

Schedule

Polar Imaginaries and Combative Poetics: Symposium on Australia's Literary Cold War

UNSW Canberra City Precinct | 20 & 21 August 2026

Thursday, 20 August	
5.30pm	Welcome
6.00pm	Keynote Panel: International Perspectives <i>John Connor</i> , 'The Battle for Socialist Realism in Britain and Australia' <i>Dougal McNeill</i> , "'E taku hoa, e Ron": R.A.K. Mason, Hone Tuwhare, and Cold War Friendship' <i>Christina Spittel</i> , "'An Honest and Effective Political Action": Gertrude Gelbin and the Publication of English-language Paperbacks in the German Democratic Republic'
8.00pm	Conference Dinner (venue tbc)

Friday, 21 August	
8.30am	Arrivals
9.00am	Session 1: Theorising Realism <i>David Carter</i> , 'The Death of the Old World ... The Birth of the New: Realism as Modern, Traditional, Nostalgic, Utopian, Sentimental, Mundane, Documentary, Revolutionary, Revisionist or ...' <i>Doug Jarvis</i> , 'First Wave Realism: Some Continuities into the Cold War Period'
9.45am	Session 2: Human Suffering Amid Nuclear War & Fire <i>Brigid Magner and Gerard Starling</i> , "'The Dying Down of a Burned and Blighted World": John Morrison's Bushfire Stories' <i>Annelise Roberts</i> , 'Imagining the Impossible Real: Disavowal and the Task of the Writers Against Nuclear Arms' <i>Hannah Viney</i> , "'Words to Use to Help a Neighbour Live": How Dymphna Cusack and Aileen Palmer Explored Cold War Tensions Through Writing'

11.00am	Morning Tea
11.30am	Session 3: Australasian Book Society <i>Rebekah Ward</i>, 'The ABS and Australia's Literary Ecosystem' <i>Li Jianjun</i>, 'Ralph de Boissière's China Tour and His Creative Writing' <i>Janey Stone and Lisa Milner</i>, 'Before Algorithms: Double Targeting the Audience' <i>Nicole Moore</i>, 'Reading the Threat: The Australasian Book Society and ASIO'
1.00pm	Lunch
2.00pm	Session 4: Political Life Writing, Folklore and Poetry <i>Jeff Sparrow</i>, 'A Path Not Taken: The After Life of Lesbia Harford's Radical Modernism' <i>Amanda Laugesen</i>, 'Creating an Australian Folk: Folklore in Australia and the Cold War' <i>Katarzyna Williams</i>, 'A Fragile Archive: Gulag Memory and Silences in Postwar Australian Life Writing' <i>Mary Besemeres</i>, 'Enduring Illusions: Cognitive Dissonance, Regret in Australian Narratives of Parental Stalinism'
3.30pm	Afternoon Tea
4.00pm	Session 5: The Bounds of Social Realism <i>Amanda Tink</i>, 'Alan Marshall, Disability, and the Limitations of Australian Realist Writing' <i>Meg Brayshaw</i>, 'Worldly Realism and Leftist Melodrama: Incompatible Genres in Dymphna Cusack's Cold War Fiction' <i>Paul Gillen</i>, 'Communism in 1950s Garment Factories: Dorothy Hewett's <i>Bobbin Up</i> and Jack Lindsay's <i>Moment of Choice</i>' <i>Giacomo Bianchino</i>, 'The Whole World in Our Hands: The Australian Strike Novel in International Perspective'
5.30pm	End



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