

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*.

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by

Fiona Sprott, B.A., MCA

Department of Drama
Faculty of Education, Humanities, and Law
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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

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:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. S. M.', written over a light grey rectangular background.

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