# *LAST SEEN ALIVE:*

## *Navigating the Abyss*

A theoretical and creative application of Jacques Lacan's model of the psyche as an analytical tool for translating newspaper accounts of an unsolved abduction case from 1983 into a creative audio project titled *Last Seen Alive*.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
The Flinders University of South Australia

by

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# *Summary*

This thesis combines a creative work titled *Last Seen Alive* which takes the form of an archive box filled with 'evidence' related to a fictional cold case, and theoretical exegesis. I explore my relationship to the 1983 true story of ten-year-old Louise Bell who disappeared from her bedroom in the middle of the night from a suburb south of Adelaide in South Australia, and has never been found. I was of a similar age and lived close by at the time she disappeared and her story affected me deeply by instilling in me a fear of being taken from my own bedroom in the middle of the night. This thesis details my research process using psychoanalysis as a theoretical and creative methodology for translating my personal relationship to the story of Louise Bell's mysterious disappearance into a creative work. I present a performance text which uses evidence collected from a crime scene as the form the 'script' takes.

I use Jacques Lacan's Borromean knot model of the psyche as a tool to interpret a collection of newspaper articles on the 1983 unsolved case of Louise Bell. I then apply Lacan's model of the psyche to my own recollections of being a girl of similar age, and living in close proximity to Louise at the time she was taken.

There are three layers to my psychoanalytic analysis. The first is interpreting the newspaper articles detailing the story of Louise Bell's mysterious disappearance as a story in which the symbolic order, imaginary and real can be interpreted. The second layer examines my own memories of the story of Louise Bell's mysterious disappearance throughout my girlhood,

and into womanhood. In this second layer of analysis I seek an intersection where Louise's story and my own overlap in order to locate the real as a dramatic nucleus for my creative work. The third layer translates the first two layers (her story and my own) into *Last Seen Alive* as an interactive experience for solitary audience members sifting through a fictional cold case file.

The thesis divides into four parts. The first is an analysis of the print media stories of Louise Bell's mysterious disappearance delivered in three parts covering the symbolic order as the world of the story, the second explores the ghosts and monsters of the imaginary, and the third discusses the real as the dramatic nucleus from which all else emanates. Part four documents the creative material I have produced, in the form of an archive box filled with bagged evidence, DVD footage, and a CD of the audio tracks for audience to listen to as they sift through the contents of the fictional cold case file. Whilst preparing the final draft of my thesis, police announced they have arrested a suspect, but the trial and final determination of the suspect's guilt have not taken place at the time of submitting. Louise Bell's body has not been found as of May 2014.

# *Declaration*

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I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

**Signed:** 

# *Acknowledgements*

I was greatly assisted by the guidance and support of my academic supervisors, Dr Jonathan Bollen and Dr Maggie Ivanova (Drama), Dr Alison Wotherspoon and Associate Professor Karen Orr Vered (Screen and Media), Associate Professor Mark Halsey and Dr Derek Dalton (Law). Between them I have enjoyed and benefitted from a diverse and dynamic series of conversations, debates and provocations. At an early stage in my research I was also assisted by Chief Inspector Albert Quinn of the South Australian Police.

Parts of the creative material were workshopped and developed during my attendance at the South Australian Film Corporation Film Lab initiative in 2011. My thanks go to fellow team members Jason Sweeney and Julie Byrne for their willingness to workshop and develop creative ideas and material.

Family and friends were also a great moral support throughout the duration of the research and authoring of this thesis.

Tom Drahos came on board as an editor and document ‘doctor’ assisting me with preparing the thesis for submission .

# *Chapter One:*

# *Introduction*

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In 1983 ten-year-old Louise Bell disappeared from her bedroom in the middle of the night whilst her younger sister slept soundly in the same room. Her parents, sleeping in a bedroom down the hall heard nothing either. To this day the mystery of her disappearance remains unsolved as her body has never been found. The Bell family lived in the suburb of Hackham West, south of Adelaide in South Australia. I was living in close proximity to the Bell home at the time of Louise's disappearance and for this reason the story had a great impact on me. Like many girls of a similar age living in the area, I was afraid that I too would be taken from my bedroom in the middle of the night and never seen again. Louise became part of my girlhood, a ghost that haunts my memories and imagination. I asked myself, how can I examine my relationship to Louise Bell as a public figure whose story became part of the tapestry of my own memories? How can I tell the story of how the unknown fate of Louise Bell shaped my girlhood and the woman I became?

This thesis examines my personal relationship to a story about a girl I never met, but with whom I identified because I felt we were quite alike. I present a creative work titled *Last Seen Alive* as a mystery about an unsolved crime. Last Seen Alive is an experience akin to reading through an investigative file which is filled with bagged evidence, witness statements, photographs and video footage of locations and memories. Told through the objects and memories left in the wake of a fictional girl called Ellen who has

disappeared, the story is told by a girl called Me who keeps a secret about something she witnessed on the night that Ellen disappeared.

The accompanying exegetical work exemplifies the specific psychoanalytic research and writing process I undertook to arrive at decisions I made in creating *Last Seen Alive.* I recommend that one explores the contents of the archive box before reading the exegetical material of this thesis. Doing so will offer the experience of performing the role of a detective sifting through evidence. Ideally this work is to be staged in such a way that a solitary spectator sits with the material in the privacy of a family home trapped in time, as it were, in the era of the early 1980s. A domestic space which is now an abandoned site of trauma where the remains of a former family life sit gathering dust, disrupted by the telltale signs of old crime scene tape, black fingerprint dust, etcetera; the fictional home of the fictional girl called Ellen referred to in the creative work. For pragmatic reasons such as cost of staging such a live installation performance experience, a solitary spectator might be sent the archive box, and examine the materials in the comfort of their own home. Key to *Last Seen Alive* is the idea of the house that fails to be a safe home for the family who live there.

This was not a practice-led project. I apply the same psychoanalytical methodological approach to both the research and the creative work of this thesis. I use my research findings as the driving force for the creative decisions I have made. I therefore consider my thesis to be a research-led creative project. The exegetical chapters present my analysis of source material, what I determined from my analysis and how I then applied my findings to make the

creative decisions that inform *Last Seen Alive* being presented as a case file that audience members sift through.

**Research Questions**

I began with an initial question: How do I examine my own memories of childhood against the narrative of a true crime story which became part of the tapestry of my own girlhood experience of fear and desire? In other words, how do I tell the story of my relationship to a public figure lifted from media reports about an unsolved crime? Woven into this question of "how" to achieve a creative examination of this cold case against my own personal history is the question of *why* should I tell my story through reflecting upon a victim's story? I felt certain that if I approached it the right way, I might reveal new insights into the cultural impact of true crime stories upon a girl as she learns what it means to become a woman in the society she lives in.

I decided that I would attempt an experimental adaptation of Jaques Lacan's theory of the psyche as a methodological process as an answer to both 'how' and 'why.' I saw in Lacan's theory of the psyche as three separate but linked fields of the symbolic order, the imaginary and the real a potential model for analysis and creative methodology as well as dramatic structure.

This project attempts to answer the question: Can Jacques Lacan's model of the psyche (the symbolic order, imaginary and real), be adapted as a critical inquiry tool, a creative methodology for generating creative material and an organising principle for the resulting creative material? It is important to note that this three-part methodology is my suggested answer to the original question of "how" to approach both my own story and that of Louise Bell's

mysterious disappearance. In order to answer my question of "why" I should be telling a story which intersects with that of Louise Bell I needed to submit to the actual proposed model of methodology which is primarily a psychoanalytic approach. The creative work I have produced here, the creative decisions I arrive at are entirely driven by this methodological approach.

**Literature Review/Contextual Review:**

Below I discuss the key texts that have influenced my decision making in developing both critical and creative concepts for this project. There is no specific book that details or responds directly to the crime I am examining. Neither have I identified any other project of live performance which attempts an adaptation or translation of factual source material into dramatic fiction using Lacan's model of the psyche. To the best of my knowledge this project and the experiment I undertake is addressing a gap in documented scholarly investigation in the field of drama and live performance.

***Bachelard and Bond***

The conceptual and intellectual foundations of this thesis in its entirety are primarily built upon ideas expressed in two key texts. Henry Bond's *Lacan at the Scene* (2009) and Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1969). Bond puts forward a very playful notion of imagining Jacques Lacan as a police detective applying his theories towards solving crime. Using archival photographic material of actual crime scenes taken in the 1950s, Bond identifies ways to read each as either perverse, psychotic or neurotic. Bond's bold act of translation of psychoanalysis to reading crime scenes inspired me to

adapt Lacan's notion of the symbolic, imaginary and real towards reading crime and as a creative process. Of particular note is Bond's notion of a house that looks back at the site of trauma where a murder has taken place in the back yard. He suggests the looming structure of the building with its dark windows appears to have a malevolent presence at the scene.

I developed another key conceptual and creative framework for my thesis of the house as being both a symbolic and imaginary dwelling. Bachelard proposes a reading of the house as an intimate space filled with truth, memories and fantasies with a dark subterranean beneath. A dream house, a space lodged in the memory and forged in the imagination. Bachelard presents a house as something to be read, arguing that the house offers up a sanctuary space of protection for the inhabitant 'in here' from whatever lurks 'out there'. Within this thesis, I draw upon other texts to further explore the impact of the crime of abduction of a family member upon the symbolic family home.

***Psychogeographies: memory, imagination and haunted spaces***

This thesis explores a crime which took place in an outer suburban geography, not an urban city space. Nevertheless, there are key theories related to reading modern urban spaces that have proved useful to my development of ideas. Guy Debord explored the notion of urban space as having a psychological aspect to it in that traversing through city streets and environments was emotionally affecting. His premise is that there are certain spaces that evoke emotional responses. For example, how one feels walking down a shop-filled mall is often different to how one might feel when walking through an underground car park, or the experience of being in urban space during daylight hours versus

during night hours. From Debord's original proposition of psychogeography (where psychology and geography intersect) have come key theorists work that I have referenced for this project.

Anthony Vidler presents a psychoanalytic reading of modern architecture and the uncanny in *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (2000) and *The Architectural Uncanny* (1992). In *Warped Space* Vidler dedicates a chapter to a reading of the crime scene drawing upon Lacan's reading of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Purloined Letter" as an example of automatism of repetition. Vidler argues that a police investigation of a crime scene equates with the notion of exhaustion of space. So thorough and in depth is the process of seeking out clues and hard evidence that space itself is exhausted. In *The Architectural Uncanny* Vidler includes a chapter, "Unhomely Houses". In this chapter he discusses the presence of the uncanny in home spaces and, like Bond, refers to the house as an entity which appears to have the ability to watch. He analyses a range of gothic literature and poetry to examine the construction of the haunted house.

Steve Pile's work in *The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity* (1996) provides an in depth and persuasive examination of the relationship between a subject and space. Pile applies Lacan's theories of the mirror stage of child development and the development of a relationship between the idea of I and the Other situated within urban space/s. Pile draws upon the notion of the construction of identity through the external signifiers of spaces inhabited, and of the symbolic, imaginary and real. It is Pile's *Real Cities* (2005) that I draw most heavily upon for this thesis due to his focus upon the imaginary aspects of city spaces. It is specifically his chapter on "The

Ghostly City" that I drew inspiration for my own examination of how ghosts appear throughout the media reports on the Louise Bell case. Pile argues that symbolic ghosts distort the way that time functions, creating threshold spaces where the present and past are intrinsically bound together. Ghosts signify a need for justice and resolution to unsolved crimes and/or acts of trauma.

Dylan Trigg writes from a phenomenological perspective about space, memory and the uncanny in *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny* (2012). Trigg discusses the relationship between the body and place as being fundamentally formed through memory. A sense of self, he argues, emerges through the fluidity of passing through places and argues the various ways in which landscapes are written into the body. Part Three is particularly useful for an in depth examination of the impact of trauma upon memory and the uncanny of haunted places.

Paul Carter discusses how space is darkly written by the non-static forces acting upon both it and the body, challenging the idea that space can be mapped using two dimensional using lines on paper. In *Dark Writing: Geography, Performance and Design* (2008) Carter poses the question; where are people situated in the architectural designs and mapping of space from which we construct and navigate place? Bodies move, perform, enact and create meaning in a space through activity. People create stories of places. In many respects I consider my entire project to be an example of dark writing in that I am mapping a place and the geography of my own childhood through stories of a crime, and memories from my own life. I use the story of Louise Bell as my navigational tool for traversing a specific landscape.

### *The Influence of True Crime*

In a broad sense, this thesis examines my personal relationship to a true crime story. I am not attempting to tell Louise Bell's story as such, and my work falls outside the genre of true crime. This genre, however, is worth discussing briefly in light of Anne Rule's seminal 1980 true crime text, *The Stranger Beside Me* (1980), Rule details her relationship with notorious serial killer Ted Bundy as the conceptual framework for the narrative of the book. She writes about Ted Bundy's life and crimes because she knew him. Perhaps most significant about Rule's approach is her focus upon, and respect for the lives of the victims. Jean Murley, writing about the role of true crime narratives in modern American cultural life, writes of Rule that she "writes books for and about women" and in doing so she "continues to challenge the stereotypes of the genre and expand the cultural work of what true crime does."[1]

Alongside the genre of true crime are scholarly examinations and commentary on the genre itself. Jean Murley's *The Rise of True Crime: 20th-Century Murder and American Popular Culture* (2008) examines the genre specifically whilst Sara Knox's *Murder: A Tale of Modern American Life* (1998) looks at the stories of notorious murders which have almost become folklore through various modes of telling and re-telling. Both argue that murder narratives impact upon, and to some degree influence cultural daily life in America. In my own work I am examining how one specific true crime informed my personal daily life and experience of girlhood culture in Australia.

Whilst not strictly examining the true crime genre, Alison Young's *Imagining Crime: Textual Outlaws and Criminal Conversations* (1996) became

[1] [1] Murley, J. *The Rise of True Crime: 20th-Century Murder and American Popular Culture*, (Westport, Conneticut, London: Praeger, 2008), p. 75.

useful to me in reflecting upon trauma, visibility and Lacan's notion of the real. She mediates the spaces between factual accounts of crime and how those evolve into embodied cultural narratives. Young dedicates a chapter to reflecting upon a case of child abduction which horrified her because it was captured on security video in the shopping centre where the toddler-victim was taken. These images captured on video were literally those of the child 'last seen alive'.

### *Finding the creative 'voice' for Last Seen Alive*

Peter Brooks opens *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (1992) with the proposition that our "lives are intertwined with narrative, with the stories that we tell and are told … all of which are reworked in that story of our own lives that we narrate to ourselves".[2] Brooks presents an analysis of ways in which we desire, in the Freudian sense of the word, to create narrative or plot driven stories from the various materials and fragments of lived experience. He argues that we have an almost innate awareness of the well-made story with its structure of beginning, middle and end, as we are schooled in such stories from childhood.

Richard K Sherwin's *When Law Goes Pop: The Vanishing Line between Law and Popular Culture* (2000) and Richard Kearney's *On Stories* (2001) both examine how stories come to be structured, enjoyed and used to manipulate meaning and outcomes (as societal myths, legends, or in the court of law, for example). Each author examines story structure, and argues that

[2] Peter Brook, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative,* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 3.

narrative desire and intention to create specific meaning/s is core to the structure of how and why a story is told the way it is told.

I knew I was assessing source material of an unsolved crime, reading for a plot which is not fully resolved. My source material includes personal memories that arise in a haphazard, non-linear and fragmentary fashion. The challenge is to find a story structure and form that would mirror the challenge of working with a story that has only a beginning and middle. Against the well-made structure of the popular 3-act story I argue that Lacan's model of the psyche as three interlinked fields can provide an alternative structure to work with creatively.

Anne Rule stands apart within the true crime genre for her dedicated focus upon the story of the victim of a crime. Of particular note is her book *Green River, Running Red: The Real Story of the Green River Killer* (2005). Once again Rule reflects upon the fact that, as with *The Stranger Beside Me* she is a part of the story she is telling through personal connections to many of the investigators working the longtime case of serial murder. In the Introduction to *Green River* Rule discusses her experience of cutting out an article from a newspaper about the discovery of a body of a girl, without consciously understanding why she was holding onto the article, why she felt the need to. Perhaps, she writes, "it was because Wendy's body had been found close to where I lived".[3] I listened to Rule's audiobook version of both true crime texts and took inspiration from the intimate experience of listening to stories of how girls and women from ordinary walks of life happened to make one fatal decision that cost them their lives. I took inspiration from Rule's

[3] Anne Rule, *Green River, Running Red: The Real Story of the Green River Killer,* (New York: Free Press, 2004), p. 5.

attention to creating a sense of the life of a girl or woman that was being lived in full prior to their murder as I wrote the long form monologue of this thesis. I tap into the notion that there is/was an ordinary life being lived up to the point of tragedy striking.

Sue Grafton's 'alphabet' series of books featuring the private investigator Kinsey Milhone are written in the first person, structured as her final written report on a case she is investigating. There is a balance in the narrative between 'what is happening/happened' and 'how I feel about it' on the part of Milhone's character. The character lives in a fictional town called Santa Teresa, descriptions of which evoke a sense of familiarity for me as Grafton could be describing the same landscape I map out and explore in *Last Seen Alive.* Importantly, Grafton sets her books in the era of the 1980s, which is the era I am recalling and writing about from my own life. Grafton's work as hard-boiled detective fiction is borne of a genre with a legacy of debt to many male writers such as James Ellroy it is specifically the work of Grafton that I find most relevant for discussion in my literature review because it is a female narrator.

*Last Seen Alive* is written as a first person narrative delivered by a character called Me. To that end it is worth touching briefly upon the notion of the unreliable narrator. The term 'unreliable narrator' was first used by Wayne C Booth in 1961 in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) in which he analyses examples of how first person narrative is not necessarily truth in storytelling. Unreliability in narration comes from discrepancies in which the voice telling the story deviates from the "core of norms and choices" set up in the story by

the author.[4] There is the tension in my own narrator's voice of truth, fact and fiction being relayed through the character of Me. I deliberately set up an unreliable narration within the context of this thesis by naming the fictional narrator "Me" strongly suggesting that this fiction is really "the author's second self".[5]

Whilst there is an entire body of theory and debate about Booth's work and the notion of the unreliable narrator, I am not approaching the topic from a scholarly perspective in this thesis. I acknowledge my awareness of Booth's thesis as the starting point for an entire field of scholarship and writing that continues today.

In terms of creative work that directly resonates with my own approaches to, and thinking about creating dramatic material and/or live performance for this thesis includes the filmmaker David Lynch, the performance artist Cindy Sherman, live performance makers Forced Entertainment, and film and theatre makers The Desperate Optimists.

I have often joked that my aim is to create a dramatic work about Adelaide that is very "Twin Peaks". David Lynch's iconic television series of the early 1990s presents an unsolved murder of a young woman in a small town. There is a strong sense of the uncanny in Lynch's direction, in that everything is familiar-yet-strange. The murder victim exists within the community as a point of identification for every other character in some way, so that the crime is not only about the victim, but about her presence/absence in the lives of others. The uncanny constantly disrupts the fictional reality through deviations of tone, music, odd moments which seem out of sync with

[4] Wayne C Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction,* (DETAILS, 1961), p. 74.
[5] Booth, p. 151.

'normality' until, over time it becomes apparent that so called normal life in Twin Peaks is uncanny. The murder has merely revealed what was already present but is not the actual source of the uncanny.

Cindy Sherman plays with the idea of photographs of scenes which appear to be still-shots taken from a filmed sequence. A moment from the middle of a narrative that had a beginning we missed, and an ending we are denied. She places herself in the picture, usually in a costume that suggests a type of character or role being played in the scene but the viewer is left to guess what the story of the scene is. Significantly, once again there is a sense of the familiar-yet-strange about Sherman's images, as though the viewer can guess at the story unfolding based on how the image mirrors scenes or moments from known movies. In other words Sherman places herself in a still shot from a not-movie which is *like* actual movies the viewer may have seen. My decision to place myself within my own creative work is inspired by Sherman's work.

Forced Entertainment has created two live performance events of note in relation to *Last Seen Alive,* "Void Story" and "A Decade of Forced Entertainment." Both use a narrative approach of the landscape or urban space as the literal map and impetus for storytelling. In "Void Story" two protagonists navigate a city scape, encountering the dangers and threats therein whilst in "A Decade of Forced Entertainment" the performers use an actual map of the British landscape and their home town of Sheffield. They mark out locations on the map and detail events throughout the decade of both personal and political significance. Significantly their work comments upon the cultural

changes over the decade of the specific urban landscape that inspires and informs their work.

Finally there is the feature film “Helen” (2008) by The Desperate Optimists worth mentioning for its basic premise and core idea. The film details the experience of a teenage girl who successfully auditions for a role in a film recreation of a crime of apparent abduction of another teenage girl, still missing. Whilst the feel and tone of the movie is very different to anything I produce in *Last Seen Alive*, the idea of following in the footsteps of a victim of a crime is absolutely core to my creative concepts.

**The Abyss and the Real: Lacan’s Borromean Knot Model of the Psyche**

In thinking about this unsolved crime of abduction, I came to the conclusion that Louise Bell was lost in an abyss where she is simultaneously dead and alive. Until her body is found there is no way of knowing for certain whether she is dead or alive. This abyss presents as an unknowable space into which Louise has disappeared. Thinking about this abyss led me to contemplate Jacques Lacan’s notion of the real, understood here as an abyss within the psyche caused by a radical rupture or trauma. Would psychoanalysis help me approach the abyss in which Louise Bell was hidden from view? After all, wherever Louise actually is, the idea of her exists within my own psyche as an encounter with the real. I felt that it would be an interesting way, as a writer, to examine my personal relationship to the story of Louise Bell. Using Lacan’s model of the psyche as both an analytical and structural tool holds a certain appeal for the telling Louise’s story and my relationship to Louise, which is more compelling than a three-act structure. The exegesis deploys Lacan’s

Borromean knot model of the psyche as the primary theoretical research tool for analysing both the story of Louise Bell and my relationship to that story.

The Borromean knot presents as three rings which are linked in such a way that to break one ring, is to undo the knot entirely. Lacan applied this idea to a model of the psyche in which three fields called the symbolic order, the imaginary, and the real were similarly bound together. In Lacan's model the real operates as a kind of abyss in which something is hidden or repressed, usually a traumatic memory, and the psychoanalyst must bring what is hidden to light in order to help the patient heal. To enter the real one must navigate the other two fields of the symbolic order and imaginary. The knot itself is the key to how I shape my thinking in both the theoretical and creative work. I use this knot model as an alternative to adopting the more traditional three act story structure of linear narrative progression. It was never my aim to write a traditional play script for this thesis. I explore the potential of a psychoanalytical approach as both a research and creative methodology because this project seeks to explore a personal relationship to an unresolved story. The story only has, in effect, a beginning and middle until such time as the body of Louise Bell is found. Rather than seeking a beginning, middle and end in the story, I look for the symbolic order, imaginary and real. The exegesis details the ways in which I interpret and define the three fields. That is to say, my exegesis demonstrates how I arrived at interpretations and definitions of the symbolic order, imaginary and real in the context of working on this project.

There are three layers to my psychoanalytic analysis. The first is interpreting print media accounts of Louise Bell's mysterious disappearance

from 1983 until late 2013. The second examines my own memories of growing up as a girl into womanhood identifying with Louise and presents a surprising discovery of an intersection where her story and my story connect. The third layer defines and explains my creative decision to present *Last Seen Alive* as a fictional cold case file.

**The House and Home**

The symbol of the family home as a structure that is meant to protect the inhabitants but fails to, and the tensions between visibility and invisibility of a missing child are key ideas explored here. In the absence of the body of the child, evidence of the child's former existence remains. The photographs of the child, the clothes and toys the child owned, the bed the child slept in, an open window of the child's bedroom and the memories of people who knew the child become evidence to be sifted through by those investigating her mysterious abduction. The family home becomes a crime scene. I only know of Louise Bell because she was a victim of a crime and her story became newsworthy. It was the seeming paradox that a missing child is actually more present, more visible for being absent that led me to the idea of telling a story through objects and evidence which stand in for the missing girl. I use the house which was a home, but is now a crime scene as a symbolic structure within which the symbolic order, imaginary and real are explored. It is the site where the missing girl was last seen alive and the most defining characteristic of the crime; that a girl was stolen from her own bed in the middle of the night whilst the family slept.

I endeavor to answer the following questions:

- What is “home” in the wake of a child being abducted from their bedroom?
- What is the nature of the gap in time between when the child is last seen alive, and discovered missing? Can I argue it as an example of the Lacanian real?
- What if the child willingly climbed through the window and left with her abductor? What part do the forces of fear and desire play in the psyche of a girl who might willingly go with her abductor?
- In what ways does the missing child become more visible than the present child? How does the absent child continue to haunt the geographies she once inhabited, even many years later?

**Evidence as the Creative Anchor**

The idea of evidence is the foundation for building the story of what happened to Louise Bell. I take on the symbolic role of a detective, sifting through the evidence to see what story could be interpreted.

What I could access, collect and analyse were the print media accounts of the Louise Bell investigation as it has unfolded from 1983 until 2013. I use editions of *The Advertiser,* the *Sunday Mail* and *The News* covering the years 1983, 1984, and 1985, then editions from 2011 covering the re-opening of the investigation in light of new technology to re-test evidence collected in 1983.

The thesis is presented in four parts. The first is an analysis of the print media stories of Louise Bell’s mysterious disappearance delivered in three parts covering the symbolic order; the second explores the imaginary; and the

third discusses the real as the dramatic nucleus of the story. Part four is the creative work of *Last Seen Alive*.

**Methodology:**

**Lacan, Louise Bell and I in a Haunted House**

Lacan proposes, "[w]e can extend analysis' equations to certain human sciences that can utilize them—especially, as we shall see, to criminology—provided we perform the correct transformation."[6] Here I attempt something similar, "rethinking" the use of psychoanalysis "in relation to a new object."[7] In order to develop a methodological approach to using Lacan I take inspiration from Henry Bond, a professional photographer and writer who has taken an innovative approach asking, what if Jacques Lacan "had left his home in the early 1950s in order to travel to England and work as a police detective? How might he have applied his theories in order to solve a crime?"[8] His analysis works with reading crime scene photographs and interpreting them as psychotic, neurotic or hysterical. I decided I could adapt his methodology using the Borromean knot model of the psyche instead. The key difference is that Bond's work explores three categorical differences whilst I use a model of interlinked fields which cannot be separated.

I ask how might Jacques Lacan apply his theory of the symbolic order, imaginary and the real as a dramatist working with the story of Louise Bell? How might he identify the three interlinked fields within her story? For this project I use the collection of seminars and writings edited together for the 2002

[6] Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), p. 128.
[7] Lacan, *Ecrits,* p. 126.
[8] Henry Bond, *Lacan at the Scene,* (Cambridge and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2009), p. 1.

edition of *Ecrits*, and *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI.* With these parameters and limitations in place I undertook the following research process.

My research topic is a very specific story about the disappearance of Louise Bell. I am not looking at a *type* of crime, but specifically examining *this* crime and how it affected me personally. To that end, apart from the print media accounts, my search for significant reference to Louise Bell's case in any academic publications demonstrated that I would be writing into an existing gap. In terms of creating a fictional outcome using a true crime as inspiration, the originality lies in my decision to present my creative work in the guise of a cold case file I believe I have contributed something more original. I discuss the work of specific contemporary performance companies using environmental theatre approaches and how their work has influenced my creative decisions in Chapter 10.

I contain the print media analysis to the written accounts in local press. I made this decision because I wanted to work with the source of information my family relied on in 1983 to learn the story of Louise Bell's alleged abduction. I use the print media articles as my primary resource for developing a geographical map to work with, and list of evidence I could figuratively collect. Making this decision enabled me to define parameters on how to map my own memories of time and place over the decades from 1983 until 2013. I relocated to the area and spent two years mapping and remembering, using the print media accounts as my navigational tool. I included visiting the street where Louise lived and attending an open inspection of a house for sale on her street, of a similar style to the Bell family home. Part of this mapping exercise

involved using a camera (stills and digital video) to create a visual map for my audience, and to create the character of Ellen. A key part of this phase of research was seeking an answer to the question of whether there was a point on this map that my story intersected with Louise's. Discovering that one of my seemingly random memories from girlhood was in fact *very* significant provided me with a direct link between us.

I gathered all of my data together; the print media articles, the memories, the visual material generated during the two year residency on location. In light of the arrest of a new suspect for the abduction and murder of Louise, I chose to include some new source material for research purposes. I accessed online transcript documents related to a former trial for abduction and murder of a child by the suspect currently being held in custody for the abduction and murder of Louise Bell. With that material added to my collection, I began my psychoanalytical analysis of the Louise Bell story.

The focus in Parts One, Two and Three is determining and articulating a definition for my interpretation of the symbolic order, imaginary and real. As I read, and re-read the unfolding story of Louise Bell's mysterious disappearance I divided story elements into the three fields as I understood them, and then interpreted them as an analytical and dramatic tool from my reading of the listed texts written by Lacan. In other words, I have deliberately taken from Lacan what I found useful in relation to developing a methodological approach to my creative practice. I focus only upon what I could use, rather than discussing what I couldn't adapt or make use of and to that end I knowingly embarked upon an imperfect experiment in using Lacan's psychoanalytic theory.

In the exegetical chapters I propose a reading of the story of Louise Bell where the symbolic order is 'the world' of the story which I interpret as being the investigation itself into her mysterious disappearance. This is how I arrived at the use of an investigative case file as the dramatic structure for my creative work. The images of the predator who has taken her, and the images of Louise and other missing children which appear in her story are ghosts and monsters of the imaginary. The predatory gaze at the bedroom window is the real as an abyss into which Louise has disappeared. An abyss where the missing girl is both dead and alive until her body is found. Louise must be reinstated in the house, dead or alive, in order for the house to be able to function once again as a family home. I use the family home which has become a crime scene as the key organising principle for this thesis.

**Factual to Fictional**

The character "Me" represents my memories translated into fictional monologues for a character I name Me who speaks about a missing girl called Ellen. This character called Me can only speak, but not be seen whilst Ellen can only be seen and not heard. I felt that I needed to creatively represent the relationship between myself and Louise in this way because it suggests that in some way we are symbiotically linked. In performing the role of Ellen myself, I am inspired by the work of Cindy Sherman. "By turning the camera on herself, Cindy Sherman [...] uses herself as a vehicle for commentary on a variety of issues" including "the role and representation of women in society."[9] My audience can hear the voice of one, and see the image of the other but are they

[9] "Biography," *CindySherman.com* <http://www.cindysherman.com/biography.shtml> [accessed 27 June 2013]

one and the same? The voice speaks about her relationship to the girl in the image but I choose not to resolve whether they are one and the same girl. How deeply has Me identified with Ellen? Is Ellen the mirror image by which Me has constructed a fantasy version of a girl she wanted to be?

As a guiding principle the progression of narrative for *Last Seen Alive* is one which circles a hidden truth. The story of Louise Bell is a *search* for her body, for the abductor, for answers to the question of what happened in the timespan between when Louise was last seen alive, and when she was discovered missing. I mirror this searching and not-finding through offering a cold case file filled with fragments which do not quite fit together to make a whole. The gaps in the narrative are integral to the story of Louise Bell and therefore I deliberately avoid closure, opting instead to raise questions and leave my audience to experience an unsolved mystery. I place my audience in the role of a detective opening up a cold case file and sifting through it. In effect I give my audience a set of story elements from which a number of narratives might be drawn and allow them to actively draw their own conclusions.

In working with my personal memories and translating them into fiction my creative methodology combines two key approaches to autobiography and performance: auto/biographical and personal narrative. I work with both "the first person narrative onstage (personal narrative), and the intermingling of the writer/performer's life with that of a historical figure (auto/biography)."[10] I look at my own girlhood through Louise Bell's story alongside my own memories of a landscape and timeframe shared by us both. In "auto/biography" there is a "more embedded subjectivity; as the central focus falls on the historical figure,

[10] Lynn C. Miller & Jacqueline Taylor, "The Constructed Self: Strategic and Aesthetic Choices in Autobiographical Performance," in *The SAGE Handbook of Performance Studies*, ed. by D. Soyini Madison and Judith Hamera (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), pp. 169–87, (p. 170).

the writer/performer subsumes him- or herself within the performance" and the subject chosen "can become a mentor figure, changing the trajectory of the writer/performer's own life."[11] I write a semi-autobiographical monologue for the character called Me who is obsessed with a girl called Ellen who has gone missing. I write fictional witness statements for two fictional characters based on figures who appear in the newspaper stories about Louise, and speak on her behalf, the Unreliable Witness, and the Curious Criminologist. My witnesses attempt to speak about Ellen but end up revealing their own fears and desires. Ellen is always constructed through others and simultaneously others construct themselves through Ellen.

I decided upon specific physical objects which were drawn partly from the story of Louise Bell, and partly from my fictional monologues for the character of Me. The case file is deliberately *like* a real case file without ever being an accurate representation. The aim was to…presence of fact, memory and fantasy to be entwined in the work as the symbolic, imaginary and real are entwined within the psyche.

Before outlining the content of each of the four parts I provide a summary of the story of Louise Bell. Throughout this thesis I reference the source material in non-chronological order for the purpose of analysis but here I offer a chronological summary of the overall story. Hopefully this will help the reader navigate the over-arching story.

**Relevant Background:**

**The Mysterious Disappearance of Louise Bell**

[11] Miller and Taylor, p. 170.

On 7 January 1983 news broke that a ten year old girl called Louise Bell had gone missing from her bedroom in her family home in Hackham West. She was last seen alive by her mother at about 10:00 pm the evening before, awake and tucked in her bed. Her younger sister Rachel, who occupied a bed in the same room, was already asleep. The suburb of Hackham West is located approximately thirty kilometres south of the city of Adelaide and is a suburb made up of large tracts of public housing. Louise lived on Meadow Way in a house typical for the area: modest, but functional.

Her disappearance was declared a major crime by police, who undertook an extensive search for Louise, and made appeals to the public for help.[12] A witness recalled seeing a man in the area near where Louise lived and from this description an identikit image of a possible suspect was published in the print media.[13] He was described as blonde, clean shaven and of athletic build, likely in his early twenties. Notably the man arrested for the abduction and murder of Louise bore no resemblance to the identikit image.

Late in 1983 a suspect named Raymond John Geesing was arrested for the abduction and murder of Louise and convicted to a life sentence in jail.[14] An appeal against the court ruling saw Geesing released after serving eighteen months. Evidence from the original trial was found to be flawed.[15] In 1991 police searched an unnamed suspect's house in Hackham West for the remains of Louise Bell. The search turned up no evidence.[16]

[12] John Whistler, "Disappearance declared a major crime," *The Advertiser,* 7 January 1983, p. 1.
[13] Robert Ball, "Louise Bell: Police seeking this man," *The Advertiser,* 12 March 1983, p. 3.
[14] Jim Kernahan and Annette Holden, "Geesing Guilty," *The News,* 14 December 1984, p. 1.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *Sunday Mail,* 9 October 2011, p. 1.

In 2011 the case was re-opened and police bought in new technology to re-search the suspect's house for human remains. Police and forensic teams spent three days on an intensive search, but found nothing.[17]

**Chapter Outline:**

I provide below a brief summary of the exegetical chapters contained in this thesis. It is important to note that my exegesis reflects the analytical work I undertook using Lacan and not intended to be a journal of my creative process.

**Part One: "Home" Becomes a Crime Scene**

Lacan suggests the symbolic order is the overarching language used by the society into which a subject is introduced and educated.[18] Louise Bell's story is about a crime and the subsequent investigation. This crime narrative is the symbolic order or 'world' into which the reader is introduced and educated. In the story of Louise Bell's mysterious disappearance the house signifies as a family home which has experienced a traumatic criminal event. When the crime of abduction occurs one of the family members is suddenly absent, hidden from view. The missing child is in the real. The family is no longer a whole entity. Only when the missing child is found, dead or alive, and reinstated in the family can the house function as a family home again.

In Chapter Two, The House is Not a Home Anymore, I argue that the symbolic order for the story of Louise Bell is a mystery, a crime to be solved and the house is the key symbol in the story. I search for the Other as that which defines the subjects in the symbolic order within the story of Louise Bell

[17] Ibid. In November 2013 an arrest of this same suspect has been made, but for the duration of writing it remained unsolved.
[18] Lacan, *Ecrits,* p. 35.

and argue that there is a symbiotic relationship between the figure of the detective, the child victim and the predator. I look at the transformation of the family home into a crime scene

In Chapter Three, The Detective Enters the Abyss, I look at the investigative process and the role of evidence in narrative construction. Crime scene investigation transforms the ordinary into the uncanny as objects are taken 'out of context' of their original place within the family home. In their new context these familiar objects potentially signify as clues. These objects become meaningful in a new way as potential clues which reveal the story of what happened.

In Chapter Four, The Conjuring of the Absent Body as Present, I focus specifically upon the role of the absent body in the narrative of the crime. I argue the body can activate a space, even when absent, or because of its very absence. I track the ways in which the body of Louise Bell is narrated as missing then presumed deceased. I discuss the use of my own body as part of my research methodology to literally follow in the footsteps of the victim and attempt to locate the predatory gaze.

**Part Two: "Home" is a Haunted House**

Part Two explores the realm of the imaginary and the body – the body of the innocent child-victim, the monstrous body of the predatory criminal and my own body in performing the role of Ellen. I draw upon Lacan's theory of the mirror stage in a child's development in which the child identifies with its own image as reflected back to it via both literal mirrors, and others-as-mirrors. I examine the newspaper articles for examples of the imaginary at work, the

presentation of image-based identities. I ask how innocence and criminality are narrated through the imaginary as *imago*.

In Chapter Five, The Congregation of Ghosts, I explore the concept of *imago*, "the specular image" at "the threshold of the visible world" as being ghostly presences which haunt the story of Louise Bell.[19] I track the ways in which other missing or murdered children appear throughout the newspaper articles detailing the ongoing story of Louise Bell, and how they function as ghosts who congregate about Louise. I ask how her innocence is constructed through being positioned as being like the other child-victims. I examine the role of alike-ness in the story of Louise Bell, and discuss my construction of the character of Ellen as image-only, captured on screen.

In Chapter Six, Loving the Monster, I look at the construction of the criminal monster responsible for Louise's disappearance. I demonstrate the ways in which a man accused of her abduction and murder, is narrated as a monstrous figure, and presented to the reader in images that evoke the figure of the mythical bogeyman.

In Chapter Seven, Girlhood Fear and Desire, I explore the tensions between fear and desire as forces which operate in the story of Louise Bell, and upon the psyche. Although her body has never been found, Louise's body is conjured as though present and assumed dead. A speculative narrative of wounds inflicted upon her body are offered to the reader of the newspaper articles. Woven in between the tangible realities and hard facts derived through the investigation of the crime, are memories and speculation. The body is

[19] Lacan, *Ecrits*, p. 77.

positioned as something seen, watched, preyed upon, searched for, and remembered by witnesses.

The ways in which the imaginary operates in the story of Louise Bell leads to my conceiving of Ellen as image-only. She is a memory manifest as a ghostly image filmed by an unknown camera person. Or is the girl on film Me in the role of Ellen? Through the imaginary I explore the forces of desire upon Me and suggest in *Last Seen Alive* that the power of memory and fantasy conjure the image of Ellen.

**Part Three: "Home" is Impossible**

In Part Three I deal with the real as "that which always comes back to the same place."[20] Where does the story of Louise Bell get stuck? What is the point in the narrative from which there can be no true progress? How can I interpret the real as a performance concept to work with for *Last Seen Alive*? I argue that 'home' is impossible in the story of Louise Bell because the very idea of a safe home is a phantasy. I look at the impact of memory and trauma upon the idea of home as time passes. I examine a personal memory from the late 1980s which has only revealed its true meaning during the re-opening of the investigation into Louise's disappearance in 2011. It is this memory which reveals the answer to my question of why Louise Bell's story is meaningful to me and is actually part of my own story. I discover the real for myself.

In Chapter Eight, An Abyss as the Real, I identify the bedroom window as the location of the real in the story of Louise Bell because there has been no forensic evidence to support the theory that Louise was or was not forced from

[20] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), p. 42.

the room. Her story is stuck at the window. I work with the notion that "it is in relation to the real that the level of phantasy functions. The real supports the phantasy, the phantasy protects the real."[21] I argue that the theory of abduction itself, and the construction of Louise as a child-victim is a phantasy. It is a phantasy that operates to protect the real, or truth that Louise Bell *might* have exited the room willingly. I am not proposing this as a fact, merely applying my analysis to the source material and finding a space of ambiguity for exploration as a dramatist. I propose that an abyss into which a victim disappears at the point they were last seen alive is similar, in nature, to Pascal's abyss. A literal void space into which one could fall, or be taken and eradicated therein. This abyss is tangible, always at Pascal's side. I ask whether the abyss is something which is external to the self, or internal? I extend this question to ask what is the place of *desire* in relation to the predatory gaze?

In Chapter Nine, Me and Louise and the Real, I search for the real in my own story. I seek out a point at which my story and Louise's story intersect, if at all. I work with the idea the real is the dramatic nucleus from which all else emanates. I ask myself 'why Louise Bell?' Why *this* case, *this* girl's story? I find an intersection where our stories overlap and it raises new questions about memory and trauma as containing meanings which cannot be accessed at the time of the event, but are understood later. I draw upon the work of Dylan Trigg, a phenomenologist writing about memory and trauma in order to explore this question more deeply.

In Chapter Ten, Performing the Real, I turn to the creative material of *Last Seen Alive* and discuss my approach to authoring the texts, both written

[21] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts,* p. 41.

and visual. I discuss how one might encounter the real within a performance, given the real can only be discovered by chance and not manufactured. I draw upon the work of performance groups such as The Sydney Front and IRAA Theatre who engage their audience as interactive participants in the performance experience to discuss ideas for how an audience might encounter the real within *Last Seen Alive.*

**Part Four: *Last Seen Alive* Texts**

*Last Seen Alive* includes written and visual material framed as evidence contained in an archive box. It is a fragmentary collection of hints and clues, setting up a mystery with no resolution.

Included in the box are a pair of latex gloves, and a set of Instructions for handling the 'evidence'. I've set this box up as if I were going to place it somewhere that general audience could book a time to review the contents rather than for the purpose of being assessed as part of my thesis. The one exception being that I include written copies of the monologues so that assessors have the option to read the scripted portion of *Last Seen Alive.* I suggest setting aside an hour to browse through the contents of the box and listen to the recorded monologues. Objects bagged should remain sealed in the bag. Numbers assigned to each item of evidence relate to track numbers for both audio and visual recorded material.

# ***PART ONE:***

## *The Symbolic Order*

## *"Home" Becomes a Crime Scene*

# *Chapter Two: The House is Not a Home Anymore*

In determining the world of the story of Louise Bell, how do I determine the fictional world of *Last Seen Alive*? In this chapter I argue that the symbolic order for the story of Louise Bell is a mystery, a crime to be solved; an investigation into a criminal event. This event has taken place in a house, the Bell family home. Of the symbolic order Lacan says it is the "order whose mass supports" the subject "and welcomes him in the form of language, and superimposes determination by the signifier."[22] He suggests that "if man comes to think about the symbolic order, it is because he is first caught in it in his being" and "he has only been able to make this entrance" into the symbolic order "through the radical defile of speech" exemplified "each time the subject addresses the Other as absolute [...] making himself into an object in order to deceive the Other."[23] The symbolic order is language driven and pre-exists. As subjects we are born into this pre-existing language which defines us and constructs us.

I access the symbolic order for the story of Louise Bell through the newspaper articles which, to some degree position me as the Other being deceived. Those who write for the newspaper determine the symbolic order into which I, the reader, enter. As the Other I am reading one version of a story about a girl called Louise Bell who has mysteriously disappeared from her bedroom in the middle of the night. There are multiple versions of this story however. For example the Bell family's version, her friends' versions, the

[22] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 35.
[23] Lacan, p. 40.

neighbours' version (perhaps they witnessed something strange), the police version, and so on.

I identify the house as the key symbol of the story of Louise Bell's mysterious disappearance. In the story the house functions symbolically in two distinct ways. Initially the house is presented as a family home inhabited by the Bell family until Louise mysteriously disappears. At the point at which Louise is removed from the family home, the house then functions symbolically as a crime scene. This transformation of the family home into a crime scene renders the house uncanny. What was once familiar is now strange. In a similar way the missing child is transformed from being a girl, to being a victim of a crime.

**The House as Home**

When the case was re-opened in 2011, a report in the *Sunday Mail* suggested there "are perhaps just a handful of crimes etched in the memory of South Australians. The abduction of 10-year-old Louise Bell is one of them." The report mentions that Louise "wasn't taken from a public place; she was snatched from her bedroom [...] still wearing her pyjamas" and goes on to point out that "[t]hankfully, it remains the only abduction of its type in suburban Adelaide [...] carried out so audaciously."[24] The suggestion is that this case has etched itself as a lasting memory for South Australians because the girl was taken from her own home, and "no trace of the schoolgirl has ever been found."[25]

Gaston Bachelard, writing about the experience of home as an intimate space we experience, suggests that a "house constitutes a body of images that

[24] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *Sunday Mail,* 9 October 2011, p. 5.
[25] Ibid.

give mankind proofs or illusions of stability."[26] He casts the house in the role of the "non-I that protects the I," an interior space without which "man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life."[27] It operates both as a physical structure and an imaginary phantasy space into which a subject projects their desires, and in which "our memories are housed."[28] A family home is constructed by the ways the inhabitants *enact* their phantasy space, the ways in which they interact with and perform in the house.

As a symbol, the house can evoke memories of 'my' house or 'your' house. I hear of a girl taken from a house down the street and her house becomes my house in my own mind, because of the symbolic likenesses between me and her, and between her house and mine. We are of the same age, living in similar kinds of houses in the same area therefore what differentiates her from me? Her home from mine? Not able to determine differences of any real significance I arrive at the conclusion that home is no longer safe for a girl like her, or a girl like me, for girls like *us*. Lying in my own bedroom at night alone in 1983, my house now *feels* different. The darkened bedroom window becomes vaguely terrifying. Lacan says that, "all that is necessary for something to signify to me that there may be others there" is a "window if it gets a bit dark, and if I have reasons for thinking that there is someone behind it, it is straightaway a gaze."[29] The gaze at the bedroom window is predatory, carrying with it the threat of an encounter with an abyss into which one can disappear, like Louise did.

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[26] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* (Boston: Beacon Press,1969), p. 4.
[27] Bachelard, p. 7.
[28] Bachelard, p. 8.
[29] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique. 1953-1954.* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), p. 215.

Henry Bond suggests a house located at the scene of a murder is "a house that looks on" and designates the darkened window as "a literal instance" of "the separation between the eye and gaze*:* this place from which the Other looks."[30] The house is positioned as both seen *by* the subject, and able to *see* the subject. Bachelard writes that "our home is our corner of the world" and as already mentioned is the "non-I that protects the I."[31] Bachelard's house is an interior space where the subject is protected, and able to dream. He argues that the "house as I see it, is a sort of airy structure that moves about on the breath of time. It really is open to the wind of another time."[32] In other words, what happened *then* lingers in the now of every house I inhabit. At every bedroom window, the abyss continues to hover as a potential void threatening to remove me from time and place.

The uncanny house has been rendered so by the presence of a predatory gaze. The missing girl is assumed to have fallen prey to this predatory gaze embodied by a criminal. In the story about Louise Bell there is an Other. This Other is a predator. Louise is objectified as the child-victim of an unknown predator. The predatory gaze is located at the bedroom window through which the girl is assumed to have disappeared. Lacan presents an idea that the darkened window of the house suggests the presence of an Other who watches. From this darkened window one becomes aware of the Lacanian gaze.[33] A sensation that one is being watched by an unseen observer. In this case an unseen predator.

[30] Bond, *Lacan at the Scene,* p. 47.
[31] Bachelard, p. 4.
[32] Bachelard, p. 34.
[33] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique. 1953-1954.* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), p. 215.

The missing body of the girl renders the house uncanny not only through transforming it into a crime scene, but also through leaving the entity of the family itself incomplete. The detective, therefore, must find the body of the missing girl (dead or alive) and reinstate her into the family in order for the house to become a home again. Until then, the house remains the scene of a crime, an unsolved mystery. Whilst the house may become a home again, the girl will remain a victim of a crime whether she is found dead or alive. The house becomes a site where the girl was last seen alive.

**The Home Which Failed to Protect**

Both Louise and her younger sister Rachel "had been safely in bed at 10:30 the previous night."[34] Being at home in bed equates with being safe. "The Bell's brick home in Meadow Way," suggests a strong dwelling, one difficult to penetrate. It is framed as the non-I which protects the I, much as a fortress might. Early in the case, detectives working on the investigation "admit we're only theorising on how she got out of the house," suggesting that part of the mystery is wrapped up with the question of how the house itself figures in the crime as detectives arrive at the initial conclusion that Louise "either went from the house or was enticed from the house." At the suggestion that Louise might have been enticed from the house, her mother (Mrs Bell) argues that Louise "had been warned constantly about strangers" and "is not the type to do that sort of thing." Symbolically the house represents a powerful idea of 'home' and the story negates the idea that a child would willingly leave their family,

[34] Robert Ball, "Louise Bell: Man in Court," *The Advertiser,* 26 November 1983, p. 1.

her parents stating, "we will never give up hope she is coming home to us [...] so we can be a whole family again."[35]

Without Louise, the family home becomes a crime scene. Her absence signifies a lack beyond her own body, and points to a lack in the larger entity of the family. Without this whole family in the house it becomes a site of trauma. An abyss takes up the space that was once inhabited by Louise. Her absence becomes a signifier of the abyss which opened up and radically transformed the home into a crime scene. The girl is now symbolically represented by evidence collected from the scene of the crime. In *Last Seen Alive* I fill an archive box with objects and memories taken from the house she once lived in, the place she was last seen alive.

It is not only the Bell house that figures in the unfolding reports on the case. Detectives locate a suspect at a house in Mitchell Park and request to "search all the rooms and cupboards" for two items linked to Louise; "a pair of pants and a pyjama top" that she was wearing when last seen alive. They seek proof that the missing girl had been in the suspect's house. The suspect, Raymond John Geesing, claimed to have been "home in bed the night Louise Bell disappeared." Again the safety of the bedroom is implied. One cannot be out abducting children from *their* bedrooms if one is tucked up in one's own bed. The bedroom is framed as a site of innocence. The innocent child-victim taken from the bedroom, and the alibi used by the suspect to profess his innocence of committing the crime. The house of the suspect is also a home until the police arrive and request to search the premises for evidence of a

[35] Robert Ball, "Doorknock 'useful' in hunt for Louise," *The Advertiser,* 11 January 1983, p. 6.

missing, possibly murdered young girl. Whether guilty or not, the suspect's own home is also transformed into a potential crime scene.

After the arrest of Geesing in late 1983 for the abduction and murder of Louise, detectives on the Bell case "spent hours with Louise's parents at their home."[36] At this time the Bell home is suspended in a figurative space where the house is *both* a family home and a crime scene. The detective enters their home as the symbolic non-I that is charged with the symbolic role of protecting the I. The detective has the suspected predator in custody but the body of the missing girl has not been found. The detective has yet to reinstate the missing girl into her family so the Bell house can return to being a family home. It is not enough, therefore, to arrest a suspect. The mystery of where the missing girl is must be solved.

**The Body and the House**

Bachelard writes about the cellar that it is "the *dark entity* of the house. The one that partakes of the subterranean forces. When we dream there, we are in harmony with the irrationality of the depths."[37] In 1991 the floorboards of another suspect's home were pulled up as police searched for the body of Louise Bell.[38] The suspect was living nearby. In this dark space underneath the floorboards the body of Louise Bell might be hidden. Such a discovery would provide the evidence of the dark entity of the house. It would also reveal the geographical location of the abyss into which Louise has disappeared. Her body was not found but the active search of the subterranean spaces of the

[36] Tom Menzies, "Charged Man, 35, Denies He's Guilty," *Sunday Mail,* 27 November 1983, p. 3.
[37] Bachelard, G, p. 18.
[38] Photographs of this taking place were re-published in 2011 when the case was re-opened in *Sunday Mail,* 29 October 2011, p. 5.

house indicate that it is the spaces that lie below the surface of the house where dark forces are assumed to gather and where the abyss will be found. It is the abject spaces that are searched for the body of Louise rather than the traditional 'living' spaces of the house where daily life unfolds.

Mr Bell, in the early days of the investigation called for people in the local area to check their "backyards, garages, sheds, or even unoccupied shacks for any trace of Louise."[39] It is suggested that the abyss in which Louise is hidden from view is located in, or near a house somewhere—if not beneath the house, in the other darker, storage spaces for objects and activities kept outside the main living areas of the family home. Garages and sheds become symbolic cellars.

A press conference is given by Louise's parents in "the bare living room of their modest home" where "photographs of Louise and their other daughter Rachel" adorn "the mantelpiece."[40] Photographs are the representation of the missing girl and become signifiers of a gap, an abysmal void in the family home. Bachelard suggests we "ask ourselves if what has been, was" and asks have "facts really the *value* that memory gives them?" The house becomes a space in which to capture or locate the memories of a girl that once was but, suggests Bachelard, "let this value be effaced, and the facts cease to exist. Did they ever exist?"[41] There is no embodied Louise Bell in the house to signify her existence. Photographs suggest she *did* exist but are problematic to the answer to the question, does she *still exist?* If she is not in the house, how can she be accounted for? If she is not part of the family, then who is Louise Bell?

[39] Christabel Hirst, "Give us a sign Louise is alive, plead her parents," *The Advertiser,* 24 March 1983, p. 20.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Bachelard, p. 58.

Whether other occupants move into the house on Meadow Way in Hackham West, it will remain a location where Louise Bell disappeared through the bedroom window in 1983, so entwined is her body-as-memory with the house she once lived in with her family. Dylan Trigg, a phenomenologist theorising about memory writes,

> through our experience of place, our own bodies become entangled with our surrounding environment. Doing so, places become plentiful, full of the temporal vibrancy of our bodies, stretching back into time, and reaching out into the future.[42]

The symbolic house, which was a family home, is now a site of trauma where a crime has erased the presence of a girl. This house exists at the threshold between the symbolic, imaginary and real, caught between the past (how things were), present (how things are) and the unknown future (will they ever find Louise and solve the mystery?).

Bachelard suggests something "unreal seeps into the reality of the recollections that are on the borderline between our personal history and an indefinite pre-history, in the exact place where, after us, the childhood home comes to life in us."[43] Applied to the story of Louise Bell this something unreal resembles the real as an abyss into which the girl has gone missing. The memory of her lingers in the house *but only as she was* in 1983, not how she *is* (whether dead or alive). The bedroom where Louise was last seen alive

[42] Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny,* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2011), p. 119.
[43] Bachelard, p. 58.

remains the location of the darkened window through which Louise disappeared. Time fails to erase this memory of the body that once was, demonstrated by the re-opening of the case in 2011. "Major Crimes detectives questioned a man in connection with the murder of the 10-year-old Hackham West girl, who vanished from her bedroom on a summer's night 28 years ago."[44] Twenty eight years later the story of Louise Bell is still being told as a story about the loss of a family home as much as the loss of a young girl.

**The Crime Scene**

The crime scene exists exclusively in the symbolic order. It is tangible, readable, and able to be mapped, documented and put through the rigors of an investigation because it can be *seen* and described. Alan Sheridan, in his translator's notes on Lacan's conception of the symbolic order, writes, "it is the symbolic, not the imaginary, that is seen to be the determining order of the subject, and its effects are radical."[45] It is the radical shift in signifying by the symbolic house from family home to crime scene that determines my first decision for the creative material: that *Last Seen Alive* is a mystery about an unsolved crime, told through the objects and memories left in the wake of a girl who has disappeared.

A crime scene is a world structured in and around rules of law. A crime scene is transitory, ephemeral, temporary. It erupts within other spaces. It is imposed upon spaces which signify differently before the commission of a crime radically alters its symbolic function. It is a space to be read or interpreted, rather than a space to be inhabited and performed. A family home

[44] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *Sunday Mail,* 9 October 2011, p. 1.
[45] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 279.

is dynamic in that it has a fluidity of energy animating it, constructing it. A crime scene, in effect, attempts to hold the space *in time,* as it was. A crime scene is like an object to be examined and from this examination, meaning is sought. There is increasingly sophisticated technology available to help see the minute particles known as trace evidence which are invisible to the naked eye. Evidence is processed and interpreted, broken down and studied in detail so that evidence can be used to plot a narrative which describes the commission of the crime. A narrative which answers the question, what happened here?

The crime scene cannot be read by just anybody. Rather, the crime scene is to be read only by those who, as subjects, signify the law. I designate the figure of the detective as the subject who signifies the law, charged with the task of examining and interpreting the crime scene. In the way that an analyst approaches their patient as a subject constituted in the field of the Other, so too is the detective constituted in the field of the Other-as-criminal. "The relation of the subject to the Other is entirely produced in a process of gap," suggests Lacan.[46] Lacan argues that the Other is "present in the subjective revelation. It is already there, when something has begun to yield itself from the unconscious."[47] The Other is the unconscious and is "the locus of speech and potentially the locus of truth."[48]

Conceptually, in the symbolic order of the house which signifies as either family home or crime scene the gap is the missing girl. As Other to the detective, the missing girl is, symbolically speaking, the victim. In other words, the detective is both signifier and subject constructed in the field of an Other. "The signifier, producing itself in the field of the Other, makes manifest the

[46] Lacan, p. 206.
[47] Lacan, p. 130.
[48] Lacan, p. 129.

subject of its signification."[49] The detective exists because both the predatory criminal and child-victim also exist. There is a symbiotic relationship between these three subjects who signify. The role of the detective is to interpret the clues left in the wake of the crime but as for the analyst working with a patient, interpretation "cannot be bent to any meaning," for a crime scene "designates only a single series of signifiers."[50]Around a crime scene "the subject may in effect occupy various places, depending on whether one places him under one or other of these signifiers."[51] In the story of Louise Bell, the subject positions around the crime scene are detective, criminal and victim. Henri Lefebvre, theorising the way space is produced, writes,

> Any determinate and hence demarcated space necessarily embraces some things and excludes others; what it rejects may be relegated to nostalgia or it may simply be forbidden. Such a space asserts, negates and denies.[52]

The detective must determine what to embrace as a clue, and what to dismiss as being of the former symbolic order of the house as a family home.

The detective is looking for the *discrepancies,* in the same way, as Bond argues, an analyst is looking for the "metanarrative" of the "dynamic unconscious" that is revealed through the "seemingly incidental details such as denials, repetitions, hesitations, slip ups and so on."[53] Bond suggests that such a theme of looking for the discrepancies "underpins the process that modern

[49] Lacan, p. 207.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Lacan, p. 207.
[52] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* p. 99.
[53] Bond, *Lacan at the Scene,* p. 4.

crime investigators follow."[54] The question, when confronted with the crime scene should be, Bond argues, "not 'what has occurred'" but rather "what has occurred that has never occurred before?"[55] What in the bedroom of the missing child is not as it ordinarily is? First and foremost of course is the obvious discrepancy, that of the girl's absence. Key to the crime scene of Louise's disappearance is the window, which is noticed to be open, with "a flywire screen [...] pushed out of place from inside the room," leaving a space "big enough for Louise to climb through."[56] This window, with its fly screen removed, remains the one clear discrepancy of the crime scene throughout the investigation. In *Last Seen Alive* I weave this ambiguous open window throughout the collected evidence and monologue of Me as being something which incorporates the symbolic order (photographs of the window in a girl's bedroom), the imaginary (video images distorted and rendered uncanny and strange), and the real (the gap in the monologue of Me which hides something important).

**The Crime Scene and Memory**

In relation to the mapping (literally) of space and place-making, Paul Carter describes dark writing as "[a]lways gesturing toward other presences, the marks dark writing makes outline other places inside the one we agree to inhabit."[57] Dark writing refers to the sublime of place and how a space is transformed into a knowable place through the ways it is enacted, lived in, experienced emotionally, imaginatively. Where a map is two dimensional, dark

[54] Bond, p. 4.
[55] Ibid.
[56] John Whistler, "Disappearance declared a major crime," *The Advertiser,* 7 January 1983, p. 1.
[57] Paul Carter, *Dark Writing. Geography, Performance, Design,*(Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), p. 2.

writing embellishes the impact memory, story and habitation have on creating a sense of place beyond being a location on a map. Interpreting a crime scene is like attempting to decipher the darkly written aspects of the space that have transformed it into a place now regarded as the site of a crime. The location remains fixed, but the events that have occurred radically alter how the space is experienced after a crime has been committed as opposed to how it was experienced before.

The crime scene is secured by police, and preserved *in time* so to speak, as if a pause button has been pressed to still the crime scene as a picture, a snapshot, or a *map.* A crime scene is rarely a space of the *now.* It is a space in which an event has taken place, and it is the role of the detective to retrieve the memory or imprint of the past event before releasing the crime scene back into the now. The question is always *what happened here*? What 'presences' can be found in the crime scene in the guise of evidence to answer this question?

David Carr, a phenomenologist scholar writes about Husserl's conception of recollection thus, "I cannot experience an event except against a temporal background."[58] Carter adds that the "emphasis is not upon things but on the adherent forces that bring them together and arrange them."[59] A crime scene exists as much in time as in space, and is created through dynamic forces but is mapped as static. Much like the way a map uses lines as a key tool by which to describe a place. Carter is interested in alternative ways to map geography that account for the fluidities of space and place making. In a Lacanian sense, the map itself belongs in the symbolic order. The stories, memories and fluidities of spatial dynamics affected by the movements and actions of human agents,

[58] David Carr, *Interpreting Husserl*, (Holland: Dordrecht, 1987), p. 251.
[59] Carter, *Dark Writing. Geography, Performance, Design,* p. 86.

the *performance* of space, belong in the imaginary. A crime scene contains the residue of a performance that has taken place, namely the abduction of the girl (assumed, against her will).

A crime scene is *created* by the actions of criminals, but it is *discovered* by, and read by the detective (and other professionals involved in the investigation of crime). A crime scene is always a mystery to those encountering it. It is a space to be interrogated and interpreted. The detective asks the questions, and the crime scene holds the answers. The challenge for the detective is arriving at *rational* answers despite the paradoxical *irrationality* of the crime itself. (How could a child be taken so brazenly from her bedroom in the middle of the night and nobody notice?)

A crime narrative is constructed using the evidence and information gathered from the crime scene(s), and investigative processes such as interviewing potential witnesses, and gathering background information to create a profile of the victim to determine how she might have been identified and targeted by the predatory criminal. Brent Turvey, a practitioner and author of instructional texts for various criminal investigation processes, writes that crime reconstruction "is the determination of the actions and events surrounding the commission of a crime."[60] He explains further,

> Crime reconstruction is reality based, there is an orderly body of knowledge that exists in the literature, there are generally accepted theories and practice standards, and reconstruction conclusions reached through the scientific

[60] Chisum and Turvey, *Crime Reconstruction. Second Edition,* p. 9.

> method are susceptible to verification through independent peer review and testing.[61]

A crime reconstruction is developed in accordance with a set of governing rules and language from a pre-existing symbolic order known as the law. Lacan describes the symbolic order as a structured network of signifiers driven by language that we are born into,

> Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world […] so total that they give the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he *is* not yet and even beyond his death; so total that through them his end finds its meaning … [62]

A crime reconstruction narrative is intended for, and will be judged by those who represent and enact the law. Richard K Sherwin, a legal theorist writing about storytelling in the judicial context, states that "[r]eality must be reconstructed at trial" arguing that the "crime and the motive [...] none of this exists, as a matter of law, until it has been proven."[63] A crime reconstruction has a target audience. It is a story authored by legal professionals, reflecting the subjective positions loosely represented by those who seek to prosecute and

[61] Chisum and Turvey, p. 9.
[62] Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 68.
[63] Richard K. Sherwin, *When Law Goes Pop. The Vanishing Line Between Law and Popular Culture,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 41.

those who seek to defend the accused. As Sherwin argues, in "place of deductive and inductive logic, narrative necessity takes over," and "may come from a particular kind of order that is internal to the story itself. But it is also we, the audience, who actively help it to reach an appropriate resolution on its own terms."[64] Opening statements by both parties tend to reveal the subjective positions each are taking on the narrative constructed from the crime reconstruction. Sherwin's argument is that the story told by the prosecution or defense teams draw upon cultural memory of pre-existing story models, but the crime reconstruction in the original form must be drawn from the trail of evidence and will likely have narrative gaps, and therefore resist conformity to story models that audiences are familiar with. Lacan says analysts "treat the real by the symbolic" encountering "the imaginary to a greater or lesser degree" along the way.[65] A crime scene provides a symbolic structure within which to translate an encounter with the real into a narrative. Evidence is of the symbolic order, speculation is of the imaginary, and the crime scene itself is the result of an encounter with the real.

The reconstruction of a crime is ideally the *true* story of what happened. It is a narrative bound by the parameters of evidence and factual data, and arrived at through a scientific analysis in which clues are put under rigorous scrutiny to assess their truth-potential. Crime reconstruction is looking for absolutism in its narrative conclusion as an ethical position. The objective is to re-establish the symbolic order after a rupture of the real and avoid the traps of the imaginary realm in which the facts can be obscured by emotions or a strong desire to 'win' on the part of legal teams applying pressure upon the crime

[64] Sherwin, p. 43.
[65] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 6.

reconstruction process. A crime reconstruction narrative is often fragmentary, incomplete, and inconclusive as a result. It will not necessarily obey the culturally embedded rules, or intrinsic understanding of story structure that operate in, for example, a crime drama or crime fiction. In a crime reconstruction one cannot force the pieces of the puzzle to fit, they either do, or they don't. In the next chapter I align myself with the figure of the detective and attempt to enter the crime scene through the portal of the newspaper articles following the story of Louise Bell.

# *Chapter Three: The Detective Enters the Abyss*

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In this chapter I investigate the crime scene as though I were alongside the figure of the detective using the newspaper articles I have collected as my resource for identifying evidence. In reading the figure of the detective through a Lacanian lens, Slavoj Žižek suggests,

> The detective grasps the scene as a bricolage of heterogeneous elements, in which the connection between the murderer's mise-en-scene and the 'real events' corresponds exactly to that between the manifest dream content and the latent dream thought, or between the immediate configuration of the rebus and its solution.[66]

The crime scene is a rebus, a problem to be solved, a space which facilitates communication between the detective and the criminal. It is a privileged space that only the detective is granted access to whilst members of the general public read accounts and reports of the investigation delivered in the newspaper based on details offered to the reporters by the detective. What can I determine of the crime scene through the information I find in the newspaper accounts?

[66]Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis,* (Masachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), p. 53–54.

**At the Crime Scene**

The State Library of South Australia becomes my portal to the crime scene as I sit for hours on end, over many days, scouring the microfilm copies of local newspapers for reports on the investigation into the mysterious disappearance of Louise Bell. To access the crime reconstruction the detectives built, I turn my attention specifically to the reports on the trial of Raymond John Geesing, "37, cleaner, of Ashley St, Torrensville," charged with having "abducted Louise from the bedroom of her home during the night of January 4-6, 1983, murdered her and hid her body." A basic narrative of the crime is presented by the Crown as an allegation of guilt against Geesing. For his part, Geesing pleads not guilty. Notably, the "body of Louise has not been found" and therefore the accused is being tried for a murder that is based in part on speculation, not entirely upon factual evidence. Here is the reported testimony of Louise Bell's mother at the trial,

> She had got up out of bed about 6 am on January 5 last year and found Louise missing. She noticed some damage to the wire screen and the curtain and window of Louise's room were open.
>
> Mrs Bell said the previous night Louise and her sister Rachel had showered and gone to bed about 8:30 pm.
>
> She and her husband watched TV, turned it off about 10:00 pm and she went to the girls' bedroom. Rachel was

> asleep, but Louise was awake. She told Louise to shut the curtains, then went to bed.
>
> Mrs Bell said nothing disturbed her during the night. The door from her bedroom to the hallway had been open, as had been the door from the hallway to the girls' room.
>
> Next morning she got up about 6am to bring in the milk. "I looked into the girls' room. I saw Louise was missing. I went to check the lounge." Mrs Bell said she noticed some damage to the wire screen and the curtain and window were open.[67]

Mrs Bell has provided a factual, rather than speculative account. These details can contribute to a crime reconstruction. Details which are not useful for a crime reconstruction include, for example, the "last known photograph" of Louise "taken by a camera given to Louise for Christmas."[68] The photograph itself is useful for it provides a visual clue as to the physical appearance of the missing girl at the time she was last seen alive, but that she was given the camera which captured the photograph as a gift for Christmas is not information of relevance to the detective. It would be if one could determine the gift was given by the criminal Other but it was a gift from her family.

[67] Annette Holden and Jim Kernahan, "The Night My Louise Vanished," *The News,* 12 November 1984, p. 3.
[68] Annette Holden and Jim Kernahan, "The Night My Louise Vanished," *The News,* 12 November 1984, p. 3.

Another example of speculative evidence is offered by Mr Bell who claims that to "his knowledge, Louise never went out at night alone." Mr Bell is unable to offer definitive proof that Louise has never left her bedroom in the middle of the night on any previous occasion. The girl *might* have previously, unbeknownst to her father, gone out alone. There is, notably, no proof to suggest she had either. A photograph of Louise is passed around by the jury, and witnesses assert that she "got on very well with the rest of her family" and "was very shy in the presence of people who were strangers" and that school "formed a very important part" of her life. These statements made by witnesses are also subjective. This is not to say they are untrue however, but, by contrast, testimony such as "at the time of her disappearance Louise was about 4 ft 6 inches or 4 ft 7 in, fairly slight build and weighed about 38-40 kg" or that she "attended Hackham West Primary School" are able to be proven.[69]

Where a subject is missing, or dead, others speak on his or her behalf. Others construct the identity of the victim through testimony based on observation of the victim, or a relationship to the victim. At a crime scene, can the dead or missing speak directly to us? Can the detective reading the crime scene mediate the gap that exists between the living and the dead, or missing? A body can signify, through the narrative of wounds or biological data collected by forensic scientists but what does the location where the victim was last seen alive signify? Colin Davis examines this question of mediating the gap between the living and dead through the work of De Man, Levinas and Agamben. He writes,

[69] Ibid.

> Death does not suspend our expectation, or our hope that those who have gone may nevertheless speak to us in some way. Their words would come to us from an alterity more radical than that of the living other; though the danger, of course, is that what the dead say may only be the projections of what we want to hear.[70]

The problem identified by Davis in attempts to mediate the gap between the living and the dead, is that they do not inhabit the same sphere of reality. The crime scene does signify. It does, to some degree, speak on behalf of the dead or missing, but the process of translation is flawed and fraught because the "dead may have much to say, but their words are a fiction created by those who speak in their place."[71] There are rules for mediating the gap between the detective and the missing girl. Only the body of the girl can speak on her own behalf (dead or alive), but in her absence the *evidence* communicates. In *Last Seen Alive* I give this evidence a literal voice, but never actually reveal the identity of the woman speaking.

**The Stories of the Crime Scene**

There are many storytellers involved in narrating the crime. Each has a version of the story of the crime to tell from their own perspective or position of interest. Family of a victim may tell a story different to that of close friends of the victim because each experienced the victim differently. How I was with my closest friends as a girl was different to how I was with my parents because I

[70] Colin Davis, "Can the Dead Speak to Us? De Man, Levinas and Agamben," in *Culture, Theory and Critique,* Vol 45.1 (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 77–79 (p. 78).
[71] Davis, p. 84.

enact different facets of my personality and identity for each. Each provides me with a mirror in which I can construct myself as how I wish to be seen in their eyes. I probably don't slather on make-up and fuss with my hair to eat dinner with my parents in the way that I might make that added effort with my appearance for a boy I have a crush on. My parents, closest friends, and boy-crush could potentially offer contrasting witness testimony about me in a court of law. The detective aims to deliver the definitive true account based upon evidence and proven facts. The detective also acts as an intermediary between the crime scene and the media in the story of Louise Bell. The media are then intermediaries between the detective and the public. The story of the crime is filtered through two subjective layers of storytelling: the detective sharing the 'facts' deemed appropriate for public consumption, and the media making a story of the facts they feel the public will want to read.

To illustrate the ways in which the figure of the detective narrates the crime scene and ongoing investigation, on 20 January 1983, *The Advertiser* reported that, "Det-Supt Edwards said that as a result of a communication from a man, it was believed that Louise was being held at an address in the Adelaide area." The public are not given the specifics of the "communication." Rather the detective asserts, "'I can't be more specific than that because of the nature of enquiries being undertaken.'"[72] The narrative of the crime is privileged information, intended for a different audience from the reader of the newspaper. The detective's role is to catch criminals, and deliver them into custody, along with a narrative of a crime which is built upon the foundations of evidence. This is done in preparation for the performance of the competing

[72] Kym Tilbrook, "Louise in Adelaide area, police believe," *The Advertiser,* 20 January 1983, p. 3.

crime narratives by lawyers both for and against the accused in the court of law, where story is intended for yet another audience. It becomes a performance for the delegated jurors and presiding judge charged with the task of determining which version of the story (prosecution team or defense team) is most likely the true version.

In *The Advertiser* on 26 November 1983 an article on the arrest of a suspect for the abduction and murder of Louise Bell appears, with a photograph of "Detective Senior Constable P T Madden escorting the arrested man." The criminal is being delivered into custody, and the detective fronts a press conference in order to offer a story for the public. A "senior detective on the case, Detective Sergeant G I Lawrie, told a press conference the enquiry had been one of the 'most intense and prolonged investigations undertaken by SA Police.'" This same detective goes on to reveal that the "arrested man had first been interviewed three days after Louise disappeared."[73] The detective 'finds' the criminal, his necessary Other, through interviewing suspects as well as gathering evidence.

On 9 October 2011 the *Sunday Mail* ran a front page story about the re-opening of the Louise Bell investigation, revealing another suspect under investigation. The report states that police had "questioned a man [...] in connection with the murder" but once again, the detective edits the text of the crime narrative for the public by withholding the identity of the suspect "for legal reasons." What is revealed is that the man "has been a suspect in the case for two decades, living two streets from the Bell house, in Meadow Way" and that the "backyard of the man's house and a shed were excavated in 1991. The

[73] Robert Ball, "Louise Bell: Man in Court," *The Advertiser,* 26 November 1983, p. 1.

floors of two bedrooms were also dug up as part of the search, which failed to find any evidence."[74] It is the role of the detective to perform an *exhaustive* search for evidence.

Writing on the subject of anxiety and architecture in modern culture, Anthony Vidler suggests that the process of crime scene investigation itself actually exhausts space. He does this by reading Lacan's essay on Edgar Allen Poe's "The Purloined Letter,"

> Poe's spatial field of crime scenes is, in a similar sense, three-dimensional; both the map constructed by the police search and the map of the displaced, purloined letter are construed in space and time [...] The poetics of crime and its revelation transform the geometrical space of rational detection into a knot of abyssal proportions.[75]

In Poe's story the purloined letter is hidden in plain sight, but remains undetected despite an exhaustive search for it until the detective finds it, "in full view hanging from the mantelshelf" for he has already deduced that the evidence was placed "in full view so as to hide it from those who would think it hidden."[76] Similarly the detective investigating the case of Louise Bell reveals a suspect was living near the Bell home, also hidden in plain view. Lacan describes three gazes at work in Poe's detective story illustrating his point with "the technique legendarily attributed to the ostrich when it seeks

[74] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *Sunday Mail,* 9 October 1983, p. 1.
[75] Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space.Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture,* (Masachusetts: MIT Press, 2001), p. 128.
[76] Vidler, p. 126.

shelter from danger [...] as it is here among three partners, the second believing himself invisible because the first has his head stuck in the sand, all the while letting the third calmly pluck his rear."[77]

In the story of Louise Bell, the detective is calmly awaiting his opportunity to pluck the rear of the suspect who believes himself to be invisible (assuming the community and police have their heads stuck in the sand). The detective thinks he has his man in full view but lacks the evidence to charge him for the specific crime of abduction and murder of Louise Bell. Like the purloined letter, the suspect is in the 'right' place from the detective's point of view.

In *Last Seen Alive* the character of Me refers to a suspect hidden in full view of the student body of her school studying geography. I create a fictional teacher, based on the real suspect whose house was searched in 2011, and who is arrested for the abduction and murder Louise Bell in November 2013. I explore the ways in which the teacher reveals his guilt in subtle ways that only make sense in hindsight. For the character of Me her teacher is simply a figure standing in the periphery of her vision as her main focus is upon a student called James whom she has a crush on. It has never crossed her mind that her geography teacher might be a predator because he has been successful at hiding in plain sight. His symbolic role of teacher obscured his real, that he is actually a predatory criminal who abducts and murders children.

[77] Lacan, *Ecrits,* p.10.

**Follow the Evidence**

The phrase 'follow the evidence' is key in determining the narrative for a crime reconstruction. There is no place for intuition unless it can be backed up with evidence. A court of law is a particular kind of theatre in which stories told by prosecution and defense teams compete for validation by the jury and judge. The truth is weeded out through a process of debate, qualifying statements, expert testimonies, cross examination, and scrutiny of evidence by independent experts. A detective prepares a crime reconstruction for the prosecution team, who decide whether the narrative concluded from the evidence will be competitive in the court of law up against the defense team's version of events. If confident the story can compete, the prosecution team then make choices as to how to deliver it as a story for the audience of the jury and judge. I am accessing the crime reconstruction presented in the courtroom through the fragmentary narrative written by court reporters. As I read their reports, I am attempting to follow the evidence. Evidence is, however, easily translated into a variety of meanings and stories.

Evidence has the potential to form a picture, in the Lacanian sense of the word. That is, to *lure* the eye into seeing a *representation*, something that *mimics* the very thing the eye is desiring to see. Not just at a superficial level, for "it is not in this dialectic between the surface and that which is beyond that things are suspended," but at the deeper level in which a subject is "entirely caught up in this imaginary capture. He maps himself in it."[78] Which is to say that the evidence can be read incorrectly, for the viewer, in seeing a picture

[78] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 107.

within the gathered evidence, can see a picture which compels the viewer "to lay down his gaze."[79] To explain this further, Lacan writes,

> The painter gives something to the person who must stand in front of his painting which, in part at least, of the painting, might be summed up thus—*You want to see? Well, take a look at this!* He gives something for the eye to feed on, but he invites the person to whom this picture is presented to lay down his gaze there as one lays down one's weapons.[80]

Evidence, handled incorrectly, or interpreted and manipulated into a compelling story can result in a deceptive relaxation of the discriminating gaze of the detective who must follow the evidence where it leads. Following Lacan's lead, the evidence is more likely to result in an expressionistic painting, than a realist one. It does not allow the eye to relax the gaze, rather it challenges the eye to look deeper and see that which lies beyond the surface.

Soil, and silt, and corrosive chemicals are presented during the trial as key evidence. The jury are told that "estuarine silt found on the soles of a pair of" the suspect's shoes "could have come from the Onkaparinga river" and that "similar silt had been found on the pyjama top worn by Louise Bell the night she disappeared."[81] How the evidence is presented becomes a picture which asks the viewer to lay down their gaze and relax. The newspaper report paints a

[79] Lacan, p. 109.
[80] Lacan, p. 101.
[81] Graham Hunter, "Accused denies any knowledge of Louise Bell abduction," *The Advertiser,* 7 December 1984, p. 14.

picture informing the reader that the accused admits "he might have had access to flesh burning chemicals" through his work. Later in the article, the more accurate representation of what the accused has said is offered in which the accused denies he "told a jail inmate that a chemical mixture could dissolve a body." The fact that the accused had access to corrosive chemicals at his workplace has been narrated as the accused having access to *flesh burning* chemicals that could dissolve a body which the accused denies having spoken about to an inmate. What was *not* said by the accused is used as the more powerful image that competes for attention. A denial by the accused is crafted into an image of the missing girl's body being dissolved in "flesh burning chemicals" by the accused.[82]

An example of evidence being subjected to debate and scrutiny is reported during the trial as the jury "adjourned early yesterday because of a 'problem' with the transcript of an alleged record of interview" with the accused. As a detective read out his transcript in court, the QC and Judge presiding over the case "said the transcript did not accord with a copy he had been given."[83] Here the gaze is engaged, seeking the truth behind the picture of the evidence as presented.

**Entering the Real of the Mystery**

The detective must enter the real in order to find the missing child and bring them back into the symbolic order. In the context of a criminal investigation entering the real is entering a mystery which needs to be solved. Lacan suggests that this is also the task of a subject in psychoanalysis, that "the

[82] Annette Holden, "Geesing 'had access to chemicals,'" *The News,* 7 December, 1984, p 17.
[83] Graham Hunter, "'Problem' in Bell Case," *The Advertiser,* 15 November, 1984, p. 12.

subject is there to rediscover *where it was*" which is "the real" and "there is only one method of knowing that one is there, namely to map the network" of signifiers.[84] The detective is similarly entering the real through mapping the crime scene, and collecting evidence and information which become the network of signifiers of the crime. The mapping process that Lacan describes for an analyst navigating the real, is similar to that of the crime scene investigation and reconstruction process, in that one "goes back and forth over one's ground, one crosses one's path, one cross-checks it always in the same way."[85]

The question for the detective is, where is the real in the crime scene? "The real" Lacan says, "is that which always comes back to the same place,"[86]a place that the thinking subject cannot enter, a place the subject avoids at a conscious level yet constantly returns to unconsciously, demonstrated in the act of repetition. The real is *not* the act of repetition itself. The real always "eludes us," it is that which "always lies behind the automaton" (act of repetition).[87] An analyst would be asking, where does the crime reveal its act of repetition? What in the crime scene is standing between the detective and the real, where the missing child is? The bedroom window. This is the origin for the encounter with the real. The window is open, it may have been forced open but "tests by the technical services section on the circumstances of the screen's removal were 'still inconclusive'" and remained so.[88] The window itself holds answers that elude the detective. It is a significant gap in the narrative for the crime reconstruction. The window may or may not have been forced open by a

[84] Lacan, *Écrits,* p. 45.
[85] Lacan, p. 45
[86] Lacan, p. 49.
[87] Lacan, p. 53.
[88] Robert Ball, "Doorknock 'useful' in hunt for Louise," *The Advertiser,* 11 January 1983, p. 6.

criminal. It *may* have been forced open by the missing girl. Without the body of the missing girl, either dead and signifying clues, or alive and able to answer the question, there can be no definitive answer. Having collected and interrogated the evidence I have found in my analysis of the newspaper articles I turn my attention to the absent child who is assumed abducted and murdered, questioning this assumption. In the next chapter I examine the role of the body in the story of Louise Bell and demonstrate the ways in which a corporeal presence is conjured as a phantasy.

# *Chapter Four: The Conjuring of the Absent Body as Present*

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In this chapter I look at how the absent body of Louise Bell is conjured as present by newspaper reports. In these reports her assumed murder is presented as a fact despite the lack of definitive evidence to uphold this narrative. "We must find her body, say parents," is the sub-heading below the front page story on the accused, Raymond John Geesing, being "found guilty of the abduction and murder of schoolgirl Louise Bell."[89] I have argued that the body is the key piece of evidence required to complete an accurate crime reconstruction. What evidence is there to indicate that the missing body is now deceased? A missing child signifies an absent *live* body, but over time, the ongoing absence of the girl begins to signify the presence, somewhere unknown, of a *dead* body. By the end of the Geesing's trial the presence of the dead body is well established and the story is no longer about the search for a missing girl, but a search for her remains. Time passing is the active force of transformation upon the living girl becoming deceased in the story of her mysterious disappearance. In *Last Seen Alive* a key visual text is literally footage of time passing in places once inhabited by Ellen. Time itself erodes the status of the body of the missing girl as a living entity and relegates her alive-ness to being a memory of a time now passed.

The absent body of Louise is conjured as present in the newspapers through the use of a signifying chain of objects that *suggest* the presence of a

[89] Tom Menzies, "We must find her body, say sad parents," *The News,* 14 December 1984, p. 1.

body. I look at how these objects presented as evidence are used to form a picture that can deceive or lure the viewer into seeing a murdered child. I look at the role of the crime scene photographs in establishing an empty stage upon which the drama of a crime has played out. The detective must determine who the players were in this drama, avoiding the temptation of speculation and phantasy to inform the narrative. I map the geography of the story narrated through the newspaper articles and follow in the footsteps of the victim in order to understand the movement of her body through time and space leading up to the commission of the crime.

**The Search for the Body**

By February 1984 the narrative in the newspaper reports conjure a deceased body to be found as police "seeking clues to the whereabouts of Louise Bell's body yesterday conducted a second search near the Onkaparinga River at Noarlunga. Nothing was found." The report goes on to explain that the "site was targeted [...] following forensic tests on recovered clothing which Louise was believed to have been wearing when she disappeared." The clothing is the first piece of physical evidence to speak directly to the body of the missing girl. It comes, in effect, from the abyss, bearing traces of "soil and vegetation"[90] similar to that of the targeted search area. More clues speak directly to or of, the missing body. During the trial of Geesing a witness spoke of receiving a phone call from the abductor, who among other things, told her "she should tell police they would find the girl's earrings under a broken brick on a corner of Beach and South roads" and the police did find the earrings there. They were

[90] Robert Ball, "Police hunt Noarlunga area again for Louise Bell case," *The Advertiser*, 3 February 1984, p. 3.

identified by the parents as belonging to Louise. These items become the evidence of a body that has been murdered and hidden by the accused. This is how the absent body is conjured as present. They are like an architectural drawing placed on a table which represents a space designed to accommodate a body while not actually including the body. Paul Carter, in writing about how place is created beyond the lines on a map or drawing asks, "how does a two-dimensional design drawn on a page become the basis of a building?" He proposes that a building is a dynamic space activated by the movement and performance of bodies which traverse through it, or inhabit it. He asks how does "this act of translation occur *in the absence of a mediating body?*"[91] How does a drawing provide the map for creating a dynamic place given the absence of active bodies which play an integral role in the creation of place? Similarly, how are objects translated into a body now deceased, and hidden somewhere?

These objects *signify* the body of the missing girl. The signifiers are read into an intersubjective relationship in which the body is conjured as present in the spaces between the objects. Logic dictates that these objects *equal* the body of the missing girl. These objects are accorded a certain power to represent the missing girl because they belong to an intersubjective chain that operate in the symbolic order *as* the missing girl. In his seminar on "The Purloined Letter" Lacan theorises "the *insistence* of the signifying chain" arguing the "oblique imaginary means the *symbolic* takes hold in even the deepest recesses of the human organism."[92] The objects speak of a body which *should be* in its place, but is not. Its place is in the clothing itself. That the body is not in the clothing suggests something is wrong; hence the influence of the "imaginary effects"

[91] Paul Carter, *Dark Writing: Geography, Performance, Design,* p. 3.
[92] Lacan, *Écrits,* p. 11.

which suggest a crime has been committed. The missing girl has been abducted and murdered for these pieces of clothing which are "related to the symbolic chain that binds them and orients them"[93] around an empty bedroom with an open window where the girl was last seen alive. *Last Seen Alive* presents a missing girl through symbolic remnants left behind in the wake of her disappearance.

The crime scene, Henry Bond argues, "is a rarefied space in which the banal is almost completely eradicated" due to the powerful impact the presence of a dead body has as it "redefines the space and reconfigures the status of everything—or everything *else*—in the room."[94] I liken the crime scene to a space in which a drama has played out, and the actors (victim and predator) are currently missing. It is their movements the detective is attempting to determine. However, the residue is all that remains to photograph, map and collect trace evidence from but, as Bond points out, "rarely" is the crime scene actually "*experienced.*"[95]

Photographs taken by photo journalists, Bond argues, "are often defined by their distance from the site itself." He proposes that "their vagueness and generic quality, actually creates a useful space from where the *news story*—in the form of speculation and journalistic musings—can emerge."[96] The way a photograph is taken directly affects the reading of it. Photo journalism can result in a picture which manipulates viewers to relax their gaze and see a story in the frame which may be highly subjective. What distinguishes a photograph of an empty girl's bedroom with an open window as signifying something is

[93] Lacan, p. 11.
[94] Bond, *Lacan at the Scene,* p. 4.
[95] Bond, p. 11.
[96] Lacan, p. 11.

out of place? Specifically out of place is the occupant of the bedroom. The photographer attempts to capture the absent body in photographs of the empty bedroom. As a means by which to document evidence found at a crime scene photographs should be taken in such a way that "anyone" can "return to the crime scene and place the item" of physical evidence "in the same location and orientation that it was originally discovered."[97] A frame edits that which is represented by default. It is a selection of a larger whole, and guides the eye to view at the same angle as the camera lens at the time the photograph was taken.

In a crime scene it is not for the photographer to designate a hierarchy of meanings or importance to any particular object, but rather to attempt to document the whole from the perspective that *everything* is potentially important or meaningful. In this empty bedroom, where might the body have once been? What journey did the body take from the bed to the open window? Are there any clues among the objects in the photograph of the room that helps determine this journey taken by the body?

I do not have access to the crime scene photographs. Instead I construct imaginary images of the crime scene. Coverage of the court case in the newspapers assist me in building an idea of how the body of the girl left the bedroom. Instructions for crime scene photographers return to the idea of context and spatial relationships, "[t]ake relational photos to show the relationship between an item of evidence and other items in the scene" and "put the crime scene in a context regarding the area and its relationship to nearby areas" and "photograph from the perspective of any witness, from their

[97] Chisum and Turvey, *Crime Reconstruction. Second Edition,* p. 160.

height and angle."[98] The photograph is a stand-in eye for the detective who is attempting to construct the narrative of what happened.

A woman living near the Bell house gave testimony that she received an anonymous phone call from a man claiming to be the abductor. He "made three points which he said would show he was not a crank caller."[99] The man allegedly said, "any girl who wanted to run away wouldn't climb out a window because it would be too noisy" and "the bedspread would have been pushed to one side, or down" and finally that the fly screen "had been eased out—stretched—not pushed from the inside; and that wire (tent) frames outside the window had been removed to avoid making noise."[100] The caller presents narratives which I can use for creating my imaginary crime scene photographs of an empty bedroom with an open window and fly screen removed. He places the body in the empty spaces of the photographs and suggests a forced exit of the girl as opposed to a willing exit by the girl. As mentioned previously, the caller also offers specific objects for the police to find, instructing the woman to "tell police they would find the girl's earrings under a broken brick on a corner of Beach and South roads."[101]The police found the earrings there. Police also retrieved "a pyjama top found in the front garden of a house near the Bell home" on which they ran "forensic tests" which confirmed it had "been worn by Louise on the night she disappeared."[102]

Using the information the caller offers I imagine myself into the body of Louise attempting to understand and experience the crime scene as a drama

[98] Chisum and Turvey, p. 161.
[99] Graham Hunter, "Man rang to say he had Louise, woman tells court," *The Advertiser,* 20 November, 1984, p. 31.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Tom Menzies, "Murder Arrest. Police Wait on Louise Search," *Sunday Mail,* 27 November 1983, p. 1.

that unfolded, the result of which is that her body was removed from the bedroom. I sit on my own bed, in my pyjamas, and imagine an abductor climbing through the bedroom window and disabling me. How does he do that? How does he manage to remove me from the room without waking up a sister who sleeps in the bed opposite? I probably didn't scream, kick, struggle or make enough noise to wake her up. Perhaps he subdued me with a drug? Chloroform in a handkerchief? I can probably rule chloroform out as Geesing testified at trial that, "he was positive he did not have access to chloroform."[103] I am taken through the window which is already open, the fly screen removed. Did I remember to shut the curtains? Louise's mother told her "to shut the curtains."[104] Did she? Did I? Did my abductor remove it as I slept? Was I still asleep when I was carried out the window? What time of the night is it when I am taken, that nobody seems to notice? A witness, Brian Riddle, "told the court he had delivered milk to the Bell house about 5:30 am on 5 January, but had not noticed any tear in the fly-wire screen on the children's bedroom window"[105] which faces onto the street. Was she taken just before 6:00 am when her mother "got up [...] to bring in the milk"?[106]

I take photographic images of the local area to provide myself with a visual map of places linked to the crime I am studying. This exercise is my way of re-creating the symbolic order, or world of the story of Louise Bell's mysterious disappearance. If I put these photographs and video footage of locations linked to the case I am studying on a table and move them about, what story emerges?

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[103] Annette Holden, "Geesing 'had access to chemicals,'"*The News,* 7 December, 1984, p. 17.
[104] Annette Holden, and Jim Kernahan, "The Night My Louise Vanished," 12 November 1984, p. 2.
[105] Graham Hunter, "Police think I'm bad, Geesing allegedly said," *The Advertiser,* 14 November, 1984, p. 47.
[106] Annette Holden, and Jim Kernahan, "The Night My Louise Vanished," 12 November 1984, p. 2.

I drive to Meadow Way in Hackham West and park outside the house where Louise lived in 1983.[107] I walk the short distance to the primary school she attended, and then walk the local area imagining where Louise might have played, or spent time.[108] My photographs and video footage are of empty spaces into which I could imagine the body of the missing girl. I extend my visual map to include the landscape of my own girlhood, lived in close proximity. Into this more personal visual map I am creating, I project my fictional character of Ellen. I construct her symbolic order, the world of her story, based upon my own memories of inhabiting the landscapes which Louise also, most likely, inhabited.

Michel de Certeau, in his study of the culture of everyday life posits that "the viewer reads the landscape of his childhood in the evening news," and suggests that a reader "insinuates into another person's text" their own desires, memories, experiences, appropriating the text and making it their own in some way.[109] Where am I in this story? In this set of images of places and spaces that Louise and I have both passed through? *Last Seen Alive* is not a crime reconstruction so much as an exercise in exploring how Louise has become a ghostly figure haunting the spaces and memories of my own girlhood. I am, figuratively speaking, exchanging my own body for hers as I create a fictional girl called Ellen, and a fictional crime that has taken place. This fiction is itself haunted by the ghost of the story of Louise Bell.

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[107] Geoff de Luca, "Classic case SA's saga of anguish," *The News,* 12 April,1985, p. 11. There is a photograph of the Bell home on Meadow Way which I used as a reference point for identifying the right house.

[108] Annette Holden, and Jim Kernahan, "The Night My Louise Vanished," *The News,* 12 November 1984, p. 2. There is mention of Louise attending Hackam West Primary School.

[109] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice Of Everyday Life,* (Berkely, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1984), p. xxi.

I work towards directing the audience gaze away from the real Louise Bell and onto Ellen. I create *Last Seen Alive* at the intersection where my private memory meets Louise's public memory-as-news-text. I provide the reader and viewer with a visual map of the world from which Ellen has gone missing. This is the same geography from which Louise has gone missing. I invite my audience to look at a phantasy body which mediates the gap between the story of Louise and my own story. This phantasy body is also a memory of a body that once was, represented only as image, never present as a live body. Finally I give my audience a set of objects that they can sit with, as a detective might, attempting to make sense of how they all fit together to tell a story about a missing girl.

**From Inside the Body of the Victim**

Lacan writes, "I see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides."[110] This quality of being looked at from all sides is the gaze into which we are all born. Not a gaze that relates directly to the organ of the eye, so much as the ways in which the world itself creates a stage upon which we are all subjected to being part of a larger spectacle. This is the gaze we feel upon us, "[i]n our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage [...] this is what we call the gaze."[111] I imagine myself into the body of the missing girl and attempt to identify the source of a specific, predatory gaze which is watching. Was this embodied predatory gaze in the bushes along the path leading from the primary school to

[110] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 72.
[111] Lacan, p. 72.

the front doorstep of her house on Meadow Way? Was it standing outside the bedroom window night after night? Or does it exist on the horizon, the outer limits of the girl's vision? This embodied gaze is her encounter with the real waiting to happen. "The world is all-seeing, but it is not exhibitionistic—it does not provoke our gaze. When it begins to provoke it, the feeling of strangeness begins too."[112] I liken this feeling of strangeness described by Lacan as the unconscious sensation of knowing one is being watched by an unseen eye.

The embodied gaze of the predator, which heralds or announces an approaching encounter with the real, carries with it the abyss into which the victim will disappear from view. This is the abyss into which the victim is taken out of the spectacle of the all-seeing world and hidden. There is a direct line being sought by the detective, between the body of the victim and the gaze of the predator. This line maps out a "point-by-point correspondence of two unities in space" and results in a "mapping of space, not sight" as such.[113] The victim may be blind to this predatory gaze. There may be an image which constructs itself between her and the predator, functioning as a screen between the victim-to-be and the real of the abyss that she will be pulled into. This gaze upon her may not *feel* predatory. It may feel loving, affectionate or appreciative.

It is the role of the detective to draw this line which maps the point-by-point of correspondence between the girl and the predator who was watching her. The problem with the line is that it exists in the fluid dynamics of space both within and outside the identified crime scene. The line cannot be fixed in

[112] Lacan, p. 75.
[113] Lacan, p. 86.

place. It moves in response to the movement of the bodies of the victim and predator. Anthony Vidler suggests, "[o]bjects can be presented in the courtroom, but spaces have to be imagined."[114] Crime takes place in three dimensions, "the poetics of crime and its revelation transform the geometrical space of rational detection into a knot of abyssal proportions," opening up the void into the real which always eludes, always exists on the horizon, in the liminal spaces that we can only imagine, and not inhabit or know.[115] This line exists between the victim and predator, but it cannot be drawn without the body of the victim, brought back into the symbolic order for the detective to truly understand the way in which the victim inhabited the now-crime-scene/s.

In order to help the jury "to understand better locations mentioned in evidence, as well as the complex evidence of movements" presented in court by witnesses, a tour was arranged of the Hackham West area with police escort.[116] The jury must experience for themselves the literal spaces and places linked to the crime reconstruction presented in court. In writing about the act of walking, Michel de Certeau suggests that space itself is constructed and created, it "affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it 'speaks.'"[117] Walking places the walker "below the thresholds at which visibility begin,"[118] allowing them to see the whole and read it as a text. It offers a different perspective, "it is a spatial acting-out of the place"[119] in which the act of walking "selects and fragments the space traversed; it skips

[114] Vidler, *Warped Space. Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture,* p. 123.
[115] Vidler, p. 127.
[116] Graham Hunter, "Bell jury to view locations mentioned in murder trial," *The Advertiser,* 22 November 1984, p. 35.
[117] de Certeau, p. 99.
[118] de Certeau, p. 93.
[119] de Certeau, p. 98.

over links and whole parts that it omits."[120] My decision to follow in the footsteps of Louise is an attempt to inhabit the space according to her mapping of it. It is entering a space and letting go of my own internal compass or guidance system, and overriding my own impulses to walk in directions according to my own desires. How did Louise inhabit space and time creating meaningful places to her, as opposed to how did I inhabit the same space and create meaningful places to me?

As the jurors walk in the well-trodden pathways of Louise they step into places that,

> recall or suggest phantoms (the dead who are supposed to have disappeared) that still move about, concealed in gestures and in bodies in motion [...] they create in the space itself that erosion of nowhere that the law of the other carves out within it.[121]

This exploration of place through the footsteps of the victim leads to the final destination, the location where Louise was last seen alive. The journey taken leads back to the bedroom where the window is open, the fly screen removed. If the window in Louise's bedroom is *always locked* at night, the simple act of finding the window open becomes an encounter with the real. It renders the place unstable and dangerous, unknown and vulnerable. The inescapable question arises for the jury, for the detective, for myself, *why was the window open?* What part did the body of the missing girl play in it being opened?

[120] de Certeau, p. 101.
[121] de Certeau, p. 105.

**The Darkly Written Body Climbing Through a Window**

My work engages in a practice of dark writing, which Paul Carter suggests "is the discourse of the sublime" of place. I map memory and place through a crime narrative of a child abduction. In the absence of her body to speak on its own behalf, I write my own body into the landscape of the crime narrative. "Dark writing alludes to the bodies that go missing in the action of representation."[122] I look at my own girlhood, through the spaces co-inhabited and traversed with another girl who is both real and imaginary to me. Ellen is the only body seen in *Last Seen Alive,* but is it also the body of Me? The darkly written map exists beyond and despite the lines drawn by cartographers. Every space we inhabit, or pass through is a multiplicity of histories, memories, and stories. The missing girl I conjure in *Last Seen Alive* is not quite autobiographical but not entirely fictional. Rather it is "the trace of a body," a body which "starts to form" when the reader is "induced to inhabit the gesture of another, and through that a personal history as it has been played out in the surroundings of the life."[123]Ellen is the trace of my own body as a girlhood phantasy of being a blonde girl (instead of brunette). I do not want my audience to look directly upon the image of myself, but rather to see a fictional girl who could be any girl. This fictional girl is darkly written and erases the representation of both Louise and myself in the visual map of locations we both inhabited.

Colin Davis suggests, "by succumbing to the fiction that the dead may speak, we give voice to the haunting within ourselves, which ensures that we

[122] Carter, *Dark Writing,* p. 228.
[123] Carter, p. 233.

are also deprived of our own voice."[124] Louise was never restored to her family and therefore I can only invite my audience through an open window in a girl's bedroom to fall down the rabbit hole of the abyss of an unsolved mystery.

Returning to the article of October 2011 whereby the *Sunday Mail* ran a front page story on the police re-opening the investigation, the report advises of advances in "forensic technology, particularly DNA testing" which "may reveal (the) killer."[125] The article goes on to explain that "forensic evidence found at the abduction scene and other locations will be subjected to new forensic testing," which "can extract a DNA profile from just a few cells of skin or sweat left on an object."[126] DNA is the ultimate tool of materiality where the (absent) body is concerned. DNA evidence speaks to the very heart of a type of Lacanian 'symbolic order', that of the body itself, of the minute, nameable parts that form the biological structure of the corporeal entity. DNA evidence is the residue left behind by the body. All that is left to speak on behalf of the body, if only to say, yes there was once a person who existed.

Each of us leaves such traces of our bodies everywhere we go. In criminology this is referred to as Locard's exchange principle, that any action "of an individual, and obviously, the violent action constituting a crime, cannot occur without leaving a mark. What is admirable is the variety of these marks. Sometimes they will be prints, sometimes simple traces, and sometimes stains."[127] Stripped of identity and subjectivity we all become merely *evidence* of a human being, and in such an evidential state we all exist in the symbolic order. A blood stain acts as a symbolic stand-in for a missing body in the

[124] Davis, p. 79.
[125] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *The Sunday Mail,* 11 October 2011, p. 1.
[126] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *The Sunday Mail,* 11 October 2011, p. 5.
[127] Chisum and Turvey, *Crime Reconstruction. Second Edition,* p. 35.

symbolic order. A piece of clothing covered in soil tells the story of an interaction with an Other, and of places the body has been. The detective's job is to name those places and catalogue the evidence in a sequential order, to forge links between particles, stains and marks which point to a tangible body which also has a name. My task has been to give this evidence a *voice.* To create a fiction by which the missing can speak across the abyss of the real but I deliberately adopt a voice which is not Ellen's and in doing so suggest that Ellen may be a phantasy figure of the unnamed woman speaking. I give voice to three witnesses who attempt to speak about Ellen but end up speaking about their own fears and desires. I present a figure onscreen who might be Ellen, but might also be the character of Me who describes dressing up as Ellen and noticing that James looks at her differently

This multiplicity of voices and characters can be accounted for in Lacan's proposition that the real is "a point that the subject can approach only by dividing himself into a certain number of agencies," that, "any idea of the unity of the psyche [...] perishes there."[128] I aim for a multiplicity of voices to reflect the variety of ways in which the missing girl's body is conjured and placed in space, mapped into a story about being abducted, murdered and her body hidden. This too is the symbolic order of the story of Louise Bell. A darkly written crime reconstruction which attempts to make an invisible body visible in the spaces between objects-as-evidence and timeframes of being witnessed by others. "Writing grows dark," Carter says, "when distance is read into it."[129] The role of distance is to prevent the possibility of *possession* of or

[128] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 51.
[129] Carter, *Dark Writing,* p. 237.

an absolute knowledge of something. An unsolved crime is shrouded in fog and shadows.

The dramatic structure I use for *Last Seen Alive* is one which remains true to the unsolved mystery. The character of Me follows the story of Ellen, circling in and around the mystery whilst simultaneously navigating her own girlhood fears and desires. She fails to tell the story of Ellen for is is only her own story she can really share with an audience. Her own story is one about a secret she has kept about Ellen. This is the real for Me, and the truth that must be divulged to the audience. This secret has evolved over time into a kind of haunting of Me throughout her life by the memory of Ellen.

In Part Two I explore the question of what part the imaginary plays in the story of Louise Bell, of the ways in which fear and desire are manifest. The symbolic order determines the subjects' identities by naming them as victim, predator and detective and in the imaginary I introduce the role of ghosts and monsters in the story of Louise Bell, and in *Last Seen Alive.*

# ***PART TWO:***

## *The Imaginary*

## *"Home" Is A Haunted House*

# *Chapter Five: The Congregation of Ghosts*

In this chapter I identify the ways in which the ghosts of other missing and murdered children appear throughout the newspaper reports on Louise Bell. In his dictionary of Lacan, Dylan Evans writes, "[t]he imaginary is the realm of the image and imagination, deception and lure. [...] The principal illusions of the imaginary are wholeness, synthesis, autonomy, duality and, above all, similarity."[130] The imaginary originates in and is experienced through the subject's relationship to his or her body, or more specifically, the image of their own body which is often a fantasy. In a Lacanian sense the other missing children represent an 'imago' against which Louise is compared to and likened to. I demonstrate how the fate of Louise Bell is suggested by the positioning of her alike-ness with other child-victims. The role of the ghosts in Louise's story is to offer speculative scenarios as to what has happened to Louise.

Lacan describes his theory of the mirror stage of development as "an identification," describing it as, "the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image."[131] It is the point at which one knows one has a reflection in the mirror, that one is aware that one is visible to others and separate from others. A mirror never reflects the subject as they appear to others though. The subject is confronted by the mirror's inability to reflect back one's own image accurately. Thus, a subject learns to identify with a distorted image, and often one which is fragmented due to the limitations of representation of wholeness a mirror offers. One does not always see one's

[130] Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis,* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 84.
[131] Lacan, *Ecrits,* p. 76. Italics in original.

entire body in the mirror, often one views one's own body in segments–front view, face, side view, etc. Other people figure as mirrors in our lives too, reflecting back an image of how they see us to ourselves.

We learn to play with our own image, and in *Last Seen Alive* I use costume and make-up, as well as the settings on the digital camera to construct myself as an image, or imago, of Ellen. This fictional girl bears a likeness to my real self and it is the idea of alike-ness that I explore. I argue that over time, Louise is presented to the public in the newspaper as a girl who is always like another missing or murdered child, as though she casts no true reflection of herself in a mirror. Herself as a singular entity.

In Lacanian terms, my exploration of similarity to, and identification with Louise Bell "formulates what" I "suffer from and what" I "want to overcome" as I reveal "the very *image* that" has emerged through an analytical dialogue with the newspaper articles about Louise.[132] If Louise is haunted by those who are like her, then I am haunted by Louise who I suggest is like me. I look into a figurative mirror and see Louise instead of myself. I identify with a fantasy image of myself as a child-victim. The imaginary, with its illusions and deceptions, is the barrier to finding the real, where the truth is hidden. In this chapter I work with the ghosts of my own childhood whom I encounter through my analysis of the newspaper articles about Louise Bell's mysterious disappearance.

*Last Seen Alive* is a fictional story exploring not only girlhood, but a girlhood lived in the specific location of the city of Adelaide's southern suburbs. I have proposed that the house is the key symbol in the world of the

[132] Lacan, p. 76.

story of Louise Bell, and here I propose the city of Adelaide, constructed through a mythology where children mysteriously disappear, is the imaginary within which this symbolic house exists. The story of Louise's mysterious disappearance results in a claim that Adelaide (and its suburbs) is a "home of bizarre, sinister crimes."[133] On the topic of Adelaide "at a recent Sydney Writers Festival" discussion on "ideal cities in which to set crime fiction," panelists "agreed the most important thing is for a city to be big enough to have experienced most types of evil" and one member of the panel "reminded" the others "there is only one city that fits this bill despite its relative smallness: Adelaide, the 'city of corpses'."[134] It becomes difficult to isolate Louise Bell's story from the larger narrative of Adelaide as a city of corpses.

**Mirror, Mirror**

Lacan writes, "[f]or the total form of his body [...] appears to him as the contour of his stature that freezes it and in a symmetry that reverses it, in opposition to the turbulent movements with which the subject feels he animates it."[135] The I seen in the mirror is "precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as a subject."[136] This I is formed prior to entering the symbolic order and being inducted, through language into social interactions with others. Lacan calls this the ideal-I and it steers the ego "in a fictional direction" which the subject "must resolve, as *I,*

[133] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *Sunday Mail,* 9 October 2011, p. 5.
[134] Duffy, M. "Is Adelaide our cruellest city?" *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 30 May 2011, <http://www.smh.com.au>[accessed 30 May 2011]
[135] Lacan, p. 76.
[136] Ibid.

his discordance with his own reality."[137] In the imaginary we find the pictures of how we would like to be seen, constructed as fantasies, or "images with which the subject identifies one after the other in order to act out, as sole actor, the drama of their conflicts."[138]

In the imaginary realm one encounters fantasy, the fraudulent, and the necessary illusions that allow a subject to conceive of, and strive towards a realisation of an ideal Self based on a fantasy image [of themselves]. Memory reveals itself as unreliable, unstable and open to interpretation. In *Last Seen Alive* the character of Me is sharing memories that are unreliable, unstable and subject to fantasy. The voice of Me is disembodied, whilst the body of Ellen is never given a voice. Are they one and the same though? If so, what does this mean?

Ellen never appears as a written text, or a live, embodied performer, but rather as a figure trapped in time, a recorded image of a girl as she was in the past. I present this illusory girl as a deception. Ellen is the gap between the 'how I see myself' fantasy and the 'who I really am' reality: a forty-something brunette woman in a blonde wig pretending to be a teenage girl, relying heavily upon soft focus and over-exposure. I strive for a likeness to a teenage girl I might have been if I could have been blonde. The character of Me desires to be cast in the image of Ellen because the boy she has a crush on looks at Ellen differently from how he looks at Me. The boy's gaze finds in Ellen a picture he likes, and the character of Me refers to dressing up one day in a blonde wig and dress and being noticed by the boy. She is confronted with the revelation that the boy will always choose Ellen. Louise Bell is the Other through whom I

[137] Ibid. Italics in original.
[138] Lacan, p. 72.

navigate my girlhood fear and desire; Ellen is the vehicle by which I travel. Ellen is a substitute for both myself and Louise Bell. The use of Ellen allows me to speculate and probe the story of Louise Bell without implicating her, specifically. I use Ellen as a means by which to creatively explore the *similarities* between us.

I look at my own image in the mirror, and play with constructing Ellen. I place Ellen in the path of a predatory gaze. Ellen is bait, being dangled for the predatory gaze. I make her perform herself as an object of desire for the camera. But is she being seduced and lured, or is she the seductress, the lure? Who is holding the camera? I never reveal their identity. Ellen is a figment of my imagination, a character with no history, and no existence outside the temporality of the projected images. She is entirely constructed by the camera and the disembodied voice of Me. She is a ghost haunting the screen with her likeness to others, myself and other child-victims who are positioned as being like Louise.

**Louise and Eloise**

The newspaper articles become a type of figurative mirror showing Louise Bell accompanied by reflections of other children who are also lost in the abyss. Through Louise, the ghosts of other children lost in the abyss symbolically 'haunt' the public through the conjuring of their names, images and stories.

On 12 January 1983, six days after Louise Bell's mysterious disappearance, the first ghost is conjured, that of seven year old Eloise Worledge, also taken from her bedroom one night "seven years" ago and "not

been seen since."[139] Photographs of Louise and Eloise are displayed side by side with the heading "Similar Cases." Edwards, the detective working the Bell case, suggests, "[p]eople are pretty worried about what's happened as indeed they should be."[140] Presented as like Louise, Eloise symbolically represents a potential narrative for the fate of Louise. What happened to Eloise has possibly happened to Louise too. Eloise provides a reason for people to be worried. The cases are similar in that "Eloise disappeared after a flyscreen on the window of her room had been cut open" while "forensic tests on a flywire screen for the window through which it was believed Louise had left the house were inconclusive." The article describes, "a massive police effort since the disappearance" of Louise, and for Eloise there was "one of the most intensive investigations in Victorian police history."[141] Even the names of the girls are phonetically and etymologically similar.

Two young girls taken from their bedrooms in the middle of the night, and never seen again. Louise is no longer alone in her story. She is joined by Eloise and this coupling sets up a narrative of girls, plural, being abducted from their bedrooms. Other girls might face a similar fate. It is this idea of being *similar* to Louise that drew me to investigate what it means to be *like* her, to be like other children who disappear. While the figure of the detective is charged with the task of finding Louise, the figure of the journalist provides ways to make the story of Louise more interesting, more *affecting* for the reader by suggesting there are *more* victims than just Louise.

On 14 January 1983, *The Advertiser* ran a story about Louise Bell's picture being plastered on the back of public buses, described as "the latest

[139] Robert Ball, "Big reward to be offered," *The Advertiser,* 12 January 1983, p. 2.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Robert Ball, "Big reward to be offered," *The Advertiser,* 12 January 1983, p. 2.

move in a huge publicity bid for information about Louise." Along with posters on "one hundred" public buses, "police received 500 large yellow newspaper-style posters carrying Louise's picture" which were to be "distributed in a chain of retail stores," and twenty "billboard posters" were placed in the local community and surrounding areas. It was "the largest publicity campaign by police since the unsolved Mark Langley murder last year." The article introduces a murder victim, with whom the reader is supposedly familiar. After the introduction of the ghost of the murdered Mark Langley by an as yet unidentified murderer, the article informs that police had "no new developments or leads in Louise's case."[142] Again we are presented with Louise and an *other* whose story suggests the potential fate of Louise, as in murdered *like* Mark. The journalist draws Louise and Mark together through parallel narratives about police efforts with publicity campaigns calling for help from the public to solve the mysteries of their disappearance and, in Mark's case, unsolved murder. Mark is not missing in the abyss as Louise is. Instead he symbolically represents a speculative narrative about whether Louise has also been murdered by the same murderer? Since Mark has been murdered has Louise been murdered too?

**The Longest Shadow**

Steve Pile, in his study of the phantasmagoria of modern cities, writes that ghosts "cling to the minds of the living, like a nightmare that hangs around after waking."[143] He goes on to suggest that the dead are "the ghostly markers

[142] Robert Ball, "Louise's picture on STA buses," *The Advertiser,* 14 January 1983, p. 3.
[143] Steve Pile, *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life,* (London and Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2005), p. 132.

of loss, trauma and injustice" and are "sometimes impossible to give up."[144] The unsolved case of the disappearance of the three young Beaumont children from a popular seaside location in Adelaide in 1966 are an example. For those who live in Adelaide, such as I do, the story of the Beaumont children has become part of story of the city itself, as though these are the ghosts of Adelaide that are impossible to give up. Inevitably they appear alongside Louise Bell, as one article in 1985 opens with "[f]rom the days of the Beaumonts,"[145] and another article on Louise written in 2011 uses the phrase, "just like the infamous Beaumont abductions from Glenelg Beach."[146] Again the journalists assume those reading the articles are already familiar with the story of the missing Beaumont children.

On Australia Day, 26 January 1966, Jane, Arna and Grant Beaumont disappeared from the foreshore area of the beachside suburb of Glenelg, where crowds had gathered to celebrate. The children had caught the bus, unaccompanied by their parents. They have never been found, nor has the mystery of their disappearance been solved. The impact of their story upon the city of Adelaide has been deep and lasting. The Beaumont children symbolically cast long shadows over any and all other children who have mysteriously disappeared in the city of Adelaide.[147] Chronologically speaking, Louise Bell's story occurs as part of an ongoing story about *other* missing children missing who preceded her.

On 23 January 2010, *The Advertiser* published a story in a special lift-out section commemorating the Australia Day weekend titled, "Wake in Fright,"

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[144] Pile, p. 155.
[145] Geoff de Luca, "Classic case in SA's saga of anguish," *The News,* 12 April 1985, p. 10.
[146] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *Sunday Mail,* 9 October 2011, p. 5.
[147] There is a web site dedicated to their story at <http://www.beaumontchildren.com>[accessed 21 July 2013]

revisiting and reflecting upon the Beaumont case. "We thought ours was a safe, sunny city until the disappearance of the Beaumont children brought a dawning sense of the evil in our midst." The article is framed as a story of how the city of Adelaide lost its innocence when the Beaumont children were taken. "Adelaide still looked sunny and carefree but there was a serpent in the garden that ate away at the old feelings of a safe and secure community."[148] Pile writes that ghosts "also stand at the edges of the anxieties of the living. Ghosts appear in places where the provenance of a place is uncertain, or potentially unsettling, or even dangerous."[149] Where rational answers and logical conclusions cannot be drawn, the imaginary has taken over and left a legacy of storytelling which draws upon creative and symbolic imagery. There cannot be a story about Louise Bell which does not somehow touch upon, or reference the case of the Beaumont children for she is now interwoven into this larger narrative about a city from which children seem to disappear, never to be seen again, or like Mark Langley, are found murdered.

On 12 April 1985, *The News* published an article titled, "Classic Case in SA's Saga of Anguish" which contextualises Louise Bell's story as part of a larger story about South Australia having "a particular fear for children who disappear." References are made in the article to the Beaumont children, Kirste Gordon and Joanne Ratcliffe, who were abducted from a sporting event in the city in 1977 and have never been found, and the Truro murders where seven young women were murdered and their bodies dumped in remote areas about Truro. Featured are photographic images of the "hapless parents" of Louise

[148] Penelope DeBelle, "Wake in Fright," *The Advertiser,* 23 January 2010, SA Weekend section, p. 10.
[149] Pile, *Real Cities,* p. 162.

Bell, the police search efforts, and the Bell's home in Hackham West.[150] The photograph of the home is uncanny for it is once-familiar-now-strange. A house like any other house on the street, yet struck by tragedy.

**The Witness Who Sees Everything but Understands Nothing**

The congregation of ghosts of missing children gathers about Louise, constantly reminding the public of their failure to *see* what is going on, a failure to *comprehend* what is being witnessed. Alison Young, a criminologist, writes about the deep horror she felt in relation to the case of the abduction and murder of toddler James Bulger in the United Kingdom by two ten year old boys. The case shocked the nation, perhaps for obvious reasons as can be imagined when two children murder another child, but for Young "what is appalling about the event has to do with visibility."[151] She explains,

> there was a fascination with the visibility of the crime, the victim and the criminals, with visual images provided in abundance by the video cameras and eye-witness reports. That an abduction could take place, despite being filmed on security cameras, and witnessed by 38 witnesses, was a critical theme in the press reports. To me, there is no surprise or shock here. Terrible things happen daily, and are overheard by neighbours who do nothing, or are noticed by passers-by who do nothing. Security cameras film encounters constantly, some obviously violent, others

[150] Geoff de Luca, "Classic case in SA's saga of anguish," *The News,* 12 April 1985, p. 11.
[151] Alison Young, *Imagining Crime,* (London and Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1996), p. 111.

> simulating 'normality'. This is a condition of modernity; we all watch and listen to others, while feeling detached from the details of what we see and hear. [152]

We know how to look, but we don't know how to make meaning from what we are looking at because normal life has its own understood aesthetic. Children disappear in plain sight because their abduction does not *look* like an abduction taking place.

A woman living across the street from the Bell house spoke of her ability to see Louise and her sister at night, from her own daughter's bedroom. "It was dark outside, they had the light on, I could see straight into their room." The witness describes, "I was putting my daughter to sleep, I could hear loud music. I thought there might have been a party but it was only the two girls across the road" and she could see "the girls from the waist up."[153] The implication is that, on any night, a dangerous stranger could have "jogged past" and also seen the girls [on display].[154] At the bedroom window a tension is set up between the innocence of girlhood play taking place inside the house, and the predatory gaze which hovers outside. The bedroom window is introduced as a symbolic frame for a picture of two girls playing in their pyjamas at night. A picture presented to those outside the house.

Witness reports of last sightings of children who were abducted and/or murdered can reflect an inability to comprehend what was observed. The shock comes later, when it is revealed that what one has actually witnessed are the last moments of a person's life, or the last moments before they disappear

[152] Young, p. 112.
[153] Jim Kernahan, "Louise case: Detective 'made no formal notes'," *The News,* 9 March 1984, p. 4.
[154] Ibid.

forever. It is difficult to make sense of such horror looming because what is seen is banal. The footage captured by security cameras of the James Bulger abduction is a perfect example of the imaginary in that the surface appearance of two boys walking about with a toddler in tow is a deceptive lure for the viewer to see something quite ordinary in the image. In fact, the toddler was being abducted and would later be murdered by the two young boys. That the abduction was caught on film, and can be viewed repeatedly as a tragic failure on the part of so many witnesses to firstly comprehend, and secondly intervene or take action, amplifies the horror. (In Part Three I explore Lacan's theory of the missed encounter and the real in more depth, and how I translate this into *Last Seen Alive.*) Such footage operates symbolically as a type of haunting too. The memories of witnesses who saw something they did not fully comprehend as being significant become another type of haunting. Both ghosts reflect the deceptive lure of *likeness* to relax the gaze of the viewer. Louise and her sister looked like other children at play. James Bulger looked like a toddler in custody of two boys who might have been his older brothers. Ghosts ask the viewer to *look again, more carefully.*

As a type of evidence, witness testimony does not always categorically fit into the symbolic order for it is vulnerable to the imaginary and the phantasy. Sometimes victims *appear* to be willingly led away by dangerous strangers. The surviving family and friends are left with the unanswerable question of *why?* Why would *my* child do that? In *Last Seen Alive* I include three witness statements which describe Ellen in some way but no useful information or comprehension of what they have observed. Instead each

witness reveals information about themselves which could explain why the witness would disappear with a stranger, but not why Ellen would.

Ellen is presented in *Last Seen Alive* as a collection of images and video footage, and stories told about her by Me that speak of a hidden narrative of the predatory gaze that was watching, and that Ellen was aware of, and playing with. She appears happy and playful in the video footage but now Ellen is gone, mysteriously disappeared from her bedroom one night. There is a story hidden in these fragmentary images but can witnesses to the images find the story? As with the footage of James Bulger being led away to his death willingly, Ellen has been lead away to the abyss, possibly willingly, by a dangerous stranger. This stranger clearly had access to and had befriended Ellen for she allowed this person to film her. For those watching the images carefully, there are hints that a camera was filming Ellen at times when she wasn't aware of being filmed. The camera watches from afar as Ellen stands in a lonely car park waiting for someone who is running late, or perhaps never turns up. She is dressed up, as if ready to go to a party. Those who claim to know a victim must attempt to answer questions such as did the victim know her abductor? Did the victim actually invite the predatory gaze into her life? Was the predator someone she trusted? Or was she simply unlucky enough to be targeted by a predator as if by chance? Louise Bell, for example, was supposedly "looking forward" to a planned "picnic" and "to see the film *ET*" the day she was discovered missing.[155] There was no hint that she was planning a departure, and presumably she was not. However, the question of whether she knew her abductor, had met her abductor and felt confident to leave with

[155] Jim Kernahan, "Accused admitted killing Louise," *The News,* 9 November, 1984, p 2.

him (or her) is unanswerable. She may have been deeply asleep and drugged, then taken from her bedroom after a predator noticed her and her sister playing one night with the curtains open.

What remains invisible haunts us with torturous scenarios of the imagined fate of the victim. That the apparent 'normality' of Louise's actions and life in the moments leading up to her disappearance are revealed to hide such a tragedy of violence is why the ghosts of those children trapped in the abyss linger as a reminder or cautionary tale that what we see cannot always believe.

**The Ghosts Line Up**

In November 1983, a man was arrested for the abduction and murder of Louise Bell. Four pages of the *Sunday Mail* are dedicated to the story of the arrest on 27 November, and included is an interview with the "mother of a teenage girl, murdered in 1979." Julie Mykyta was one of several victims in the Truro murders. Mrs Mykyta suggests of Louise Bell's parents that they "have been rejecting the idea she might be dead for so long, to accept she is dead is really hard."[156] Louise is now cast alongside the tragedy of seven other young women whose bodies were found at Truro (and surrounds) in 1979. "Mrs Mykyta is president of the Victims of Crime group" and "said the Bells had been preparing themselves for almost a year" for the news of Louise's death but "they have had this time to hope, to brood, to build up all sorts of hopes" that Louise might still be alive. To accept Louise is dead is "very hard [...] without

[156] Tom Menzies, "Murder Arrest. Police Wait on Louise Search," *Sunday Mail,* 27 November 1983, p. 2.

some evidence."[157] In this article Louise is clearly presented as a body waiting to be found, a murder victim, like other murder victims such as Julie Mykyta. As previously mentioned, time itself has eroded the hope that Louise might still be alive. At the arrest of a suspect for her abduction and murder Louise is transformed into a ghost too, presumed dead.

In 2011, more ghosts appear alongside Louise Bell. Alongside "the infamous Beaumont abductions from Glenelg Beach" and "the snatching of the Ratcliffe and Gordon girls from Adelaide Oval," in 1979, mention is made of "the disappearance of Rhianna Barreau from a Morphett Vale street," in 1993.[158] Ratcliffe and Gordon disappeared before Louise, and Rhianna a decade after. As new cases of unsolved abductions and/or disappearances appear over the years, the victims are added to a growing list of names which form a congregation of ghosts. The stories attached to these names are "collectively responsible for the state's reputation as the home of bizarre, sinister crimes," the journalist suggests. At this stage in the story of Louise Bell, she is relegated to being one of multiple victims who are now part of the story of the place known as Adelaide. Louise is now affirmed in her status as a ghost haunting South Australia. Through her story, another narrative is facilitated about a mythology of place and into this narrative Louise's story has been subsumed. The article raises the possibility of new evidence leading to a potential conviction of a suspect, which "may yet provide hope of a breakthrough not just for Louise's parents, but for all South Australians."[159] Louise's story is now 'our' story (as in, South Australian residents). Louise Bell is not only who she was, but she is also an imaginary somebody that all

[157] Tom Menzies, "Murder Arrest. Police Wait on Louise Search," *Sunday Mail,* 27 November 1983, p. 2.
[158] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *Sunday Mail,* 9 October 2011, p. 5.
[159] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *Sunday Mail,* 9 October 2011, p. 5.

South Australians lay claim to knowing. She has transcended the personal (who she was) into the public (what she represents) through being a public news story. South Australia is presented, through Louise, as a place haunted with ghosts that cannot be at peace until the bodies are found and buried.

*Last Seen Alive* presents the character of Me as a witness to a story of a girl called Ellen, but over time it becomes apparent that Ellen may not exist as anything but a fantasy ghost haunting Me. The character of Me sees herself as someone like another girl whose fate is tragic, and even the witnesses who speak of Ellen cannot seem to avoid revealing the ghosts of old rejections, fears and desires that they are all haunted by. With the imaginary in *Last Seen Alive* I am asking what Ellen is to others, what she represents as a fantasy image captured in the mirror of others seeking an image to identify with. The character of Me begins to construct Ellen's victimhood as a fantasy in which the predatory gaze equates with being desirable and *not* being victimised by it amounts to rejection. It is to the predatory gaze and the use of imago for constructing the predatory gaze as a monstrous, criminal other that I turn to in the next chapter.

# *Chapter Six: Loving the Monster*

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In this chapter I compare the construction of a suspect as a criminal monster in the newspaper articles, detailing the story of Louise Bell's abduction and murder, to the mythical bogeyman, a faceless figure stealing children in the middle of the night from their beds. Until the suspect is named he appears as an identikit image, then a faceless figure, and is finally presented at trial as monstrous through an account of injuries sustained during an attack in jail which left him deformed. I compare the wild-eyed monstrous image of the suspect when found guilty of the abduction and murder of Louise Bell with the images of a clean-shaven, respectable man in stories reporting his court-ruled innocence after a successful appeal against his conviction. I demonstrate the ways in which contrasting images portray the guilt of the suspect up against the innocence of the child-victim. Despite the successful appeal and a name change, the suspect re-emerges in later news stories as a criminal monster arrested again for the molestation and abuse of his sisters. I argue that the suspect cannot shake off the illusion of his criminal monstrosity in relation to Louise Bell's abduction and murder despite the reality that in the symbolic order he was found innocent of the crime.

**Monsters at the Bedroom Window**

In many translations of the story, the bogeyman is a monster who carries naughty children away, often in a sack. For example, the Merriman-Webster online dictionary suggests the bogeyman is "a monstrous imaginary figure used

in threatening children."[160] In her study of the history of the bogeyman, Marina Warner writes,

> Child-stealers, night-raiders, cradle snatchers: they inspired a rich and sinister body of tales that had every appearance of medieval and superstitious primitiveness, but continued to be retold at the height of the Enlightenment. [...] The unfamiliar in every aspect moulds the phantom, and so, like witches, bogeys are crooked or moley or warty, or they limp or suffer other unusual physical traits[161]

Stephen Krensky asserts that bogeymen are sometimes "said to take human form"[162] and he explains that,

> Bogeymen are said to be dangerous. They are always evil, bad and hateful. [...] He is aggressive. Bogeymen do not need to know their victims. They don't need a special reason to attack. They are said to do it because they can. [...] They move silently through the underbrush or into people's bedrooms.[163]

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[160] Entry on the bogeyman, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bogeyman>[accessed 12 April 2013]
[161] Marina Warner, *No Go, the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling, and Mock,* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), p. 25.
[162] Stephen Krensky, *The Bogeyman: Monster Chronicles,* (Minneapolis: Lancer Publication Company, 2008), p. 7.
[163] Krensky, p. 8.

Krensky paints a picture of a predator who targets victims at random and takes pleasure in his actions. The story of the bogeyman is frightening, so why tell it? Why mythologise such a dreadful story? What purpose does this monster serve for a society invested in the telling of this story?

In looking at the role of monstrosity and the rhetoric of fear in society, Edward Ingebretson argues that monsters, "teach us who we are and how we are to live."[164] They are symbolic of what we are not to be or become. Krensky suggests the bogeyman is "a scary creature that doesn't fit into any neat and tidy category."[165] The bogeyman is constructed as a symbolic monstrous figure who steals naughty children away to an abyss where they are never seen again. This monster teaches us, as children, to behave otherwise we might be taken away by the bogeyman. When looking at the story in a real context in which a criminal abducts children from their bedrooms in the middle of the night, the bogeyman becomes the physical embodiment of the predatory gaze at the darkened bedroom window. This criminally monstrous figure teaches us the failure of the home to protect those inside from what dangers lurk outside. It teaches us that children are both innocent, and vulnerable to a criminal predator who takes pleasure in stealing children from their bedrooms and taking them away, never to be seen again. A child taken by the mythical bogeyman is constructed as naughty but the child taken by the unidentified criminal monster is constructed as an innocent victim.

This criminal Other represents both that which we are not to be or become, and that which children must fear just because they are children. Michael Levenson, in commenting upon the role of constructed others in

[164] Edward J. Ingebretson, *At Stake: Monsters and the Rhetoric of Fear in Public Culture,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 155.
[165] Krensky, p. 7.

society writes, "in learning how a community chooses its freaks and invents its deviants we construct a photographic negative of its social life."[166] The criminal monster becomes a symbolic negative image of the *guilty* criminal to the positive image of the *innocent* child. This figure of a criminal monster performs the radical act that transforms the positive image of the family home into the symbolic photographic negative of the home as a crime scene, a site of trauma. The criminal monster embodies the predatory gaze, and embodies the potential trauma of an encounter with the real.

The criminal monster and bogeyman offer up a symbolic place for the real to operate as a phantasy. Lacan proposes,

> The place of the real, which stretches from the trauma to the phantasy–in so far as the phantasy is never anything more than the screen that conceals something quite primary [...] The real has to be sought beyond the dream– in what the dream has enveloped, hidden from us[167]

In other words the monster becomes a convenient scapegoat upon whom the blame for why a child is suddenly missing from the family home can be projected. This monster assumes a position of power enforced through violent action of a predatory nature, whilst the child is presented as a helpless victim. Authorship of the crime is given exclusively to the criminal monster, in the way that the child is to blame if the bogeyman comes calling. The monster is an effigy upon which we can project our deepest fears; it is that something we

[166] Michael Levenson, "The Nayman of Noland," in *New Republic,* Vol. 197:1, (Washington: The New Republic 1987), p. 34.
[167] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanaluysis,* p. 60.

put between ourselves and the real, the abyss that opens up at the location where a victim is last seen alive. A criminal can be dragged into the symbolic order and dealt with in a court of law which will determine the appropriate punishment. Until the identity of the criminal is known, the monster operates as a phantasy stand-in. An Other who is not-right, not *like* the rest of society that is represented in the symbolic positive photographic image.

Nina Auerbach, writing about the role of vampires in society, argues that "no fear is only personal: it must steep itself in its political and ideological ambience, without which our solitary terrors have no contagious resonance."[168] I see monsters serving a similar role to Auerbach's vampires. Louise Bell is surrounded by ghosts of other child-victims who have been targeted by criminal monsters who steal children away. That Louise is one of many children stolen away by bogeymen-like criminals creates the contagion effect because it isn't just her story–what happened to her could, and has, happened repeatedly to other children. This makes it a problem for a community or society, not just a problem encountered by the Bell family. Where there are ghosts of child-victims, there are monsters standing behind them.Where there are innocent children, there is the threat of criminally deviant desire to become manifest in the guise of the predatory monster who hunts them. Innocence itself is framed as the lure for criminally deviant desire, in the way that naughty behaviour by children lures the bogeyman. In both cases it is the nature of the victim, being a child behaving badly or being innocent and helpless, that constructs the monster as either a bogeyman or criminal monster.

[168] Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 3.

In *Last Seen Alive* I create the presence of both mythical and criminal monsters. The character of Me talks about the monster she can hear breathing in her bedroom late at night, once the lights are turned out. As the character of Me experiences an increasing intensity of sexual awakening for the boy she has a crush on, the presence of this monster breathing in the dark of her bedroom at night escalates to such a degree that it climbs into bed with her and wakes her up. This monster in *Last Seen Alive* is a manifestation of the tensions between the forces of desire and fear acting upon the psyche of the character of Me. Her desire is what attracts this unseen bogeyman which enters her bedroom for desire is positioned as monstrous in the story of Louise Bell. Louise is presented as innocent against the man accused of her abduction and murder referred to having committed a "sinister and audacious act."[169]

The bogeyman operates within the symbolic order as another imago. Lacan suggests, "the first delineation of the imaginary, whose letters associated with those of the symbolic and the real, will decorate [...] the pots—that are forever empty, since they are all so symbolic."[170] In other words, there is no real monster, no actual bogeyman that exists, rather this monster is pure imaginary, all surface illusion. Sexual predators that target children, however, are real and are named in the symbolic order as criminals, constructed by and through the laws which govern a society. Lacan asserts that "[n]either crime nor criminals are objects that can be conceptualized apart from their sociological context."[171] Criminals are transformed into monsters through the ways in which the story of their crime is told. "Every society, lastly, manifests the relationship between crime and law by punishments whose infliction,

[169] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *Sunday Mail,* 9 October 2011, p. 5.
[170] Lacan, *Ecrits,* p. 54.
[171] Lacan, p. 103.

regardless of the form it takes, requires subjective assent."[172] A criminal is an other to the law, and to society-at-large. Those who perform criminal acts do so knowingly embracing their role as criminal other, risking the punishment that will be inflicted upon them if they are caught.

Monstrosity is a superficial deception layered over a criminal to transform him (or her) into an other who signifies that which must not be tolerated in or by society. "It sometimes even happens that a society considers itself to be so impaired in its structure that it takes steps to exclude its ills in the form of a scapegoat," suggests Lacan.[173] I now look at the ways in which a real man is presented as a monstrous scapegoat, when suspected of being guilty of the abduction and murder of Louise Bell.

**Birthing the Monster**

On 12 March 1983 *The Advertiser* ran a story about a potential suspect with an identikit image representing "a likeness of the man police want to speak to in connection with the abduction of Louise Bell." The birth of a criminal monster begins with such images of 'likenesses' compiled from "information given by a witness."[174]

A man "between 20 and 30, 183 centimetres (six feet) tall, with blond collar length hair, clean shaven, athletic build" is described and an identikit image of a face pieced together from a jigsaw puzzle of facial features is presented to the public.[175] The identikit image is like a Frankenstein monster, constructed from the body parts of various men. It is an

[172] Lacan, p. 103.
[173] Lacan, p. 103.
[174] Robert Ball, "Louise Bell: Police seeking this man," *The Advertiser,* 12 March 1983, p. 6.
[175] Ibid.

image drawn from and though the imaginary seeking a likeness to a real man who exists in the symbolic order. Public are asked if they recognise this Frankenstein who is a "composite photograph," a speculative stand-in image of a possible man.[176] He is *all* image, *only* image at this stage. A potential man conjured from the intersection of memory and imagination of a witness. The suspect is not-quite-human. The image of the identikit is suggestive of a human being, but there is something not quite right about the image. There are gaps in the narrative of the face where the features do not meld together seamlessly. The gaps suggest the criminal is like this image, but is not actually the image. The identikit image can only signify likeness but not represent the identity of the criminal. It is, in effect, the empty decorated pot that Lacan described as being of the imaginary.

Witnesses' memories are subjective though, and may be unreliable. As Dylan Trigg argues, "[W]e never experience an image directly because the same image is altered by the creative imagination" as it is recalled.[177] He goes on to suggest, "the interplay between memory and imagination [...] precludes the witnessing of memory, and renders the imagination the guiding agent."[178] Notably, the man arrested for the abduction and murder of Louise Bell bears no physical resemblance to the identikit image published.

**The Lure of the Faceless Monster**

When a suspect is arrested, the front page story of the *Sunday Mail* for 27 November 1983 includes a photograph depicting a male figure, with a covering over his head, up against a smaller head shot of Louise Bell, smiling. While

[176] Ibid.
[177] Trigg, *The Memory of Place. A Phenomenology of the Uncanny,* p. 67.
[178] Ibid.

this is to protect the identity of the alleged suspect, it presents an image which is also monstrous, evocative of the bogeyman. Warner discusses the bogeyman as being "masked or hooded" suggesting he looks at his victims "from the wide, borderless field of the world's gaze, which shatters the subject and scatters him or her across a blurred and terrifying wilderness."[179] The bogeyman "shrouded" and "invisible under his hood" stalks his victims from the "edges of the gaze, unseen."[180] Not yet revealed as a real man, the public are confronted with a figure whose face is obscured and bears a likeness or *similarity* to the bogeyman. Lacan proposes "the relation between the gaze and what one wishes to see involves a lure."[181] The photographic representation of a faceless criminal is a lure that invites the eye to see a picture of a monster.

Lacan suggests, "[m]an, in effect, knows how to play with the mask as that beyond which there is the gaze. The screen here is the locus of mediation."[182] This gaze relates to the notion of desire of the Other. Choosing fantasy over reality, seeing what one wants to see but not necessarily being seen *as* one wants to be seen, hence Lacan suggests, "you never look at me from the place I see you."[183] An arrested subject offers up a screen which protects the reader of the newspaper article from the real, from the abyss. A suspect locates the abyss through embodying it as a criminal monster. Once it can be seen, the abyss can be known, controlled, and integrated into the symbolic order. The prisoner therefore, becomes a stand-in for the real, a real that can be held accountable and punished by a court of law. The judicial process is restoring the site of trauma in the house from a crime scene back into

[179] Warner, *No Go the Bogeyman,* p. 182.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 104.
[182] Lacan, p. 105.
[183] Lacan, p. 91.

a family home assuming the suspect confesses to the whereabouts of the body of the child.

**Unmasking and Naming the Monster**

Monsters emerge from the real and take up residence in the symbolic order through the imaginary realm. Whether monsters actually exist or not, in the symbolic order we have pictures of them, stories about them, and fears of them. They *signify.* A man with a bag over his head at the time of his arrest is abysmal, for the question arises of what lies beneath the covering?

On 28 November 1983, the front page story of *The News* was dedicated to the "legal drama" regarding the release of the suspect's name into the public realm for thirty minutes, before a new suppression order was granted by the court.[184] Notably, alongside the front page story is the image of the suspect with his face covered. This same image or one similar appeared again in the *Sunday Mail* on 27 November 1983.[185]

What lies beneath the bag over the head? Something monstrous, of course. On 13 December 1983, the identity of the suspect is yet to be released, but his face is revealed and described thus, in *The Advertiser*, "[t]he man's head was completely shaven [...] revealing a dark row of numerous large stitches extending from ear-lobe level to the left side of his face, over the top of the skull."[186] The mention of stitches conjures the image of Frankenstein. "His left eye was blood-shot, puffed, almost closed and heavily bruised. He appeared to have stitches below it and the left eyebrow. He had a big lump just

[184] Mike O'Reilly, "Louise: Court Drama Over Man's Name," *The News,* November 28 1983, p. 1.
[185] Tom Menzies, "Murder Arrest. Police Wait On Louise Search," *Sunday Mail,* 27 November 1983, p. 3.
[186] Author uncredited,"Man charged over Louise remanded until March," *The Advertiser,* 13 December 1983, p. 17.

above his left temple. As he left the dock he appeared to limp."[187] Caught between the real and the imaginary, dragged into the symbolic order is a man badly beaten and described in gratuitous detail. The monster is revealed and he is indeed grotesque, a bogeyman.

On 28 November 1983, *The News* ran with the headline, "Court Drama Over Man's Name."[188] The images on the front page revisit the accused with his head covered up, and two clock faces displaying two times covering the duration of a half hour when the name of the accused was released, then suppressed again. "Identity revealed for half an hour" is the sub-heading on the front page.[189] The monster is suspended in time between the imaginary and the symbolic. For half an hour the monster was fully birthed into the symbolic order, but then through legal procedures was pulled back into the shadows of the imaginary realm where he returned to being faceless and nameless. The name matters greatly. As argued by the lawyer representing the accused, Mr S H Lindsay, suppressing his name is "in the interests of the administration of justice and to reduce undue hardship."[190] He goes on to argue that "the man would receive a 'great stigma of notoriety' if his name were published and would continue to be known as the person who abducted Louise Bell if he were not convicted."[191] It is difficult to shake off the imaginary illusion of monstrosity once named as being such whether guilty or innocent.

[187] Author uncredited, "Man charged over Louise remanded until March," *The Advertiser,* 13 December 1983, p. 17.
[188] Mike O'Reilly, "Louise: Court Drama Over Man's Name," *The News.* November 28 1983, p. 1.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Author uncredited, "Louise Bell: name of man released, then suppressed," *The Advertiser, 29* November 1983, p. 9.
[191] Ibid.

**Imaginary Evidence**

Before being named, the criminal monster's guilt is constructed in an article appearing in *The Advertiser* on 9 March 1984. Highlights from the article offer a narrative of a man who "lied and changed his story" and "had no alibi for the night" that Louise was taken, and was "tall enough to have 'leaned in through the window and simply lifted the sleeping girl out through the window.'"[192] The accused also "lived only a block away" from Louise and "often jogged at night" and "a person walking along Meadow Way [...] could easily see inside the bedroom if the lights were on."[193] The man is described as "being evasive," lying and changing his story "when presented with new evidence."[194] The accused had allegedly spent time on an Army Reserves camp where he is accused of appearing to others as "edgy and nervous" and of discussing "sexual matters" with some women, who after making fun of him, supposedly heard him "mention Louise Bell."[195] By the end of the article the journalist has presented a convincing picture of a guilty man.

On 12 March 1984, the headline on the front page of *The News* announced, "Louise: Man Named," and the article goes on to reveal "[h]e is Raymond John Geesing, 35, cleaner, of Ashley St, Torrensville."[196] Geesing has dark hair, and has a full beard. The lure of the *idea* that Geesing is the guilty man proves compelling enough to dispel doubts over his likeness to the witness description of a potential suspect of athletic build, clean-shaven, with collar length blonde hair. The monster is now replaced by a real man, who can be placed within the symbolic order. The monster is transformed into a

[192] Author uncredited, "Man in Bell case lied," *The Advertiser*, 9 March 1984, p. 3.
[193] Author uncredited, "Man in Bell case lied," *The Advertiser*, 9 March 1984, p. 3.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Author uncredited, "Louise: Man Named," *The News*, 12 March, 1984, p. 1.

criminal through being removed from the imaginary realm into the symbolic order.

**Beauty and the Beast**

On the front page of *The News* on 14 December 1984, a story announcing "Geesing Guilty" features photographs which depict him as wild-eyed, bearded and mean looking, bordering on resembling a madman, against a photograph of Louise Bell, smiling at the camera, the tragic figure of an innocent girl robbed of her life (by the monstrous Geesing).[197] The girl's innocence is in part constructed through the use of such an unflattering photograph of Geesing and likewise the criminal other becomes more monstrous through this juxtaposition of images.

In *The Advertiser*, one report runs with the headline: "Police think I'm bad, Geesing allegedly said." The article juxtaposes Geesing as a 'bad' man against witness testimonies that Louise was a "shy, quiet, well-liked, pleasant, eager to please" child. Geesing is "alleged" to have "admitted to a prisoner" that "he killed the girl" and is accused of having "shown in a number of ways to a number of people a consciousness of guilt." He is marked as a criminal through having previously served time in jail, and a key witness frames him as someone "the police have been asking" about. The detective appears in the article also, as he had "searched Geesing, the house where he had been staying while its owner was away, his car, and a motorcycle, but had found nothing to link him with Louise Bell." Rather than assuming this lack of hard evidence suggests the potential innocence of the accused, Geesing remains cast in the

[197] Annette Holden and Jim Kernahan, "Geesing Guilty," *The News,* 14 December 1984, p. 1. The photograph of Geesing is dominant, and larger than that of Louise.

role of a criminal monster who, despite a lack of evidence to prove it, is still assumed to have "killed her and then hid her body." Geesing was found guilty by the jury and convicted to a life sentence with the presiding Judge stating it to be "one of the most serious types of murder."[198]

Lacan writes it is "the search for truth" that "constitutes the object of criminology in the judicial realm and also what unifies its two facets: the truth of the crime, which is the facet that concerns the police, and the truth of the criminal, the anthropological facet."[199] In the trial of Geesing, truth competes with the overpowering imaginary which takes hold of the jury and public through the desire for the monstrous Other to be *named* and punished. *The Advertiser* ran a front page story on 15 December 1984 revealing that Geesing "had previous convictions for unlawful sexual intercourse, with a girl, 14, and one conviction for indecent assault of the same girl." The article sets up a pattern of criminal behaviour for Geesing. Judge Greaves commented that, due to this "reprehensible aspect of his behaviour," Geesing had "lost everything" including his "previously excellent character, his standing in the community, his job, his marriage and his house." Notably, photographs of Geesing on this front page show him both faceless (hiding his face as he is lead away by police guards) and fully revealed and named in a smaller full-face portrait shot with a caption telling the reader that he "appeared to flinch" at the verdict. He is presented as being both man and monster. In this same article, another criminal monster is conjured, namely Bevan Spencer Von Einem, "convicted last month of having murdered Richard Dallas Kelvin, 15." Apparently monsters also congregate in the story of Louise Bell, in this case alongside the ghost of

[198] Annette Holden and Jim Kernahan, "Geesing Guilty," *The News,* 14 December 1984, p. 2.
[199] Lacan, *Écrits,* p. 102.

another murder victim who is portrayed as being like Louise in that both murders are "of the most serious type."[200] A successful court appeal saw Geesing released within eighteen months, at which point the newspaper articles alter the photographic images used to represent Geesing. On 12 April 1985, *The News* ran a front page story which mirrors the front page of 14 December 1984, except the headline, again taking up nearly half the page, reads: "Geesing Freed."[201] In a photo of Geesing beneath the headline, he is clean shaven except for a moustache, smiling (albeit subtly), and looking away from the camera towards the distance, perhaps looking towards the future lying before him. Both front page stories in 1984 and 1985 each feature a small picture of Louise Bell, in one with long hair, in the other with short, and a sub-heading quoting her parents. In 1984, "We must find her body, say parents" and, in 1985, "We're angry and upset, say parents."[202]

**Deconstructing the Monster**

Stories of Geesing's release feature photographic images of a man who is now neat, tidy, well presented and polite. On 12 April 1985, *The News* printed a photograph of Geesing shaking the hand of his lawyer who was fully dressed in courtroom attire, suggesting the former criminal monster is now no longer the enemy of the law, but able to smile and shake hands with it. In this article his monstrosity has been purged as Geesing is quoted as saying, "I have had the Lord on my side, that is the main thing."[203] As reported in *The Advertiser* on 12 April 1985, "[t]he court released him unconditionally." Alongside the story of

[200] Graham Hunter, "Geesing guilty: Plans a 'relentless' appeal," *The Advertiser,* 15 December 1984, p. 1.
[201] Jim Kernahan, "Geesing Freed," *The News,* 12 April 1985, p. 1.
[202] *The News,* 14 December 1984 p. 1, and April 12, 1985 p. 1.
[203] Jim Kernahan, "I'm glad justice has been done," *The News,* April 12 1985, p. 2.

whether Geesing may seek compensation is a photograph of Geesing being interviewed by journalists, again well dressed, well presented, and well *re*presented in light of his being proven innocent. Geesing is quoted as saying, "I just hope I can get a job pretty soon," and argued "I had absolutely nothing to do with it" again.[204]

Once a monster has been identified by society, once it has been created, can it ever be truly released from its imaginary phantasy role? Can the decisions in a court of law of the symbolic order undo the powerful manifestations of the imaginary realm? To escape his legacy of being a criminal monster, Raymond John Geesing, once successfully acquitted and set free changed his name to Raymond John Bolte. However, in 2009, Bolte was arrested and subsequently tried and convicted for the ongoing abuse and sexual assault of two of his sisters. During this trial, the cumulative effect of the Louise Bell trial comes into play, and his monstrousness is firmly established,

> The man jailed-and then released-for the 1983 murder of Louise Bell is a 'child molesting pedophile' who ruined the lives of two young girls, a court has heard. In tearful victim impact statements read to the District Court today, the girls said Raymond John Bolte was a monster who had repeatedly molested them over an eight year period.
> 'I have flashbacks and consistent reminders of the monster that destroyed my childhood,' the younger girl, now 17, said.

[204] Graham Hunter, "Geesing guilty: Plans a 'relentless' appeal," *The Advertiser,* April 12 1985, p. 2.

> ‘Your face is the one thing I see when I close my eyes at night.
> I thought that court would heal the invisible wounds but it hasn't.
> The pain you caused will always be there, you were supposed to be my protection but all you turned out to be was a child molesting pedophile.’
> Outside court, the other girl, 20, said the consequences of Bolte's crimes would live inside her forever.
> ‘I hope that he suffers a lot because that is what we had to do, we lost our childhood,’ she said.
> ‘I really hope he rots, because that is what he did to our life. He made it rot.’[205]

There can never be another trial of Bolte for the abduction and murder of Louise Bell and Crown prosecution believe there is “no point in a retrial” due to the evidence “falling far short of the proof which the law required for conviction.”[206] In the symbolic order Geesing might be ‘not guilty’ of the abduction and murder of Louise Bell, but in the imaginary he remains criminally monstrous.

Until such time as both the girl, dead or alive is found, and the criminal responsible for her abduction and presumed murder is captured, the imaginary stakes a larger claim than the symbolic order. For *Last Seen Alive* I have positioned a predatory gaze behind a camera, a gaze which is never named,

[205] Ken McGregor, “Louise Bell murder suspect ‘a pedophile,’” *The Advertiser,* 15 December 2009,<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au>[accessed 15 December 2009]
[206] Jim Kernahan, “I’m glad justice has been done,” *The News,* April 12 1985, p. 2.

never revealed. It follows Ellen and records her. Meanwhile the character of Me describes the monster living in her bedroom which follows her from girlhood into womanhood as a symbolic fear of an unknown man who climbs through her window. Perhaps many girls grow up with this same monster following them, unseen, unnamed and predatory in nature. In the next chapter I delve into the imaginary as it manifests as a geography of fear and desire within girlhood.

# *Chapter Seven: Girlhood as a Geography of Fear and Desire*

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In this chapter I look at the role of stories such as Louise Bell's and recent reports in the news which construct girls and women as potential victims of predatory, sexually motivated criminals. Such stories, I argue, become part of the imaginary of girlhood and set up a tension within the psyche between fear and desire. On 9 May 2012, my local newspaper ran a story with the headline, "Don't Walk Alone," aimed at girls and women, "following two reports of sexual assaults in less than a week." Stories in which "young women" are told they "should consider their safety at all times" and instructed to "not be in an isolated public environment" create a geography of fear.[207] On 13 September 2012, *The Advertiser* ran a story about five "weeks of fear" listing a "series of sex attacks" upon women, posing the question "are you scared to walk alone around Adelaide?" The article informs the reader that women are "taking charge of their own safety as police hunt dozens of men wanted for sex attacks and abduction attempts across Adelaide."[208] In both these stories women are presented as potential victims of sexually motivated attacks if they walk alone in the public spaces of the city of Adelaide. In *Last Seen Alive* I ask how girls learn to balance the tensions between desire and fear resulting from such dangerous narratives whilst living in, and traversing a seemingly hostile geography?

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[207] Lia Harris, "Don't Walk Alone. Sexual assaults prompt warning," *Southern Times Messenger,* 9 May 2012, p. 7.
[208] Bryan Littley, "Adelaide women take action against male predators after series of sex attacks," *The Advertiser,* 13 September 2012, p.1.

During the investigation into the series of sex attacks on women in Adelaide, "half a dozen detectives walked the streets" where the attacks occurred in order to "revisit the area, to view the environment at the time of the offense," but the reader is informed that the "scenes of the attacks range from popular night entertainment strips to daylight attacks in parks [...] there are no particular 'hot spots' for the attacks."[209] In other words, women are unsafe everywhere, and at all times.

I examine the ways in which I remember my girlhood life being informed by the imaginary of the predatory gaze and criminal monsters who watch girls, sometimes with tragic consequences such as was the case for Louise. This memory recollection exercise reveals the tensions I felt between a fear of the sexual predators who might be lurking about the place and the desire and longing associated with having a crush on boys. Despite knowing that the gaze of boys and men could bring danger, I still sought it out. I wanted to be desired by the boys I liked and ignored by those predators responsible for abducting girls like Louise, girls like me. In *Last Seen Alive* the character of Me has a crush on a boy called James. I deliberately integrate this story of a girlhood crush alongside the story being told about Ellen to illustrate the inherent tensions between desire and fear at work on the character of Me's psyche. The two forces do not work in isolation, rather they entwine as simultaneous forces at work. I seek to demonstrate the ways in which the force of desire trumps the force of fear. A girl might, I suggest, place herself in the path of danger when acting upon her desire for the attention of a boy she likes. This chapter details the translation of the imaginary into a symbolic geography of girlhood in which

[209]Ibid.

tensions between forces of desire and fear related to being seen or held in the gaze of an Other must be navigated in order to stay alive.

**Inviting the Gaze of the Other**

I have previously argued that Louise Bell is presented to the reader of the newspaper articles as an innocent victim. Victimhood is what Louise signifies in the symbolic order. Innocence is a key quality for being considered a victim, but what if a child invites the predatory gaze, or actively seeks it out? How does the force of desire impact upon fear when it comes to the predatory gaze?

Lacan writes of desire, "it is in the Other that the subject is constituted as ideal, that he has to regulate the completion of what comes as ego, or ideal ego [...] to constitute himself in his imaginary reality."[210] He goes on to expand,

> But, certainly, it is in the space of the Other that he sees himself and the point from which he looks at himself is also in that space. Now, this is also the point from which he speaks, since in so far as he speaks, it is in the locus of the Other that he begins to constitute that truthful lie by which is initiated that which participates in desire at the level of the unconscious.[211]

In *Last Seen Alive*, Ellen only ever appears to the audience through the gaze of the Other who is watching her via a camera lens. At times it is clear that Ellen is aware of the camera, as she looks directly into the lens. She knows she is

[210] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 144.
[211] Lacan, p. 144.

being watched, evidenced by her direct gaze to the viewer via the camera lens. She plays with the very predatory gaze that will erase her from the symbolic order and hide her in the real. At other times the camera records Ellen from afar, as though spying on her. The predatory gaze reveals itself to be playing with Ellen too. Watching Ellen raises the question for the audience as to what part desire plays in the story of her mysterious disappearance. Was she groomed? Was Louise groomed? As Lacan suggests, "the true aim of desire is the other, as constrained, beyond his involvement in the scene. It is not only the victim who is concerned in exhibitionism, it is the victim referred to some other who is looking at him."[212]

**The Question of Innocence in Childhood**

Childhood is a term used to describe an era of life spent as a young person but it is also constructed by ideas of what it means to *be* a child, and what life for a child is, or should be. For example, one might suggest childhood is a time to be carefree, unburdened by the worries of adults, a time to play, or that children are by default innocent. There is a school of thought in sociology that suggests that our ideas of childhood are a social construction. For example, David Wilson, a sociologist studying serial murder writes,

> We should also remember that childhood has always been iconic of broader social anxieties and as a result children have always been the subjects of the adult gaze, whether in the guise of protection and empowerment, or control

[212] Lacan, p. 183.

> and regulation. In this respect what I am suggesting is that late Modernity is reconstructing childhood by blurring the boundary between childhood and adulthood, so as to achieve outcomes that suit adult needs. Thus these outcomes may be about developing new markets and commercial opportunities, or simply to permit and facilitate adult sexual fantasy.[213]

This raises a question as to how innocent children are potentially constructed as adult sexual fantasy objects of criminal monsters. One can only actively participate in the sexual fantasy through adopting the symbolic role of criminal monster, whilst the general public are allowed to read about the gratuitous details in the newspaper. How important to Louise Bell's story is the construction of her as an innocent child? Does the suggestion of being an innocent child imply a lack of (sexual) desire on the child's part? Not to suggest that any child consciously invites the predatory gaze and the destructive force behind it, but I question whether children are in fact authors of their own lives and abide by the principles of forensic victimology in which "victimization is not always simple."[214]

Forensic victimology is the study of the lifestyle of, and environmental factors impacting upon the victim of a crime to determine the role they did, or did not play in their own victimisation. It is the means by which to determine what level of risk the victim of crime was at of being targeted? For example, sex workers with a drug dependency are considered to be at a higher risk of

[213] David Wilson, *Serial Killers: Hunting Britons and Their Victims 1960-2006,* (Winchester: Waterside Press, 2007), p. 155.
[214] Turvey and Petherick, *Forensic Victimology,* p. xvi.

victimisation by virtue of both lifestyle and environmental considerations. A child asleep in her bedroom at night should be at a lower risk of victimisation but what if the child has been groomed by a predator in social situations that she and her family have taken part in? Or groomed by a teacher she trusts? Or an older boy who she has a crush on? What if she feels lonely, and therefore more vulnerable to the attentions of a predatory criminal who disguises himself as a friend of the family, or a charming boy who makes her feel pretty and wanted?

Throughout Louise's story are clues to how she may have been exposed to the predatory gaze. For example, during the trial of Geesing for the abduction and murder of Louise, "Geesing said he had first met Louise's father, Colin Bell, at a cabaret organised by the Hackham West Community Group at the end of 1981 or in early 1982" and "Geesing said, he knew only that the Bells lived 'around the corner' from a friend's house."[215] Louise may have been exposed to the predatory gaze of the accused but the question I cannot answer is whether Louise engaged with the predatory gaze or not.

In *Last Seen Alive,* I explore, through the character of Me, the awareness felt by a girl when a predator pays her attention. I suggest a feeling of uneasiness, or strangeness that is difficult to articulate because there is only the gaze upon the girl which on the surface appears harmless. It is in the subtle ways a man might tell a young girl how pretty she is, and the seemingly harmless physical gestures of affectionate touching of the girl that represent the grooming of a victim.

[215] Graham Hunter, "Court told how Louise Bell was found missing," *The Advertiser,* 13 November, 1984, p. 34.

Lacan says of desire, "[l]et us conclude that the reality system, however far it is developed, leaves an essential part of what belongs in the real a prisoner in the toils of the pleasure principle."[216] Can desire of the Other be self-destructive at an *un*conscious level? Steve Pile puts forward an interpretation of the Lacanian real that it "becomes the unconscious" of Freud's theories. "The Real," Pile writes, "is the unconscious underside to both the world of images and the world of signifiers and is, therefore, in conflict with both."[217]An unconscious, self-destructive desire to attract the predatory gaze is that essential part of what belongs in the real but instead makes the victim-to-be "a prisoner to the toils of the pleasure principle."[218]

Ellen plays with the gaze of the predator *unconsciously,* for in the imaginary the pursuit of a desiring gaze as something to *possess* is driving her fantasy. My proposition is that a girl *might* willingly go with her abductor in the mistaken belief she is the object of his desire and love. Where audience might resist the idea that any girl would willingly pursue the predatory gaze, in the character of Me audience learn how the desire to be desired by a boy called James contains within it the same seeds of destruction. Desire, I argue, is not discriminating enough to recognise the difference between the predatory gaze and the innocent attentions of a nice boy. The question that cannot be answered by the detective, nor is it answered by the journalist is, did Louise willingly go out the bedroom window with her abductor? Did she *see* the predatory gaze upon her? How was it presented to her? Lacan proposes,

[216] Lacan, p. 55.
[217] Steve Pile, *The Body and the City. Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity,* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 139.
[218] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 55.

> the gaze operates in a certain descent, a descent of desire [...] *man's desire is the desire of the Other* [...] at the end of which is the *showing*. [...] How could this *showing* satisfy something, if there is not some appetite of the eye on the part of the person looking? The appetite of the eye that must be fed produces the hypnotic value of painting.[219]

The hypnotic value of the painting which relaxes the gaze is like the process referred to as grooming the victim. The predator presents as the picture which the eye of the victim wishes to see and feed upon. The Self reflected back as one wants to be seen (or desired). Who is watching a child at any given time? What is their intention or desire in relation to the child?

**"Have You Checked the Children?"**

*When a Stranger Calls* is a horror-suspense movie in which a female teenage babysitter is tormented by an anonymous caller repeatedly asking if she has checked the children, who, it turns out have been butchered upstairs in their beds.[220] It is revealed that the caller is using a telephone in the house, which is the climactic part of the story. The idea that the killer has been in the house all along is revelatory and terrifying. Despite being tucked up in bed, under the supervision of an adult, the children are attacked by a dangerous stranger. Gill Valentine, a geographer writing about childhood abduction and murder suggests,

[219] Lacan, p. 115.
[220] *When a Stranger Calls*, dir. Fred Walton (Columbia Pictures, 1979).

> the abduction or murder of a child thus also represents a threat to this association of childhood with specialness and freedom from the adult world. It is not therefore just individual children who are perceived to be under threat in modern society; the institution of childhood itself is also at risk of violation.[221]

Have you checked the children? One might answer, it is too late to check the children, they are already gone. Like the sadistic caller in the movie, a child abductor torments a community with the truth of the lie, that whether they did or did not check the children, they did not check the children *at the right time*. Louise Bell's mother saw Louise at about 10:30 pm, alive and well in her bed, but it was between 10:30 pm and 6:30 am the next morning that Louise disappeared. If a child is not *looked at* by the right people the child can disappear into the real of the abyss.

*Last Seen Alive* examines how images of self are constructed by and for others. "What is the desire which is caught, fixed in the picture, but which also urges the artist to put something into action?" Lacan asks, "and what is that something?"[222] I am the artist creating a picture of a girlhood where fear of being targeted as a victim of crime is constantly competing with the desire to be liked by a boy. Through the character of Me I invite the audience into a world of girlhood innocence and wishful thinking about a seemingly nice boy who might one day take notice of her. Through the character of Me, I strive for

[221] Gill Valentine, *Public Space and the Culture of Childhood,* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), p. 20.
[222] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 9–3.

a less knowing, more naive grasp of her own desires and fears. The imaginary of desire, I suggest, is more powerful in the end than the imaginary of fear and can cause one to make regrettable, fateful decisions that end in tragedy. This imaginary is not only psychological as the more recent news stories about sex attacks on women in the city of Adelaide remind us. Fear and desire are embedded in the geography that girls and women must navigate on a daily basis. Fateful decisions made by victims are often related to where they have placed themselves in space and time. It is common knowledge that one is best served by keeping to well-lit areas rather than taking short-cuts down dark alleyways in a city, for example. One is advised not to leave one's window open in summer for fear of who might crawl through it in the middle of the night. For women and children in particular, it is difficult to locate a truly safe space for them to inhabit because 'home' is not the non-I that protects the I after all.

**Walking in Fear and Desire**

I lived my own girlhood in and around the same locations as Louise did. For this reason, I spent the first year of my research traversing these areas on foot, in the car, and with my camera, conjuring my own memories associated with any and all places. Place itself became the imaginary through which I sought a connection to my subject. An initial idea I had for a staging of *Last Seen Alive* was an audio tour of the areas I have been researching, in order to bring my audience into the actual landscape of my girlhood. The work of Melbourne based performance company, 'one step at a time like this,' provides a good example of what they describe as a "pedestrian-based live art event" with their

work titled *en route.*[223] This work "invites participants on a journey" guided by "directions, instructions and audio" through "the thoroughfares and back-alleys of both the city and what they make of it."[224] The show sets up audience members to be "traveller, witness, voyeur" as they literally walk a map of the city streets, listening to the audio recording which was partly instructive, and partly "snatches of narrative, musings, song, dialogue, philosophy."[225] Such a performance project creates the city as a multilayered text of past and present histories and stories colliding in a dynamic space which is always in motion. It positions place as being of equal importance to, and intimately linked to, the audio track being listened to. For *Last Seen Alive*, a key text is visual material of geographic locations. It is the 'out there' which exists beyond the bedroom window at which lurks the predatory gaze. It is the 'out there' where the body of Louise Bell is looked for and assumed to be. I provide filmed material in order to facilitate, for the audience, a means by which to traverse the landscapes and places in which *Last Seen Alive* takes place. I want my audience to have a visual reference of the symbolic world upon which the imaginary of girlhood fear and desire is projected. I am telling a story about what it means to live in Adelaide, a city haunted by the ghosts of children still missing, never found, such as Louise Bell.

In 1985, detectives still assume that Louise's "body may have been dumped in the Onkaparinga River basin, south of Adelaide and near her home."[226] Alongside the article discussing this theory of the detectives are two photographs: one of police divers searching the river, another of police cadets

[223] Information on the company and this work available online at <www.onestepatatimelikethis.com> Under Audience Works, is a link to the "en route" project.[accessed 23 July 2013]
[224] "en route," <www.onestepatatimelikethis.com/enroute.html>(accessed 23 July 2013]
[225] Ibid.
[226] Geoff de Luca, "Classic case is SAs saga of anguish," *The News,* 12 April 1985, p. 10.

searching the bushland near Louise's home. For the duration of my research I resided near the river and walked this area on a near daily basis. I placed Ellen by the river, in a dress suitable for a school dance, performing herself to the camera. It is impossible to know for certain that a bodily death has occurred for Louise or Ellen and if not, what has become of the missing girls? Have they merged, literally, with the river? Ellen looks happy by this river. She might be going dancing later, or have been to a dance already as she is dressed up for someone. That her body might have ended up in this same location is an uncanny effect I want my audience to experience. At this location I propose, desire and fear entwine.

How to invite my audience to search for Ellen in the river and surrounds? I present them with images of empty spaces Ellen once inhabited or moved about in. Blast Theory are a UK based performance company who presented a work in Adelaide in 2004 titled *I Like Frank* which was a game that "invited players to search for Frank through the streets of Adelaide."[227] The game involved recruiting players to go online and search for "elusive Frank" through a virtual reconstruction of the city, finding hidden objects to collect along the way. Frank could not be found in the real world, but for the online players, "they entered a new virtual Adelaide saturated in red where Frank was waiting in a photographic 'Future Land.'"[228] In many respects the virtual world operates like an abyss in which Frank exists, trapped, accessible only to those able to traverse the imaginary city online. In many respects my own approach to writing and filming material for *Last Seen Alive* operates like both the work of 'one step at a time like this' and Blast Theory in that my traversing of place

[227] Information on the company and this work available online at <www.blasttheory.co.uk/bt/work_ilikefrank.html>[accessed 6 January 2013]
[228] "I Like Frank," <www.blasttheory.co.uk/bt/work_ilikefrank.html>[accessed 6 January 2013]

is guided by a search for a missing person, and a search for the predatory gaze which targets girl's like Louise, like Ellen, like Me.

One of the key ideas within Steve Pile's book *Real Cities* is the notion that city spaces are physical and psychic spaces. That they are inhabited by phantasmagoria of dreams, myths, magic, and ghosts as much as they are built environments. In *Last Seen Alive* I am placing the predatory gaze and criminal monsters as similar presences which inhabit the geography of the story of Louise Bell, and my own childhood. His theory of ghosts is the notion of how ghosts reflect the idea of the uncanny, in so far as that which has been repressed or left unresolved will continue to return. He suggests they "can flash up at certain moments in cities to uncanny effect, reminding people of earlier losses and traumas of that place."[229] Pile proposes that the "question, however is not whether we can simply remove the dead from life, but how best to live with the dead."[230] In my own work I extend this question to the particularity of learning to live with the maybe-dead (who have disappeared into the abyss) and the abyss itself, which is ever-moving, ever-elusive, but seemingly ever-present as a threat through the accumulation of ghosts which speak of its existence. I position myself as an adult recalling being a girl growing up in the shadow of another ghost-girl who reflects back at me my own fears, but who also reflects back a complex desire I struggle to own, the desire to be desired by the Other no matter the cost. The character of Me narrates Ellen as a girl who became visible, noticeable and *desirable* only after she was presumably abducted. However, like the women who have been victims of sexual attacks in the city of Adelaide when traversing public space, Ellen has fallen prey to the

[229] Pile, *Real Cities,* p. 163.
[230] Pile, p. 160.

very predatory gaze she was playing with. There is no proof Louise Bell played with the predatory gaze, instead she remains the innocent child-victim.

Lacan writes, "now, although desire merely conveys what it maintains of an image of the past towards an ever short and limited future [...] it is nevertheless *indestructible.*"[231] Louise Bell meets this criteria of desire. Her photograph appears in the news print articles operating as an image of the past which is indestructible. There remains a desire to find the girl and solve the mystery of her disappearance and reinstate the innocent child into the symbolic order to signify once again the very institution of childhood. By Louise being abducted and possibly murdered, childhood itself is revealed to be illusory. Instead of images of a girl playing happily in public spaces designated for children such as schoolyards and playgrounds or, more importantly, the lit space of her own bedroom after dark, one is left with images of "STAR force officers and Aqualung Squad police" as they "set up search headquarters in a derelict farmhouse in paddocks" near the Bell home, whilst "[d]ivers dragged sections of the Onkaparinga River" searching for her body.[232] Her mysterious disappearance alters the place she once inhabited. Her absence brings presences in her wake which create a geography of fear; the predatory gaze which remains unidentified, and the figure of the symbolic detective in the guise of STAR force officers trawling the river searching for her body. Louise did not successfully navigate the geography of desire and fear that all girls and women must navigate. She did not survive, as far as we know. Instead she is now lost in this landscape somewhere, eradicated by the predatory gaze that found her amongst the many other girls like her. What fateful decision might

[231] Lacan, p. 31. Italics in original.
[232] Tom Menzies, "Murder Arrest. Police Wait On Louise Search," *Sunday Mail,* 27 November 1983, p. 2.

she have made that allowed this predatory criminal an opportunity to victimise her?

In Part Three I turn my attention to the real as an abyss. A spatial and temporal void into which the victim disappears *from view* at the location where she was last seen alive.

# ***PART THREE:***

## *The Real*

## *"Home" is Impossible*

# *Chapter Eight: An Abyss as the Real*

In this chapter I translate Lacan's concept of the real into an abyss in which Louise Bell is hidden from view, suspended in time as a memory of how she was when she was last seen alive. I demonstrate how the real operates as an abject space within which a submerged truth or memory is hidden. In this space she is both dead and alive, an impossible state of existence which can only be reconciled with the discovery of her body. I liken this abyss to a literal void into which one can disappear and discuss in relation to eighteenth century mathematician, Blaise Pascal's belief in such an abyss located at his left side. His abyss is a literal space into which one could fall and be obliterated.[233] Pascal's abyss is a space of the unknown in which anything could be hidden, and anything could happen, including death. Louise is hidden in such an abyss, and there is only an open bedroom window left in the symbolic order which offers up a phantasy narrative of *forced abduction* as an answer to the question of what happened to her. I use Lacan's proposition of the missed encounter to examine the idea that those who did not step in to prevent Louise from being taken, or leaving willingly through her bedroom window, have missed an encounter which now translates as trauma.

The real is the nucleus, the anchor to which all else is moored. Dramatically speaking, the real provides the climactic or revelatory moment. It is an experience discovered by chance by the audience, rather than an experience I can manufacture on their behalf. I offer the fragmentary clues

[233] Dylan Trigg writes about Pascal's abyss on his Side Effects Blog at <http://side-effects.blogspot.com.au/2010/04/pascals-abyss.html>[accessed August 2012]

within which one might see a truth which has been obscured. This truth, as an experience of the real, is subjective and individual. I have suggested a missed encounter for the character of Me which might have prevented a tragedy. This confession by Me is her real, and I hope that it can transcend the individual and speak to a broader truth obscured by the phantasy of forced abduction which operates in the story of Louise Bell. That nobody intervened and thus prevented her disappearance reveals a truth about the family home. It failed to maintain the protective boundaries between inside and outside. As a result, home is, I argue, is impossibile for a house from which a child has been abducted. I turn to the work of Dylan Trigg to explore memory, place and trauma, and how trauma affects the ability to feel 'at home' in a house.

**Defining the Real**

The key to locating the real is identifying that which one returns to at an unconscious level time and again. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan discusses the real in relation to repetition and trauma. A subject cannot consciously prevent themselves returning to the real, the original site of trauma, where something has been left unresolved. I ask, what in the story of Louise Bell necessarily repeats, or is inevitably returned to? Where does the story get stuck because of lack of resolution, or unanswered questions preventing the story moving forward? The story gets stuck at the bedroom window, the location where Louise was last seen alive and presumed to have exited the house *somehow.* At the window an abyss has opened up, an abyss of invisibility in which Louise is hidden from view.

What might the real become, if given form outside the human subject and placed in a crime scene? Lacan refers to the real "as the impossible" by virtue of being opposite to that which is possible. The real, he suggests, is "the obstacle to the pleasure principle," it is "the impact with the obstacle; it is the fact that things do not turn out all right straight away" as the subject might wish.[234] Lacan proposes that the real is that which is hidden from view and that which a subject unconsciously keeps returning to "*as if by chance.*"[235] This returning functions as an act of repetition on the part of the subject, an act informed by the unconscious and so powerful that conscious efforts to not return fail. In the story of Louise Bell the lack of definitive evidence regarding exactly how Louise was taken from or left her bedroom through the window presents an obstacle to the story of what happened to the girl. In the early days of the investigation police suggest "Louise Bell, 10, may have been the victim of foul play after voluntarily leaving her Hackham West home."[236] The story does not move on from the speculative to the definitive.

The repetition is not a deliberate or conscious act but rather, Lacan suggests, there is "a *hauling* of the subject, who always drags his thing into a certain path that he cannot get out of."[237] The thing which is being dragged along by the subject is the entry point to the real, where an answer lies to the question of, why this thing? What does the thing itself reveal about a trauma that the subject is unable to process at a conscious level? In the case of Louise Bell, I propose that the thing is the bedroom window. The open window signifies the house failed the family, and the family failed the girl by missing

[234] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 166.
[235] Lacan, p. 54.
[236] John Whistler, "Disappearance declared a major crime," *The Advertiser,* 7 January 1983, p. 1.
[237] Lacan, p. 51.

an opportunity for an encounter with her *as she was being taken, or leaving willingly* through the bedroom window.

The real is described by Lacan as being "between perception and consciousness."[238] He discusses the real as the noise that pulls the dreamer awake from a dream. He describes his own dream during which a "knocking occurs, not in my perception, but in my consciousness" wherein "my consciousness reconstitutes itself around this representation" and he becomes aware that he is "waking up." Lacan poses the question, "*What is it that wakes the sleeper?* Is it not, *in* the dream, another reality?"[239] The story of a father who has fallen asleep in one room, while his son is burned to death in the room next door is borrowed by Lacan from Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* to further explain the real as being of another reality, that hints at the truth. The father dreams his son is trying to wake him, asking "Father, can't you see that I am burning?"[240] Lacan suggests the dream is "essentially [...] an act of homage to the missed reality" of waking up and saving the child from burning alive, "a reality that can no longer produce itself except by repeating itself endlessly, in some never attained awakening."[241] The missed encounter (with the real boy) "forever missed, has occurred between dream and awakening."[242] The encounter with the real exists where the truth lies; the son was literally burning in his bed and died. The dream repeats itself because the dreamer did not wake up in time to save his son. Likewise, the open window of Louise Bell's bedroom points to a missed encounter, a failure on the part of anybody to wake

[238] Lacan, p. 45.
[239] Lacan, p. 56. Italics in original.
[240] Lacan, p. 34
[241] Lacan, p. 58.
[242] Lacan, p. 56.

up and stop the events that caused Louise to disappear. It is the real that an analyst is attempting to find, asking "what is the first encounter, the real, that lies behind the phantasy?"[243] The purpose is to question what lies behind the *resistance* by the story to the idea that Louise might willingly have climbed out the window. However, I stress that this is merely an intellectual exercise and not an accusation.

In *Last Seen Alive,* the character of Me eventually reveals a hidden truth about her relationship to the missing girl Ellen. She confesses that she saw Ellen leaving through the bedroom window the night she went missing, but promised not to tell. The revelation for the character of Me is that she watched a crime being committed and never told anybody because she thought Ellen was leaving with a boyfriend. It is why the character of Me is stuck, obsessing about Ellen, because it is Me who was the last person to see Ellen alive and she has been keeping this a secret. Only the character of Me and Ellen herself know that Ellen left willingly. The memory of what the character of Me has witnessed has been repressed due to discovering that Ellen might actually have been abducted, and possibly murdered. It is this memory that the character of Me is circling, making her ways towards. In this memory lies an unanswered question as to whether Ellen climbed out the window willingly with a boyfriend who later murdered her, or whether she encountered her murderer later, or if she was indeed even murdered.

In a performance the real would be that which is hidden between the lines, so to speak. The performance itself is a phantasy. The real presents in the gaps where what is hidden in the performance is revealed. The real erupts in

[243] Lacan, p. 54.

the moments of surprise, where an audience find unexpected meaning in the performance, or experience a visceral response which cannot be articulated, only felt; for example, the kind of silence where 'you could hear a pin drop.' I cannot produce the real, it must be discovered *by chance.* It is that which the performance does not knowingly achieve, but rather that which is revealed to be present by the audience, demonstrated in the ways they are responding. In a performance the audience must discover the real for themselves. To that end, not every audience member will experience an encounter with the real during a performance. I anticipate the real to exist at the point in a performance where the audience member suddenly feels they are experiencing something deeply meaningful and personal to them, rather than maintaining an objective distance from what is unfolding. The real is that which affects them, providing an entry point to something previously hidden from view in and of themselves. One could represent what the real, as a traumatic event or encounter, looks like but that is merely representation, or reproduction, not a genuine experience of discovering the real as if by chance. It is the difference between telling an audience member they should be feeling scared or joyful and their feeling either for themselves. I co-created an interactive performance (with Unreasonable Adults) on the topic of single girls and serial killers for my Master of Creative Arts. For this project we recorded interviews with audience members in the foyer before the show. We asked how they were planning to get home that evening, and probed into their personal lives attempting to find out where they lived. During the show itself, after the final monologue about a young girl who accepts a lift from a stranger and is never seen again, we played the recordings of the interviews. Disembodied voices filled the space with

lighthearted answers to our questions, sharing details of where they lived and that some of them might, for example, take a short-cut home through a parkland, or go out on the town to see if they could meet someone and go home with them instead. The effect on the audience, now listening to their own voices played in the dark space, was quite visceral and unsettling in light of how naïve they all sounded about the potential danger that any of them might not make it home alive, due to taking certain risks with their personal safety.

It is this visceral quality of the real that I am working with, the idea of something discovered, or fallen into by chance. To that end, the story of Pascal's abyss proves useful.

**Pascal's Abyss**

After having a near fatal accident falling from a coach as he rode by the River Seine in Paris, then-mathematician Blaise Pascal was thereafter convinced of the presence of an abyss on his left side. William Desmond, writing about Hegel in reference to Pascal discusses it thus,

> There is a story that Pascal lived with the perception that the abyss was there right next to him, literally to his left side, and that he always placed a chair to that side to buffer himself against it: a chair between, an inconsequential, derisory distraction which obviously Pascal himself knew to be a distraction. So he says: we

> rush towards the precipice, and throw an object before us,
> between us and it, to shield ourselves from this abyss.[244]

Pascal's abyss was not figurative or symbolic, but literal. The presence of the abyss into which one might disappear is tangible to Pascal and inspires terror but it is an abyss which clearly comes from within. The source of terror can be linked back to the trauma of the accident in which Pascal was shocked by the fall from the coach. Similarly, the Lacanian real is that which lingers after a trauma and compels the subject to acts of unconscious repetition. In Pascal's case, his abyss is always by his side. Baudelaire refers to it thus, in a poem titled "The Abyss,"

> Pascal's abyss went with him, yawned in the air--
> Everything's an abyss! Desire, acts, dreams.
> Words! I have felt the wind of terror stream
> Many a time across my standing hair.[245]

The nature of the abyss described is of the imaginary but erupts as an encounter with the real; a feeling of terror that overwhelms all else. The inability to locate, geographically, the abyss into which a victim of abduction disappears from view raises the question of whether the abyss is something the victim potentially carries with them, such as Pascal's abyss on his left side. In other

[244] William Desmond, "Between Finitude and Infinity: Hegelian Reason and the Pascalian Heart," in *Hegel on the modern world,* ed. Ardis. B. Collins, (New York: SUNY Press, 1995), p. 1–28, (p.16).
[245] Charles Baudelaire, "The Abyss," in *The Flowers of Evil,* ed. Marthiel Matthews and Jackson Matthews, (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1989), p. 193.

words, can the victim draw the predatory gaze which brings the abyss of the real with it?

The real is within the subject where, Lacan suggests,

> we see here a point that the subject can approach only by dividing himself into a certain number of agencies. [...] any conception of the unity of the psyche, of the supposed totalizing, synthesizing psyche, ascending towards consciousness, perishes there.[246]

In *Last Seen Alive*, I raise the question of whether Ellen is a real girl, or an imago the character Me has constructed. I do this to mirror my own relationship to Louise Bell as a subject who is real in her own right, but never represents herself, is unable to speak on her own behalf. Louise has become a phantasy figure I imagine, an imago that I identify with. The Others are symbolic of characters lifted from the newspaper accounts translated into phantasy figures from the imagination of Me. Where the abyss has opened up I have filled the void with the imaginary of phantasy that obscures, hides and protects what is obscured from view in the abyss. The character of Me is searching for Ellen in the abyss but in truth, it is Me who is lost from view in an abyss of invisibility. She is *not seeing* herself as she is, but herself as constructed through Ellen's disappearance and desirability to James. As a result of Ellen's abduction and murder, the character of Me has become visible

[246] Lacan, p. 51.

to James. In effect, Me has stepped into the void left in the wake of Ellen's absence.

The predatory gaze can create a subject as an object of desire as in the case of Ellen (or Louise) but I argue the predatory gaze can also eradicate a subject as an object of desire too by *not looking.* In *Last Seen Alive*, I play with ways in which a girl can be made to feel invisible and ways in which to interpret the idea of being 'last seen alive' beyond the obvious of being abducted. A Me in the now narrates memories of a Me when she was as a girl, a girl wrestling with the forces of fear and desire acting upon her psyche. The character of Me in the now is searching for her lost girlhood, revisiting a time in her life where she feels her girl-self was last seen alive.

In *Last Seen Alive* I attempt to create a sense of the abyss that exists at *any* girl's bedroom. Ellen and Me are deliberately constructed as phantasy girls who are *like* other girls, any other girls. The audience ideally find their own entry point to the real through reading Ellen and Me as being *like* themselves (if female) or like any other child whose bedroom window has been a portal of fear during childhood. I am presenting the real as an abyss into which *any* child might disappear because of a missed encounter with someone who intervenes at the right time to stop events unfolding in the direction of tragedy.

When dealing with the real, one is dealing with what is hidden. Traumatic memory is relegated to an abject space in the psyche. Lacan writes,

> I have constantly stressed in my preceding statements the *pulsative* function, as it were, of the unconscious, the need to disappear that seems to be in some sense inherent in

> it—everything that, for a moment, appears in its slit seems to be destined, by a sort of pre-emption, to close up again upon itself.[247]

The real is an abject space within the psyche, where something unpleasant is kept, a traumatic memory which has been repressed, buried in the consciousness. Translating the real into a geographical location where the missing girl will be found, Louise is similarly assumed to be in an abject place. Chf-Insp Lenton said, "We have searched all her favorite haunts, people have been questioned and everything from drains to bins checked."[248] Joshua Nichols, writing about Lacan and abject urban spaces argues,

> The utopian gaze avoids these objects, it evades them by employing its defensive mechanisms, it represses and negates, yet it is this very aversion that fuels desire for the sanity of the utopia. It is fixated on the abject; it orbits around it, reading it as both promise and curse.[249]

Abject spaces are interwoven into the narrative of the search for Louise as the police search the drains and the bins—these most abject of urban spaces where human waste ends up. There is also a plea made by a Catholic priest for the return of Louise "even if the worst has happened and she has died" in order that she "be given a proper burial" and "her parents be spared the awful

[247] Lacan, p. 43.
[248] John Whistler, "Disappearance declared a major crime," *The Advertiser,* 7 January 1983, p. 1.
[249] Joshua Nichols, "Lacan, the City, and the Utopian Symptom: An Analysis of Abject Urban Spaces," in *Space and Culture, Vol 11,* 2008, p. 459–470, (p. 463).

uncertainty of whether she is alive or dead."[250] The abyss takes on an unholy quality, requiring a skilled mediator, such as a priest to navigate or negotiate with the predatory gaze. The abject spaces are hidden from plain view, and thus the body is searched for in those locations.

I went out with my camera and shot footage and still images of the abject spaces in and around the landscape that both Louise and I inhabited. Some were spaces designated as unsafe to enter, some were 'between' spaces, such as pathways, streets, and others were dump sites for waste, such as storm water drains, rubbish bins behind attractive shop fronts, and cemeteries. Abject spaces are those where the real lurks, a real of the society which actively seeks to hide something unpleasant. The unpleasantness that interferes with the phantasy of utopian visions, such as the loose fly screen removed from the bedroom window of a house that failed to protect the sleeping child inside.

**Inside, Outside and The Real**

In exploring the phenomenology of the uncanny, memory and place in relation to the idea of home, Dylan Trigg writes,

> When stirs the phantasmagorical prospect that a home is different from the one we remember, then we align that difference with an error in memory rather than with an agency within the house itself. At no point does the house,

[250] Author uncredited, "Return Louise, priest pleads," *The Advertiser,* 24 January 1983, p 6.

> in its silence and whispering, come to be seen as plotting a life of its own.[251]

Once trust is broken between the inhabitants and the house they call their home, what results? Trigg argues, "reason stands no chance of assimilating the unreal into the real," and the memories of what were, of the house as having been a home become a mere "parched fragment [...] left over, a deterritorialized remnant of a previous order" that is preserved through memory alone.[252] The Bell family home now exists as a memory only. As one returns again and again to the bedroom window with its ambiguous status of having been, or not been forced open, and by whom, a question arises. Did this family home *ever* exist? Was it always a phantasy?

The real of the abyss at the bedroom window interferes, radically with the way the space of the house operates and functions. It suggests there was always a flaw in the building, an opening in the boundaries between inside and outside. Trigg writes,

> Through the uncanny, presence is stripped of its reassuring content and 'things' are reduced to their shadow—to some extent 'dead' even before their biological expiration.[253]

Time passing erases what once was, and relegates it to the realm of memory. The uncanny functions much like the real in its ability to reveal the shadows

[251] Trigg, *The Memory of Place. A Phenomenology of the Uncanny,* p. 222–3.
[252] Trigg, p. 223.
[253] Trigg, p. 225.

that lurk behind the phantasy. The uncanny calls into question what is familiar, the reliability of memory "whereupon place and time are revealed as having a concealed life, hitherto hidden despite our attempts at domesticity."[254]

The real in the subject is the "nucleus" from which all else emanates as Lacan describes,

> The subject in himself, the recalling of his biography, all this goes only to a certain limit, which is known as the real. [...] thought, at the level at which we are, always avoids—if only to find itself again later in everything—the same thing. Here, the real is that which always comes back to the same place—to the place where the subject in so far as he thinks, where the *res cogitans,* does not meet it.[255]

The real is that which one cannot escape from. It is that truth which will find representation in subconscious acts of repetition or disruption of the surface phantasies, waking the dreamer from sleep with a reminder of what they have forgotten, or the missed encounter.

**Agoraphobia: The Impossibility of Being At Home**

Dylan Trigg writes extensively on both the experience of and theories about agoraphobia, posing the following,

[254] Trigg, p. 225.
[255] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 49. Italics in original.

> For the body of the agoraphobe, orientation is only possible within a severely constricted world, around which the home is not only the centre of physical life, but also the centre of all that is real. No wonder, then, that outside the home, the agoraphobe feels his world turn unreal.[256]

The question becomes, in a house rendered uncanny through an encounter with the real, is 'home' ever possible? How can a house from which a child has mysteriously disappeared through a bedroom window ever function as a home again?

Lacan points out that in a child's game of 'here and gone,' what is being returned to, repeatedly, is the memory of the mother figure departing. He suggests that if the objective were simply for the return of the mother, the child would have cried out for her, but instead the child fixates on the departure itself. The real is not the *missing* (or missed) mother, but the trauma of *being left*, or abandoned by the mother. In the story of Louise Bell is the *girl* what is missed? Although there is certainly a desire for her return, what is repeatedly visited is the bedroom window, the place where she was last seen alive, which speaks to the fallibility of not only the house but of the family itself to protect its own. The missed encounter is that with the child as she leaves through the open window, which should never have been open. It is the way of her *leaving* which is traumatic for it remains unknown as to how, or why she left. Is it not, in fact, the family home as it was before this traumatic crime that is truly missed? The girl is intrinsic to the functioning of the house as a family home.

[256] Trigg writes a blog titled "Side Effects" which is a merging of critical and personal reflections upon the experience of agoraphobia. This quote taken from an entry on June 24 2011, http://side-effects.blogspot.com.

A window was left open and a member of the family disappeared through it, the family home became a crime scene from that time on.

Trigg theorises a relationship between silence, violence and nothingness,

> when a room suddenly becomes empty: the absence is felt more deeply. Silence must emerge and thereafter define itself by a disjunctive origin that renders the space intrinsically negative. We come into contact with this absolute form of silence when it arises from a violent dynamic that explodes before subduing.[257]

Trigg's silence aptly describes the empty and timeless space left in the home after the crime scene has been dismantled and the house is returned to its 'ordinary' state as a family home. This silence is the encounter with the real, reverberating through the house as a constant reminder that one of the family members is missing. Colin Bell makes his plea, "I hope, I plead and I beg whoever has Louise will give us a sign on her birthday." Louise would have turned eleven years of age on 24 March 1983, but the lingering question that remains to this day is, did she? Instead, the family, "have no plans for what should be a special day." There is no return to the ordinary which existed before the rupture of the real, as Colin Bell says Louise's older sister Rachel is "an inspiration to us in a way—she's had to go to school and tolerate what

[257] Dylan Trigg, *The Aesthetics of Decay. Nothingness, Nostalgia and the Absence of Reason,* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), p. 12.

she's had to put up with in the schoolyard with cruel remarks from some children" and he is "on sick leave from his job."[258]

The window doesn't lie, but neither does it reveal the truth of what really happened to Louise except in so far as revealing the family home was merely a phantasy behind which the truth was hidden. The family was never safe in their home from the abyss of a predatory gaze lurking outside the bedroom window. In the next chapter, I look at the story of Louise Bell from the perspective of asking myself where my own experience of the real is located. Is there a point at which her story becomes my own story? Are there any personal memories which I return to, or which return to me time and again? What truth lies hidden in such a memory?

[258] Christabel Hirst, "Give us a sign Louise is alive, plead her parents," *The Advertiser,* 24 March 1983, p. 20.

# *Chapter Nine: Me and Louise and the Real*

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In this chapter I am the subject. I seek an intersection where Louise Bell's story and my story overlap, asking what of her story is also *my* story? It is one thing to have shared a landscape with Louise and to have been troubled by her disappearance but is there a point where our stories actually *connect*? A deeper reason hidden beneath the surface for *why* I have chosen this story as my subject? In other words, where is *my* real? Why do I feel so haunted by this missing girl I have never actually met? The investigation of Louise Bell's disappearance is akin to a ghost hunting expedition, trawling the landscape of both the geography of girlhood and memory, for evidence that Louise *is* dead. Looking for a body to bury so that the story can move forward from this point at which it is stuck.

Slavoj Žižek theorises Lacan and the real through a study of representations of the undead in popular culture,

> let us then ask a naive and elementary question: why do the dead return? The answer offered by Lacan is the same as that found in popular culture: *because they were not properly buried,* i.e. because something went wrong with their obsequies. The return of the dead is a sign of a disturbance in the symbolic rite, in the process of symbolization; the dead return as collectors of some unpaid symbolic debt. [...] The return of the living dead,

> then, materializes a certain symbolic debt persisting beyond physical expiration.[259]

I weave a ghost story into *Last Seen Alive* to reflect this idea that Ellen is waiting for a truth to be revealed by the character of Me, and until such time, the ghost of Ellen will continue to haunt Me. The memory of trauma persists, seeking re-emergence in a variety of ways but always "comes back to the same place."[260] The ghost of Ellen appears in the bedroom where Me sleeps at night, across the road from the window that Ellen climbed through the night she disappeared. Ellen's ghost is stuck at the character of Me's bedroom window for this is where the real for Me is located. As a witness who has failed to report what she has seen, Me has effectively created an abyss in her own bedroom into which the ghost of Ellen appears as a phantasy figure. In this chapter I excavate a specific personal memory which has persisted and re-emerged over time with new meanings as new information has surfaced. It provides an answer to the question of why I have felt haunted by Louise's story, but also demonstrates the layers of meaning and information that a memory can contain, including a surprising revelation of the *true meaning.* Whilst preparing the final draft of this thesis South Australian police announced they have arrested a man, Dieter Pfennig, for the abduction and murder of Louise Bell. In this chapter I discuss my memory of meeting Pfennig. This is my real, the point where my story and Louise's story intersect.

[259] Žižek, *Looking Awry,* p. 23.
[260] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 49.

**The Real, Trauma, and Representation**

Žižek writes, the "crucial point here is that the real that serves as support of our symbolic reality must appear to be *found* and not *produced.*"[261] When I learned that I may have met a man currently in custody on allegations of abducting and murdering Louise Bell I had a visceral response akin to that sensation described as shivers running down my spine. It took me completely by surprise and altered the shape of this thesis as a result. From my own perspective this became the nucleus, or central memory which had contained important information that I did not pick up on at the time at a conscious level. The question that arose for me was did meeting Pfennig plant a seed deep in my subconscious that eventually lead me to choose Louise Bell as my subject for a doctoral thesis?

Lacan stresses, "the importance of the ever avoided encounter, of the missed opportunity" in relation to the act of repetition emanating from the real. He reminds his reader that when Freud presents the concept of repetition "he says—*what cannot be remembered is repeated in behaviour"* and suggests "the opacity of trauma [...] is then specifically held responsible for the limits of remembering."[262] Dieter Pfennig is the subject of a memory I have had since being a teenager, but only now is the true meaning of the memory revealed. I turn to the work of Dylan Trigg as a means of examining how best to approach the real, and of how to represent myself and my own memories within both the research context, and the writing (and filming) of *Last Seen Alive.*

I am both the symbolic analyst and the subject on the analyst's couch, so to speak. Here is the real challenge of being a dramatist working with source

[261] Zizek, p. 5. Italics in original.
[262] Lacan, p. 128–129.

material narrating another's story. How to create performance texts which reflect both Louise's story and my story without being either? Lacan writes, "when the subject tells his story, something acts, in a latent way, that governs" the syntax used in the telling. There is a "psychical resistance" which is the "nucleus." This nucleus, Lacan suggests, "must be designated as belonging to the real."[263] The nucleus in my own story reveals that I have potentially been exposed to the same predatory gaze as Louise but the gaze did not see me in the way it saw her. In *Last Seen Alive*, I imagine that the predatory gaze differentiated our likeness by rejecting the character of Me. I did not see the predatory gaze that eradicated Louise because it did not present to me as predatory and desiring of me, but as an unseeing, uninterested gaze that cast me into a different abyss of invisibility.

Lacan proposes that "somewhere, this unconscious reveals itself" as "that something" which "is for a moment brought into the light of day."[264] Trigg argues that the "belated recognition of the traumatic event raises the question of whether trauma is an event experienced as it occurs or an experience that is grasped only in its nonoccurance."[265] Is the traumatic event only understood in retrospect, looking back? In looking back upon the memory of meeting Pfennig, I understand something new, something quite shocking to me in the present. Trigg suggests that with "trauma, memory belongs to the present precisely through being incommensurable with the past."[266] It is in the present that I feel the shock, and this is my encounter with the real. After three years

[263] Lacan, p. 68.
[264] Lacan, p. 31.
[265] Trigg, *Memory and Place. A Phenomenology of the Uncanny,* p. 237.
[266] Trigg, p. 237.

researching this cold case, I did not ever expect to find an intersection between my subject and myself. And yet, it is there.

**Meeting Dieter Pfennig**

In 1986 I was working as a volunteer for a community legal centre in Noarlunga, a suburb not far from Hackham West. The woman who was administrator for the centre was married to a man named Dieter Pfennig, a secondary school teacher. Pfennig was (on the surface) a charming, intelligent and charismatic man who had attracted the attention of female staff members at the centre. That the women were talking about him excitedly, asserting how handsome and charming he was is the initial reason Pfennig became memorable *before* I met him.

It was at an office Christmas party that I met him and his daughters. I shook his hand, and we conversed I imagine, but the details of the conversation have not remained memorable. I recall he was holding a paper plate filled with sandwiches. The interaction rapidly became a fading memory. It was only because news broke of his arrest for the abduction and murder of a ten year old boy named Michael Black, that meeting Pfennig became a lasting memory. Pfennig was transformed from being a charming handsome man into a criminal monster. I had already been writing this memory for *Last Seen Alive* for its revelation that I had met a man convicted of abducting and murdering a young boy and suspected *nothing* at the time. Certainly I had never thought of Pfennig in relation to Louise Bell given his victim was a boy. I had written Pfennig into my memory map of girlhood because I had been so struck by the full irony of

the revelation that the man the women at the legal centre had been so taken with was accused of abducting and murdering young boys.

On 2 July 2012, *The Advertiser* ran a story with the headline, "Paedophile Murderer Dieter Pfennig linked to property being searched over Louise Bell disappearance." In this article the reader learns that "Pfennig was jailed for life with a 38-year non-parole period in 1992 for the murder of 10-year-old Murray Bridge schoolboy Michael Black." The article also details that "Michael was abducted on January 18, 1989, from a reserve near Murray Bridge" and that, like Louise Bell, "his body was never found." In the article Pfennig is suggested to have "placed the boy's belongings" in such as way as to "give the impression he had drowned." The article also asserts that "Pfennig has also admitted abducting and sexually assaulting another boy, 13, in late 1989." The police searched the house at Holly Rise "for any evidence" related to "Louise Bell or any other offenses" committed at the house. Once again Louise is presented alongside the ghost of another child, Michael Black, and readers are presented with a new criminal monster in the guise of Dieter Pfennig. The reader is reminded that Louise was regarded by her father Colin Bell as a "fairly timid girl and slightly immature for her age and fairly shy" and that her disappearance was "completely out of character," thus reminding the reader that the girl is innocent against the criminal monstrosity of Pfennig. Mention is also made of "known paedophile Raymond John Geesing" who was originally "convicted of the crime, despite no body being found." The article presents the reader with two paedophiles, three child victims (two of whom are still missing, their bodies never found) and "more than a dozen police officers from the Major Crime and Forensic branches" involved in the search of the

house.[267] Once again the story brings together the figures of the detective, the monstrous predator/s and the innocent child-victims. The three fields of the psyche are represented: the child victim lost in the real of an abyss, the criminal cast in the role of imaginary monster, and the detective attempting to restore the symbolic order.

Pfennig was named in the newspaper as a man under suspicion for the abduction and murder of Louise Bell "after police re-examined evidence from the 1983 investigation."[268] In 1991 Pfennig's house was examined in light of his being arrested for the abduction and murder of Michael Black, after already confessing to the abduction and rape of another boy (who is still alive). Previously Pfennig's name was withheld in print media reports "for legal reasons" but in 2012 it was revealed he "has been a suspect in the case for two decades, living two streets from the Bell house" in 1983.[269] In 1991, the house in question was yellow brick, as depicted in a photograph from archives reprinted in an article in the *Sunday Mail* on 9 October 2011.[270] In the photograph, a section of brick wall between two windows is captured, showing police inside the house searching. The viewer of the photograph is situated outside the house, looking in. In July 2012, the same house is depicted in photographs as having a smooth, cream, rendered facade.[271] The house looks different, but the memory of past events is not so easily erased.

[267] Doug Robertson, "Paedophile murderer linked to property being searched over Louise Bell disappearance," *The Advertiser* 2 July 2012, p. 1.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *The Advertiser,* 9 October 2011, p. 5.
[270] Ibid.
[271] Robertson, p. 1.

Symbolically this house illustrates the ways in which memory of past trauma can be hidden beneath an illusory facade, but cannot be erased entirely. Dylan Trigg writes,

> memory and place persist through their ambiguities by becoming visible in space and time. [...] As we turn to the memory of trauma, the givenness of the past will defy such possibilities. The reason for this is that the phenomenology of traumatic memory withdraws from appearances, binding itself to an event.[272]

It is suggested by the report on Pfennig that the body of Louise Bell might well have been buried in the back yard of this house. No matter the cosmetic changes made to the structure, if the body is buried there, the police will find her remains and the house will reveal its hidden truth.

The story of Louise Bell drags the past into the present, and demonstrates the ways in which the real always returns to the same place. "Ted Van Dijk, who worked on the initial investigation" into Louise's disappearance, "is helping unravel details of the crime" including helping "to review all the evidence collected during the original investigation." Pfennig's backyard is a site returned to as police have "examined closely the extent of investigations that were conducted in 1983" and felt they needed to "fully examine the backyard more than they did in 1991."[273] The backyard of Pfennig's house becomes a potential entry point to the real, moving the story forward, should

[272] Trigg, *The Memory of Place. A Phenomenology of the Uncanny,* p. 236.
[273] Doug Robertson, "Paedophile murderer linked to property being searched over Louise Bell disappearance," *The Advertiser* 2 July 2012, p. 1.

remains be found. The discovery of Louise's remains will free up the story from where it remains stuck at her bedroom window. If they find remains, they will have some sense that she was indeed murdered and hidden by a predatory criminal—whether she left her room willingly or unwillingly will no longer matter because her remains complete the story without the answer to what happened at the bedroom window. Whatever happened at the bedroom window, Louise's story can finally be told to a degree that answers the more important question of whether she is dead or alive. *If* police can find evidence of her remains.

The dig site at Pfennig's former home brings the past into the present through the memories of those who knew her. An old school friend of Louise Bell, Kylie Doubikin recalls "it was school holidays, they had police helicopters landing on the school oval and police came and interviewed us all." Mrs Doubikin "grew up in the same area" and "was friends with Louise [...] in the same class at school." Interestingly Mrs Doubikin "has lived on Holly Rise for 11 years" and comments that it seems "strange to think that of all the streets" she "ended up living on this one." Mrs Doubikin mentions that her daughter "is 13 and she understands what happened and I guess she is worried it could happen to her. I think it's a really good time for us to bring up stranger danger with our kids."[274] Mrs Doubikin demonstrates that her own daughter finds a likeness in herself to Louise in the same way that I did, so many years ago. Louise's story resonates beyond the personal and points to a more universal fear shared by others about a fear of dangerous strangers. This fear of

[274] Alyssa-Jane Tucker and Thomas Conlin, "School friend hopes mystery of missing Louise Bell will be solved," *Southern Times Messenger,* 6 July 2012, p. 2.

the predatory gaze falling upon oneself is that which transcends the personal or autobiographical.

In looking at the phenomenology of traumatic memory and place, Trigg argues,

> The temporal structure of trauma is singular: Through it, the symptomatic reappearance of the past is possibly only in a deferred interval between past and present. [...] Structurally speaking, therefore, the deferral of trauma's violence upon the subject establishes a radical split in time, with each side prey to a different subjectivity.[275]

What a memory meant may be different to what it reveals now. The past is locked in time, but over time, one can dig a little deeper, look a little harder and find something new. At the house on Holly Rise, this idea is demonstrated through the ability of new technology to assist in looking more deeply at the past. What could not be seen then, might be found now. "The equipment" being used is "high-tech, ground penetrating radar" capable of penetrating "concrete to locate disturbed ground up to a metre deep." The reader learns that "small items were taken from the scene for examination" and that police focused their attention "on a back corner of the property" where a "marquee" was "erected over the site" in order to examine a concrete slab which had previously been the floor of a shed. "Sifting pans were used to carefully examine the soil under the slab and some items were placed in bags to be taken

[275] Trigg, p. 237.

away."[276] This is the real being dragged into the symbolic order in the hope of finally answering the question of what happened to Louise. If they find her remains then they can re-instate her in the Bell family as deceased, but able to be buried, and mourned appropriately. The point being, she will no longer be in the abyss, but in the symbolic order. Although Pfennig is named in the article, the reader also learns that "police have not confirmed" he actually is a 'person of interest'.

**Digging Deeper**

"Place forms in time," Trigg proposes. "Desire stretches out towards the world, at the same time returning that world to the self. With this motion, place is both gained and lost in time, as our desires collide with the reality of things."[277] Excavating the past brings desire up against the reality of meanings in moments and memories. I now know that in 1988 I met a man who abducted two young boys, murdering one, and possibly abducted and murdered the subject of my research project. I have asked myself, over and over, since this revelation *what does it mean*? Is it merely coincidence? What place does coincidence have in my research? And yet, in my own encounter with the real, I have to ask myself, *did I know*? Is that what my real is revealing to me? Is there a missed encounter here that I have not understood until 2012? A missed opportunity to say to someone in 1988, there is some reason not to trust this man. (He was, as it happens, already under suspicion therefore my efforts would not have made any real difference of course.)

[276] Tucker and Conlin, p. 2.
[277] Trigg, p. 108.

There is another missed encounter for me. In casting myself as being *like* Louise Bell, I find that in meeting Pfennig I have encountered the predatory gaze but escaped harm. *Why*? It is this question of *why not me,* that I explore in *Last Seen Alive.* Ellen is made invisible by the act of predation, and the character of Me is made invisible by not being preyed upon. I accidentally subjected myself to the predatory gaze that sought out Louise, but remained invisible to it. (For which I am grateful, of course). This, I decided is the true missed encounter for myself.

To learn more about Pfennig's criminal monstrosity I read through legal documents related to an unsuccessful appeal to the High Court of Australia for an overturning of the verdict on his being found guilty of the abduction and murder of Michael Black. These documents allowed me to dig more deeply into the layers of meaning in my own memories of interactions with Pfennig and his family at the time he was alleged to have been abducting both boy-child victims. Pfennig presented himself as an imago of a charming handsome husband and father, very successfully hiding the truth of his criminally deviant desires. What *repeated* in his behaviour revealed the phantasy he was projecting to others.

The appeal "raises questions as to the admissibility of what has been described as propensity or similar fact evidence."[278] Evidence of a previous abduction and sexual assault of a thirteen year old boy, was allowed into the prosecution's case against Pfennig during the trial for the abduction and murder of Michael Black. At the time of this appeal, Pfennig's house at Holly Rise had been the location where one boy, referred to as "H" was kept "the

[278] *Pfennig v The Queen* (1995), BC9506435, (CJ Mason, Deane and Dawson JJ).

afternoon of the day on which the boy was abducted, the following night and morning" until "the boy managed to escape" and telephone for help. The (authoring) judge suggests "there is a question whether the appellant would have released the boy eventually." The purpose of admitting similar fact evidence is to establish a prior history, or propensity in the accused towards repeated behaviour.[279] The question is whether what is repeated by Pfennig reveals that he might have also abducted and murdered Louise Bell. Can I see a potential in the story of what Pfennig did to two children, to account for what might have been done to Louise?

In early 1989, Pfennig is known to have been in the same vicinity as ten year old Michael Black on a day the boy went to the Murray River to fish alone. The boy had ridden his bicycle, which was found leaning against a tree, along with items of Michael's clothing. Pfennig himself admits to having conversations with several children, including Michael Black in the location of a recreation park on the Murray River. When discovered missing, Police searched extensively for the body of Michael, who was originally presumed to have drowned. Failing to find the body, the "only rational alternative to drowning was abduction" and "any abduction was likely to have been for a sexual purpose" and further "it must be inferred that he was murdered by the person or persons who abducted him."[280] Louise was taken from her bedroom in the middle of the night. It is not known whether previous contact was made with her by Pfennig. The boy referred to as "H" was similarly abducted by Pfennig in broad daylight from a public space, his bicycle also left near a sea cliff edge in order to suggest the boy had drowned. In the symbolic order

[279] *Pfennig v The Queen* (1995), BC9506435, (CJ Mason, Deane and Dawson JJ), at 1–8.
[280] *Pfennig v The Queen* (1995), BC9506435, (CJ Mason, Deane and Dawson JJ), at 7 and 8.

Pfennig is guilty of murdering Michael Black by virtue of rational deduction and inference based upon demonstrating a repeated act. An act he returns to. His real is located in the repeated act of abducting boy children from public spaces. Louise is female, and was taken from the private space of her own home. Whether Pfennig is guilty of abducting and murdering Louise Bell or not, he is established as a criminal monster who has a demonstrated pattern of abducting and murdering children.

On 6 July 2012, an article published in the *Southern Times Messenger* reports that police reveal they "have failed to uncover any human remains of missing schoolgirl Louise Bell."[281] What we are left with are two child-victims lost in the real of an abyss, neither dear or alive, simply *missing.* A house on Meadow Way with an open bedroom window, and a house on Holly Rise which has been dug up in the hope of finding the bodies of Louise Bell and Michael Black. That Pfennig can be clearly linked to Michael Black is clear, multiple witnesses testified as much, including Pfennig's own daughter,[282] but any direct link to Louise Bell, if established, has not been made public in media reports (print or otherwise) until November 2013 when police announced that due to use of "low-copy method of DNA testing" and "support from Forensic Sciences SA" they have been able to "bring this case to a point where" an arrest can be made with confidence of reaching a conviction at trial.[283]

Two houses are established as failing to operate or function as family homes. Each house carries a memory of a traumatic event. Both Pfennig and his former home on Holly Rise remain potential sites to which the investigation

[281] Alyssa-Jane Tucker and Thomas Conlin, "School friend hopes mystery of missing Louise Bell will be solved," *Southern Times Messenger,* 6 July 2012, p. 2.
[282] *Pfennig v The Queen* (1995), BC9506435, (CJ Mason, Deane and Dawson JJ), at 7 and 8.
[283] Nigel Hunt, "Science key to murder arrest," *The Advertiser*, 20 November 2013, p. 8.

into Louise Bell's disappearance may return. Can either house ever, effectively, be a 'home' again? Mrs Doubikin comments, "I feel sorry sorry for the family that live in the house now too, it's not nice for them."[284] No evidence is found of human remains in the house at Holly Rise, but Pfennig, as a convicted child killer, has left a seemingly indelible impact upon the house, a memory of *something bad* having happened. Until there is closure, both houses remain geographical signifiers for an abyss into which children have disappeared. If not buried in the backyard of a known "convicted child killer,"[285]Louise could be *anywhere,* and her supposed killer could be *anybody.* If not Geesing, and not Pfennig, who? How many other criminal monsters preying on children were there in the near-vicinity of where Louise lived?

In the next chapter, I turn my attention to *Last Seen Alive* and how I arrived at the concept of an audio project presented as evidence in an archive box which solitary audience members sit with and sift through. I explore the question of how to integrate a level of audience interactivity through looking at the work of other performance companies who I consider to be working with the real in that they directly engage their audience in the creation of the live experience.

[284] Alyssa-Jane Tucker and Thomas Conlin, "School friend hopes mystery of missing Louise Bell will be solved," *Southern Times Messenger,* 6 July 2012, p. 2.
[285] Steve Rice, "Louise Bell search yields no remains," *The Advertiser,* 6 July 2012, <http://www.adelaidenow.com.au>[accessed 6 July 2012]

# *Chapter Ten: Working With the Real*

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In this chapter I discuss the challenges of working with the real in *Last Seen Alive.* Having identified the real in both the story of Louise Bell and my own relationship to my subject I now ask what role does the liveness of a performance experience play for an audience in discovering the real for themselves? Here I look at the work of performance companies that engage their audience as active participants in the live experience to discuss ways in which the real might be discovered by chance by audiences. The approaches taken by these companies inspired me to conceive of a live rendering of *Last Seen Alive* as an experience for solitary audience members placed in the role of the detective handling the evidence taken from the bedroom of the missing girl.

*Last Seen Alive* mirrors the psychoanalytic process which Lacan says "develops in and through verbal communication,that is, in a dialectical grasping of meaning. Thus it presupposes a subject who manifests himself verbally in addressing another subject."[286] There is an interaction between two entities that takes place, the one guiding or leading the other and "even if speech meets only with silence, provided it has an auditor" a response is taking place.[287] This interaction between the one who speaks and the one who listens "is the heart of" the function of speech and language "in analysis."[288]

*Last Seen Alive* is a set of monologues and bagged objects, witness statements, photographs of Ellen's house, and video footage that tell a story about girlhood fear and desire inspired by a crime of abduction and murder.

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[286] Lacan, *Ecrits,* p. 102.
[287] Lacan, p. 206.
[288] Lacan, p. 206.

Ellen has no voice in the way that Louise has no voice in the telling of her own story. The voice of Me is intended to reflect the relationship a witnesses has to a criminal event. More specifically I am exploring how one can identify with the victim of a crime in complex ways. It is this relationship to the victim that becomes an encounter with the real. This encounter reveals an uncanny revelation, that Me witnessed an event of great significance that she did not comprehend at the time. *Last Seen Alive* is about the powerful impact of fear and desire entwined in and around a guilty secret of a girl so like the victim of a crime. The audience is the auditor for Me, listening for the clues and discrepancies in her account, and finally coming to their own conclusions about Me and Ellen, and what the box of evidence truly reveals.

**Dramatist, Analyst and Voyeur**

A question posed by Lacan is, "should we see the principle of artistic creation in the fact that it seems to extract [...] that something that stands for representation?"[289] Is my goal to *represent*? Lacan discusses painting as something that "pretends to be something other than what it is."[290] A picture, Lacan argues, "does not compete with appearance" but rather the painter is potentially the "source of something that may pass into the real" on its own terms. In other words the painting holds its own power above and beyond being a representational image of a thing which the painter has painted. The painting is a thing in its own right. In *Last Seen Alive*, I strive towards creating something which stands apart from representation. In many ways, live

[289] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 110.
[290] Lacan, p. 112.

performance works similarly to how a painting hanging on a wall in a large hall does, described by Lacan,

> Who comes here? [...] the audiences. And what do the audiences see in these vast compositions? They see the gaze of those persons who, when the audience are not there, deliberate in this hall. Behind the picture, it is their gaze that is there. [...] the gaze of the painter, which claims to impose itself as being the only gaze. There is always a gaze behind.[291]

This gaze of the performance is only one gaze; there is always a gaze behind. For *Last Seen Alive* I suggest an interactive performance for a solitary audience member is one way to create an experience of encountering the real. There must be something in this interactive performance that they can discover for, and within themselves; a phantasy behind which the real can be found. It may not be found by every audience member, only those who have some personal relationship to the themes, or are affected by the space they sit in to contemplate the contents of the box. I suggest part of the process of booking out the archive box includes the taking of a photograph of the audience member, and asking them to fill out a form which will later be filed. On this form will be questions about the first person they ever had a crush on. At the end of their listening experience, the latex gloves will be bagged as evidence, and their photograph and form will be compiled into a case file and archived

[291] Lacan, p. 113–114.

with other case files of previous audience members. In other words, each audience member leaves a trace of themselves, ( literally their DNA in the sweat of the latex gloves), behind to be filed away as another layer of the archive material making up *Last Seen Alive.* This archive box can be booked out in a private room of a library setting (for example) or, as is the case for assessment of this thesis, posted out to those who require it. The archive box could also be placed within a setting that mimics the location the girl was last seen alive: a bedroom within a modest suburban house in the year 1983. For the purposes of exploring more deeply the potential of working with the real in a live performance, I will explore this particular staging idea further.

"The object here" says Lacan, "is the gaze" when he discusses what occurs in voyeurism. "At the moment of the act of the voyeur, where is the subject, where is the object?" One might ask similar questions of the interaction between the audience member, making their way alone, through a seemingly empty-yet-haunted house, poring over the life and memories of an other who once inhabited the house, when it was a family home. "The gaze is this object lost and suddenly refound in the conflagration of shame, by the introduction of the other." What the subject, who is caught looking, is seeking and finds, "is merely a shadow, a shadow behind the curtain. There he will phantasize any magic of presence" for example a pretty young girl, when in fact what lies on the other side is "only a hairy athlete."[292] A performance is really just another shadow behind a curtain whereupon the audience may project their own fantasies of what they are looking at. If one were to liken this activity of projection as being a transference, then Lacan suggests that "the

[292] Lacan, p. 182.

transference is the enactment of the reality of the unconscious."[293] In other words, an audience member ideally finds within the performance their own unconscious, their own real.

The real which sits within the unconscious is, Lacan writes, "the chapter of my history that is marked by a blank, or occupied by a lie: it is the censored chapter."[294] To deal with the real is to deal with the unconscious, and the censored chapter of the subject's history,

> What we teach the subject to recognize as his unconscious is his history [...] we help him complete the current historicization of the facts that have already determined a certain number of the historical 'turning points' in his existence. [...] Thus, every fixation at a supposed instinctual stage is above all a historical stigma: a page of shame that one forgets or undoes, or a page of glory that obliges. But what is forgotten is recalled in acts, and the undoing of what has been done contradicts what is said elsewhere, just as obligation perpetuates in symbols the very mirage in which the subject found himself trapped.[295]

Where the subject is missing, one can only speak *of* another, not on behalf of another. Witnesses do play a significant role in the handling of, and presentation of the story of Louise Bell. "As part of the latest inquiry," in 2011, "it is likely many witnesses will be re-interviewed, particularly those who lived

[293] Lacan, p. 146.
[294] Lacan, p. 206.
[295] Lacan, p. 217.

around the Bell home."[296] The witnesses in *Last Seen Alive* are drawn from the newspaper stories about Louise, and developed as caricatures, voices who attempt to speak about Louise but always end up revealing themselves. The Curious Criminologist and the Unreliable Witness appear as characters speaking to the reader or audience members. Their designated monikers reflect their subjective position and symbolic role. They operate purely as symbols.

*Last Seen Alive* positions the audience as investigators attempting to solve a mystery. The monologue for Me is presented as a diary of a young girl on the cusp of adolescence. Images of Ellen capture her as she was when she was last seen alive. The Curious Criminologist shares the grief of losing someone, and the Unreliable Witness wants to be seen by others and liked. There are no answers, no solutions to the mystery offered. All that is truly revealed by these disembodied voices is their private pain, made public through identifying with a victim.

Lacan writes of analytic practice that "mapping the subject in relation to reality, such as it is supposed to constitute us, and not in relation to the signifier, amounts to falling already into the degradation of the psychological constitution of the subject."[297] In *Last Seen Alive*, Ellen is mapped into a theatrical 'reality.' The audience enter a phantasy reality which begs the question: can the real be encountered within a performance? Yes, but only *by chance.* The potential for an audience to encounter the real within a performance of the texts might be possible if it is staged as an interactive experience within an uncanny house or Ellen's bedroom, as it was in 1983 but the key revelation needs to be their discovery that they are part of the

[296] Nigel Hunt, "Louise Twist," *Sunday Mail,* 9 October 2011, p. 1.
[297] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 142.

performance. Too late they discover a hidden camera has been filming them the entire time they have been in the space. They have missed an encounter with the person they booked the evidence out from to change their mind and not engage with *Last Seen Alive.* Whether captured on film, or filling out a form and submitting a photograph of themselves to be retained 'on file' the important factor is that each audience member becomes a part of the collection of material linked to the cold case.

**The Uncanny Home**

Ernst Fisher discusses the uncanny within a practice of making living-room theatre, suggesting the "feeling the uncanny provokes might best be described then as a sense of *imminence* at the very moment when something invisible is about to take shape or something solid to disappear."[298] Like Fischer, I am proposing a performance concept which explores the "suspension between the private and the public, and the simultaneous guise of its architectural space as theatre and domestic dwelling" which staging *Last Seen Alive* in a house or Ellen's bedroom offers. Fischer suggests, "the unmistakeable presence of theatrical signifiers within the domestic realm" challenges "the notion of 'reality', 'truth', and identity as absolute and unequivocal concepts."[299]

The audience is invited into a space which functions as a symbol in three ways: it is reminiscent of a 'family home'; there are clear signs it is a crime scene; and it is of course a site of engagement between a spectator and performance. The disembodied voice of Me speaks to the audience member as

[298] Ernst Fischer, "Writing home: post-modern melancholia and the uncanny space of living-room theatre," in *Psychoanalysis and Performance,* ed. Patrick Campbell and Adrian Kear, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 115–31, (p. 119).
[299] Fischer, p. 120.

they sift through evidence in the archive box, and experience the space where Ellen was last seen alive. Hans-Thies Lehmann, in discussing theatre as a shared space suggests, "by entering the theatrical space the spectator cannot help but become a 'participant'" and in this shared space "a heightened awareness of one's *own presence* develops."[300] In this type of theatre the site of engagement between spectator and performers, the "body of the spectator becomes a constitutive part of the staging." For the solitary audience member, I propose they be confronted by images of themselves captured by a hidden camera. In these images they see themselves as an intruder in this space, a voyeur. They see that they are the only embodied live performer in the space as their act of witnessing and investigating is translated into being the performance. In positioning the audience member as another imago in the house, I am suggesting that they are somehow a part of the story of Ellen by inhabiting the empty spaces left in the wake of her disappearance. The space of the house is a geography of memory, fear and desire.

In theorising the impact of memory upon place to create an experience of the uncanny, Dylan Trigg writes,

> The world to which we had previously accustomed ourselves through memories and dreams now adopts a sinister presence, forever sliding in and out of our temporal frame. And yet, there forever remains a tension forcing the house back on its own otherness. This

[300] Hans Thies-Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre,* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), p. 123.

> inevitable "and yet", thus attests to the ambiguity and allure interwoven into the uncanny house.[301]

During the murder trial of Raymond John Geesing, the jury and court officials visited the home of Louise Bell. On the front page of *The News,* on 27 November 1984 is a photograph of a cluster of jury members looking at what is presumably the outside of the Bell home, with a police motorbike in the foreground. In the case of Louise Bell, it is not only her absence that renders the house uncanny but the presence of others such as the jury members and the photographers and reporters who observe this tour of the Bell home for which "police cordoned off" the street "blocking it to traffic" and "four policemen stood outside the house while the party inspected the area."[302] Some level of engagement with the site-specific locations of Louise Bell's story is important for the jury to arrive at their decisions about what really happened. The symbolic order for her story, as I have suggested, is a mystery, a crime narrative, an investigation, a search for something missing, something absent.

The house is a space activated by the bodies of those who inhabit it, but, as Trigg argues,

> after a period of habituation, the boundaries demarcating the body from those things is diminished, such that an invisible force descends upon worldly things, affecting

[301] Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, p. 37.
[302] Peter Prime, "Court visits Louise home," *The News,* 22 November 1984, p. 3.

> their very being, to the extent that the point where the body begins and the object ends becomes ambiguous.[303]

This concept of a space and objects which have merged with the body is the quality of haunting I am seeking to represent in *Last Seen Alive.* I write into and film the empty spaces, and map Ellen as an absence that causes these empty spaces. For the seemingly empty spaces are themselves quite dynamic, demonstrated by the gentle movements of plants and trees caused by breezes, the cars driving by, and strangers walking through the space. What is missing I suggest, is the girl called Ellen. I present footage of Ellen waiting by a toilet block beneath a bridge over the Onkaparinga river, at a local shopping centre messing about, walking through the schoolyard, and walking off into some scrubland in order to remind the audience that she was once in these landscapes. As the jury members are taken on a tour of Louise's home and surrounds, I invite my audience on a tour of Ellen's home and surrounds. Trigg continues,

> When worldly things exist for long enough alongside the owners, then a reversal of nature occurs: The thing assumes the controlling role, preserving the identity of the owner long after the owner has died.[304]

Jury members are invited into a home and surrounding area "to understand better locations mentioned in the evidence, as well as the complex evidence

[303] Trigg, p. 295.
[304] Trigg, p. 296.

given by many Crown witnesses."[305] Louise's absent body is located in both the family home and "where the Onkaparinga River met the sea, not far from the Bell home" as though these locations and these places somehow preserve her identity and tell her story. The uncanny house must somehow stand in for the missing child and speak on her behalf, for Trigg argues, "when the dead come, they do so alongside the living who reciprocate their desires and memories, which fuse the living with the dead."[306]

Lacan proposes that it is "in so far as all human desire is based upon castration that the eye assumes its virulent, aggressive function, and not simply its luring function as in nature."[307] We see what we want to see and we seek out that which we desire to see. An audience member is invited to meet Ellen through this box of evidence and memories spoken by an unnamed woman. Through these objects left behind in her former bedroom, audience are invited to interact with Ellen, not as in a seance, but rather, as Trigg suggests, "the experience of being haunted, of sensing ghosts, and communing with the undead is a particular manner of being-in-the-world rather than an abnormal deviation from the world."[308]In other words, just reading and viewing the texts or entering the house is to symbolically, and imaginatively enter the memory of Ellen and explore her girlhood as a geography of fear *and* desire.

Crispin Sartwell, writing about the real as an experience of shock, proposes a theory regarding peoples' relationship to place,

[305] Graham Hunter, "Bell jury to view locations mentioned in murder trial," *The Advertiser,* 22 November 1984, p. 35.
[306] Trigg, p. 295.
[307] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 118.
[308] Trigg, p. 296.

> Our experience of home is a way of showing our relationship to the world. Though people may come to feel alienated from the places they occupy [...] though they may try to pit themselves against their situation and, finally, against their situatedness in general [...] they are all the time articulated within situation.[309]

Entering the house is entering a space which functions as a psyche in which the three fields of the symbolic, imaginary and real are entwined. It is a space of deception operating along the lines described by Lacan in that "if one wishes to deceive a man, what one presents to him is the painting of a veil, that is to say, something that incites him to ask what is behind it."[310] The audience can ask the question of what lies behind that which they can see, and that which they can feel. The answer though, does not lie in the house as such, but as Sartwell suggests "the locus of 'my' experience is not within me at all; experience is something that occurs *between* myself and my environment."[311] Sartwell proposes, "people seem to carry with them a connection with or yearning for a home place" and this is what each audience member brings into the environment of the house which "*is* the person whose home it is."[312] An audience member enters the house which remembers Ellen, whose absence now claims the house in its entirety as being hers. Her very absence creates an abyss in the house which eradicates the presence of all others.

[309] Crispin Sartwell, *Obscenity, Anarchy, Reality,* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 36.
[310] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 112.
[311] Sartwell, p. 34. Italics in original.
[312] Sartwell, p. 35. Italics in original.

**Monologue, the Fragmentary Diary**

Of monologic performance, Lehmann says, the "actor's speaking is now accentuated above all as 'speaking to' the audience," reaching out directly to the audience as opposed to speaking aloud to themselves on stage, or as if they are speaking to another who is invisible. [313] Lehmann suggests, "Jacques Lacan has advanced the thesis that the voice (just like the gaze) belongs to the fetishized objects of desire that he refers to with the term "*objet a."*[314] In *Last Seen Alive*, I strive for a balance between the gaze and and the voice which belongs to the lost girlhood so sorely sought by the character of Me in the now. The character of Me goes looking for a girl called Ellen only to discover it is herself she is really searching for in order to locate the kernel of fear which embedded itself within her as a girl and altered the course of her life. In the now she trains in the art of shooting hand held firearms, taking out paper targets while secretly fantasising each one is a man who finally climbs through her window in the middle of the night. A man she is ready for, armed and prepared to shoot. He does not literally exist, but he is her *objet a.*

The character of Me does not tell her story in linear, chronological sequence but rather as a someone picking up random pieces of a larger puzzle. I mimic the way in which memories surface at random, brought about by various stimuli, but ultimately circling a specific traumatic memory stuck beneath layers of other memories and phantasies. Ann Pellegrini's discussion of Paula Vogel's play, *How I Learned to Drive*, suggests that the use of fragmentary and disjointed recollections, delivered out of the linear progression of time, suits the staging of sexual injury or trauma because "[w]here the story

[313] Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre,* p. 127.
[314] Lehmann, p. 147.

of trauma is concerned, then, narrative gets out ahead of both audience and narrator."[315] She writes,

> Out of the disordered time, we catch sight of another way to live it. *How I Learned to Drive* refuses a conception of identity as an always ready, a story that could only have one ending and one beginning [...] This play, this life, could be told differently, we learn, with different endings, surprising detours, and suspended beginnings.[316]

Where does the story of Louise Bell begin? At the moment in time Louise Bell is discovered missing? Possibly, if the predatory gaze found her by chance on the night she disappeared. What if someone had been grooming Louise? Building up to a moment where he (or she) would lure Louise from her bedroom in the middle of the night? My objective is to explore the dimensions of the mystery and unanswered questions in and of themselves.

There is another important dimension to Pellegrini's discussion of Vogel's play which resonates with my own position on writing about girlhood, and the female experiences of fear and desire. "Once framed as a stark contest between good and evil, helpless victim and all-powerful perpetrator, what *conscious* space remains for either ambivalence or moral ambiguity?"[317] I use the relationship Ellen has to the predatory gaze to explore the ways in which a

[315] Ann Pellegrini, "Staging Sexual Injury: *How I Learned to Drive,"* in *Critical Theory and Performance,* ed. Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), pp 413–431, (p. 415).
[316] Pellegrini, p. 416.
[317] Pellegrini, p. 418. Italics in original.

girl might play with this predatory gaze in the mistaken assumption she is being romanced.

I take inspiration from the work of Janet Cardiff with her audio walks. Eirini Nedelkopoulou describes *Her Long Black Hair*, a walking performance, where audience members listen to a soundtrack through headphones, and are given a packet of photographs, and sent to Central Park in New York. "Cardiff's voice on the audio soundtrack guides participants through the park, often asking them to take the photos out and view" them.[318] "The audiovisual resources of the performance link the narrator and the participant within their shared physical surroundings of Central Park, shifting between the present, the recent past [...] and the more distant past."[319] Cardiff's approach to participatory walking performance most closely resembles the approach I am taking. I write a monologue which ideally seeks a solitary listener, one who speaks, and one who listens, in order to mirror the psychoanalytic model of dialogue between patient and analyst. If not literally, I conceptually invite my audience on a tour of a place loaded with memory and trauma.

**Audience, Performance and the Real**

In constructing *Last Seen Alive* as an interactive audio performance presented as evidence in an archive box booked out, or reviewed at a location where Ellen was last seen alive, I am asking the audience to participate in an experience, to enter a constructed reality as active collaborators. When looking at the story of Louise Bell's mysterious disappearance as it unfolds in the print

[318] Eirini Nedelkopoulou, "Walking Out on Our Bodies: Participation as ecstasis in Janet Cardiff's Walks," in *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, Vol 16:4, (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 117–123, (p. 118).
[319] Nedelkopoulou, p. 118.

media articles, I can identify a constructed reality into which an audience are invited as collaborators, namely the courtroom. This audience are referred to as the "court" and as the "jury."[320] At the trial of Raymond John Geesing for the abduction and murder of Louise, the "judge said it was up to the jury to reach their own decision about the evidence" with regards to the admissibility of a witness statement given under hypnosis "but he thought it would be 'unwise for you to pay regard'" to it. This jury are collaborators, not passive spectators. They are invited into a dialectical exchange which determines an outcome, a conclusion to the story being listened to about whether Geesing is or is not guilty. The judge instructs the jury that it is "for them to decide whether they were satisfied with the accuracy" of the work done by a man presenting evidence and suggests "that in a trial involving circumstantial evidence such as this, they should look at the evidence as a whole and not in isolation." The jury are guided and advised as to how to be an effective audience to the story throughout the trial by the judge. They are then charged with the task of deciding which version of the story about the role of the accused in the fate of Louise Bell is the truest version. On the final day of sitting the "judge told the jury [...] how vital the role of a jury was and told them they had played a very important part in the case" that being to bring in "their verdict at 12:44 pm today after overnight accommodation was arranged for them." It had been "a marathon 24 hour retirement by the jury of eight women and four men," to reach a guilty verdict. Three "women jurors were obviously distressed and one sobbed when the foreman announced the verdicts."[321]

[320] Peter Prime, "Court visits Louise home," *The News,* 22 November 1984, p. 1.
[321] Author uncredited, "Louise Bell jury retires," *The News,* 14 December 1984, p. 1.

*Last Seen Alive* does not offer a complete story of what happened to Ellen. It is for the audience to decide for themselves what meaning they create for themselves from the fragments. I invite audience to be both investigator and voyeur alongside Me. I want them to symbolically enter the world of the story detailed in newspaper accounts, entering a space which invites the line between public and private to be crossed. I liken the idea to reversing the notion of the public story that filters into the homes of the reader of the newspaper, instead the reader enters the home of the victims of the crime that one has been reading about. What if one could look through the police files or enter the home of the victim? What level of access are the public entitled to with regards the victim's life and story? At what point is it uncomfortable to literally walk in the footsteps of the victim, to touch their things, and listen to the ghosts of memories and fact competing for attention, and wondering if the girl was taken by force, or left willingly?

Much like the crime scene, a performance space is mapped over another, existing space for a period of time. The performance space abides by its own rules and language. The dramatic structure of the show and the architectural design of the venue in which the performance takes place functions like the symbolic order of the psyche. Australian performance ensemble, The Sydney Front, presented interactive live experiences for their audiences over seven years (1986 - 1993) which always considered "where the audience and performer were going to be" in the performance space.[322] "How we were going to interact with the audience was always the starting point. Each show was built around a specific configuration of space that created a particular

[322] *Staging the Audience: The Sydney Front 1986 –1993,* ed. Clare Grant (Contemporary Arts Media, 2012) [on DVD].

relationship between the audience and the action."[323] In my suggested concept of staging *Last Seen Alive* in a house or a bedroom, I propose only one audience member at a time be allowed to enter and interact with the performance space. I want them to be the only embodied presence in the house in order to enhance the potential experience of the uncanny, and their potential for more deeply engaging with the haunted house, and possibly encountering the real.

Key to accessing the real within a performance is the nature of the space and the relationship between the audience and what is unfolding. For The Sydney Front, "the audience had to be there, they had to take responsibility" for their part in the show and the company would ask questions such as how they could "get the audience to perform without us?"[324] I ask similar questions of my own performance concept. How to set up a space of interaction in which the audience members can discover the real for themselves, within themselves? How do I make the audience part of the show? For The Sydney Front the goal was to offer the audience a vantage point within the performance experience that allowed the audience to see "the work from a different perspective, which still able to see themselves as part of a larger group; they watch each other across the space."[325] The audience become part of the performance itself.

In *Last Seen Alive*, there is no embodied performer to interact with once they have the box of evidence. Each solitary audience member is the only body active in the performance space, which may even be the home of the audience member as is the case for assessing this thesis. To that end the work of Australia's IRAA Theatre company is of interest for their work on setting up

[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid.
[325] Ibid.

voyeuristic relationships between the spectator and action, and their use of non-theatrical spaces. *The Secret Room,* is described thus,

> (the audience) are driven to a secret location, enter an unfamiliar house, have dinner, become acquainted with this woman and her stories, and then sleep overnight, to be returned to the pick-up point the following morning.[326]

The audience is fully immersed in a familiar space which becomes uncanny in a performance that transforms "the private house in such a way that domestic and personal space are exposed to the outside viewer."[327]

IRAA Theatre have also produced an interactive work for solitary audience members to attend. *Private Eye* is described as setting up a fiction in which an individual audience member "meets with (performer) Renato in the foyer of the Grand Hyatt to see the material" gathered by a private investigator. This fictional scenario plays with performance in non-theatrical space again, as well as the audience being part of the show. Each audience member is lead up into a motel room, where they have an interaction with Renato that is disrupted by the arrival of the next audience member at the door. Audience member number 1 is hidden behind a fake wall, and allowed to watch the action unfold between Audience member 2 and Renato, which is the same scene played over that Audience member 1 has just taken part in. The revelation being for each

[326] Details about the show available on the company website. <http://www.iraatheatre.com.au/secret_room.html>[accessed 15 July 2013]
[327] <http://www.iraatheatre.com.au/secret_room.html>[accessed 15 July 2013]

audience member hidden behind the fake wall that they have just been the performer for an unseen audience member.[328]

What both The Sydney Front and IRAA Theatre do is set up performance experiences which invite the audience into an interaction in which they themselves become agents of the action unfolding. The Sydney Front describe "the live moment-by-moment negotiation that goes on between performer and spectator" as being the central concept underpinning their work.[329] To engage in this type of relationship with an audience requires a level of trust on the part of the audience member taking part. Lacan, in describing the process of analysis suggests what is obtained by the analyst "of incalculable value" is "the trust of a subject" and asks, "what does this trust signify? Around what does it turn?"[330]

For the psychoanalyst, Lacan proposes, "that he should know, in the process through which he guides his patient, what it is around which the movement turns." For the dramatist or performance-maker working with an audience they "must know [...] what it is all *about.*"[331] Psychoanalysis and interactive performance opens up a space of structured reality with its own language that the audience or analysand is not versed in, but which they learn from the experience itself. All the audience or analysand can bring to the experience is their trust in the other who facilitates the moment-by-moment experience.

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[328] <http://www.iraatheatre.com.au/private_eye.html> The website entry is quite in depth, describing a two-phase research and development process leading up to presentation, in which Renato's husband hired a private detective to follow her as part of the research.
[329] *Staging the Audience: The Sydney Front 1986 –1993,* ed. Clare Grant (Contemporary Arts Media, 2012) [on DVD].
[330] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 230.
[331] Lacan, p. 230.

I want my audience to take some responsibility for their own experience. I want them to bring something of themselves into their engagement with *Last Seen Alive.* I cannot determine the spaces inhabited in a literal sense by the audience and cannot say for certain that an encounter with the real will or will not happen.

# *Conclusion*

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This thesis, in its entirety, has been an experiment in applying a psychoanalytical theory as a creative methodology for crafting a performance text incorporating written and visual material. In dealing with source material about an unsolved crime I wanted to avoid documentary and strive for legitimate reasons why *I* should use this story of Louise Bell as inspiration. It was important for me to determine if anything of her story was actually my story to tell and working with the Lacanian concept of the real allowed me to identify a direct connection between my subject and myself. I found a dramatic nucleus from which to work my creative material which was fragmentary, non-chronological and incorporating both written and visual mediums. It is a project of pieces to put together, much like a rebus. Working with the three fields allowed me to conceive of three layers to work creatively with, and working with psychoanalytical theory brought me to the conclusion that *Last Seen Alive* is an exploration of the forces of fear and desire acting upon the psyche of a girl, and producing the woman Me has become as a result. The symbolic order assisted me in determining an overarching structure of the mystery, into which my audience is invited, and the imaginary helped me determine the role of the body within performance and concepts of ghosts and monsters to work with. I have applied Lacan's three-ringed Borromean knot model of the symbolic, imaginary and real to the creation of *Last Seen Alive* as a cold case which solitary audience members interact with, taking on the role of a detective and entering the mystery. Although there is some closure now on the Louise Bell

case, until her body is found and returned to her family no symbolic ghosts can be laid to rest yet.

The question I am left with, at the end of this project is whether or not I could go on to create a model of creative practice based on my experience working on the story of Louise Bell? Or is this a one-off, quite extraordinary project where I just happened to make key personal discoveries that made the work more meaningful, more valid? I sense that there is potential to use the Borromean knot as a model of analytical and creative practice for other projects but I acknowledge that my use of Lacan's psychoanalytic theories is imperfect and self-serving. That said, I do believe I have made legitimate headway on the potential for further developing a model of practice which translates as a type of dramatic structure to work with. As stated in my Introduction, *Last Seen Alive* is necessarily a work in progress due to the ongoing narrative of the Louise Bell case but I am happy with the results thus far.

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