

DINGO MEDIA?

R v Chamberlain as model for an Australian media event

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English
University of Sydney
March 2007

As surely as Azaria was taken by a real dingo, the Chamberlains were taken down by a pack of baying journalistic dingoes and their publishers – the *Adelaide News*, the *Sydney Sun*, and the Murdoch press.

Michael Chamberlain and Lowell Tarling, *Beyond Azaria: Black Light, White Light*, (Melbourne: Information Australia, 1999), xiv.

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ABSTRACT

Dingo Media examines the development of media events using as a case study one of Australia's most widely known criminal investigations, the disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain at "Ayers Rock". Considering the case as a blueprint for the way mass media events develop and evolve in the late capitalist era, this thesis suggests that the event marks a turning point in negotiation of the public sphere and Australian national identity. Using an original model, I trace from the 1980s five phases through which news stories pass in their evolution as modern media events by comparing the Chamberlain saga to contemporary cases involving "controversial" women, Schapelle Corby, Joanne Lees and Pauline Hanson.

The first phase examines the emerging practice of news workers focusing on personalities rather than events; the second phase analyses both the formation of counter-publics protesting the conviction, and the development of a dialogic connection between media and publics; the third phase investigates the rise of a modern celebrity industry promoting "ordinary" individuals into subjects of media discourse; the fourth phase considers the process of mythic production surrounding the Chamberlain case as related to processes of nation-building in the late 1980s; finally, the fifth phase critiques the prevalent view that, through continual retelling, the event has suffered a loss of meaning.

Axiomatic to this study will be the politics of representation, how the media records, organises and mythologises information, as well as the interaction between texts and audiences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Even before I began writing this thesis, I had a list of people I wanted to thank. In view of the agony and the ecstasy of the last five years, I wish to give my appreciation to the following: Heather Craven at the Audit Bureau of Circulations for access to circulation data on a range of Australian publications and rendering assistance through email correspondence; David Chan from the State Library of New South Wales; the staff in the Petherick Room at the National Library in Canberra for their assistance with the Chamberlain Manuscript Collection and Simon Drake from the National Film and Sound Archive who gave up hours of his time obtaining and copying news archives on the Chamberlains. Thank you also to Belinda Winnall from Network Ten for assistance with copyright and the staff in archives at Channel Nine. Fiona Crago and Mark Slattery from Beyond Distribution deserve a special mention for providing, in relation to the mini-series *Through My Eyes* (2004), media kits, DVDs, television ratings data, scene stills and the permission to reproduce these items in my thesis. In interlibrary loans at the University of Sydney, I would like to thank Rod Dyson, the “tracker” Bruce Isaacs who could find both the obscure and the mundane with a smile, and my librarian extraordinaire and next-door neighbour Gail Pryor, who always rendered assistance at the last minute returning overdue library books and provided much warm encouragement.

Also thanks to Kristen Davis and Belinda Morrissey from the Australian National University who provided friendship, intellectual support and engrossing conversation at the 25th Anniversary Chamberlain conference. To my first supervisor, Associate Professor Helen Fulton, thank you for your encouragement, assistance with an initial thesis outline and a wonderful tour of the Cambridge campus. Thank you also to Associate Professor Catharine Lumby for finding time in your hectic schedule to provide emergency supervision; I have always admired your work and am truly grateful for the chaperoning. To Brigid Rooney my primary supervisor, who believed that if the Socceroos could qualify for the World Cup, then anything was possible, thank you for your nurturing and emotional sustenance – I derived so much from our meetings.

I would like to thank director Tony Cavanaugh for giving up his time to speak with me about production of the mini-series, also Chamberlain advocate, Zillah Williams for her correspondence and biochemist, Dr David Tomlinson for agreeing to be interviewed. In particular, I would like to express my warmest thanks to Michael Chamberlain and his family for their hospitality and assistance with material for this thesis. To my cousin, Martyn – your suggestions and observations were received heartfelt – thank you for giving up so much of your time to proofread. Thanks also to my precious girlfriends for their understanding and support: Jaz, Phoe, Lee, Lys and Bec were always on the other end of the phone; my dad, “the boys” Hamish and Max, my partner Chris for his forbearance, love and patience and finally my mum – “the force that through the green fuse drives the flower” – who gave up so much of her time and supported me tirelessly throughout, this thesis is dedicated to you. As Albert Schweitzer once said: “At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us”. To all those who have lit my flame (and you know who you are) I express my sincerest gratitude.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AWW</i>	<i>Australian Women's Weekly</i>
CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination
<i>CA</i>	<i>Centralian Advocate</i>
<i>CM</i>	<i>Courier-Mail</i>
<i>DM</i>	<i>Daily Mirror</i>
<i>DT</i>	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>
NLA	National Library of Australia
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
<i>NTN</i>	<i>Northern Territory News</i>
QLD	Queensland
SA	South Australia
<i>SMH</i>	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Sunday Territorian</i>
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America
VIC	Victoria
WEL	Women's Electoral Lobby

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

17 August 1980	9½- week-old Azaria Chamberlain disappears from the family tent at “Ayers Rock”
24 August 1980	Wally Goodwin finds Azaria’s jumpsuit, singlet and nappy at the base of “Ayers Rock”
20 February 1981	Coroner Denis Barritt finds baby Azaria taken by dingo and neither Lindy nor Michael implicated in disappearance
20 November 1981	Finding of first inquest quashed by Northern Territory Supreme Court and new coronial inquiry ordered
2 February 1982	Coroner Gerry Galvin, at the conclusion of the second inquest, orders the Chamberlains to stand trial
13 September 1982	Chamberlains’ trial begins in Darwin before Justice James Muirhead
29 October 1982	Lindy Chamberlain found guilty of murder and Michael as an accessory after the fact
17 November 1982	Lindy’s daughter, Kahlia, born in Darwin’s Berrimah Gaol
19 November 1982	Lindy released from Berrimah pending appeal to Federal Court
29 April 1983	Appeal unanimously rejected by Federal Court and Lindy gaoled in New South Wales pending hearing of bail application
2 May 1983	Application for bail pending appeal to High Court rejected by Justice Brennan and Lindy returned to Berrimah
22 February 1984	High Court upholds jury’s decision in 3-2 judgment
3 May 1984	Petition of 130,000 signatures calling for full judicial enquiry and for Lindy’s release presented to Governor-General
4 June 1985	Chamberlain Innocence Committee submits new evidence and makes application for inquiry into convictions

26 October 1985	Ceremony marking the handover of “Ayers Rock” to traditional Aboriginal owners.
12 November 1985	Northern Territory Government rejects application for judicial inquiry
13 November 1985	Chamberlains’ lawyer applies for Lindy’s release on licence
25 November 1985	Application for release on licence rejected by Northern Territory Government
16 December 1985	<i>The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain</i> docu-drama broadcast on Ten Network.
2 February 1986	Azaria’s matinee jacket discovered at base of “Ayers Rock”
7 February 1986	Lindy released from Berrimah Gaol
8 May 1986	Morling Inquiry opens in Darwin
2 June 1987	Morling Report clears Chamberlains of responsibility for Azaria’s death and Northern Territory Government offers pardon
15 September 1988	Northern Territory Court of Criminal Appeal quashes Chamberlain convictions
4 November 1988	Fred Schepisi’s <i>Evil Angels</i> released
13 December 1995	Third inquest finds neither Lindy nor Michael involved in Azaria’s disappearance
25 October 2002	<i>Lindy</i> opens at Sydney Opera House
10-11 July 2004	Frank Cole claims to have buried Azaria’s body in Melbourne backyard after shooting dingo responsible on August 17, 1980
23-24 November 2004	Mini-series <i>Through My Eyes: The True Story of Lindy Chamberlain</i> broadcast on Channel 7
17 August 2005	25 th anniversary of disappearance

INTRODUCTION

*Why blame the media? It is the public who demand the goods – so if there is no news today – well, spice it up to what the public wants or ‘produce’ some, and they do, and up go the reaction of demand and money and supply and greed. None can be blamed alone. All must share – producer, reporter and consumer public.*¹

Lindy Chamberlain, *Through My Eyes*, 1990.

For a woman who, along with her family had been the focus of a maelstrom of media publicity, chased by press photographers upon entering and leaving court, tracked by cameras at a school fun run, secretly taped by police and journalists and pursued by a Channel Seven helicopter circling Avondale College in Cooranbong, Lindy Chamberlain² appeared incredibly stoic in comments she made in her autobiography about who was to blame for her ill-treatment (see above). Her argument about the burden of responsibility being shared between the media and public is not echoed in the corpus of writing on the Chamberlain case. Some feminists have argued that there are mitigating circumstances governing the level of public responsibility for the Chamberlain convictions. One socio-cultural circumstance was the masculine character of Australian frontier nationalism, a tradition against which Lindy’s presence and behaviour in the “outback” was measured.³ This view is explicit in comments that it was “the nation” and not “the populace” which demanded Lindy’s incarceration. Other critics have re-examined the historical effects of the case on the Australian public, arguing that the existence of local protest groups implied not all were convinced of Michael and Lindy’s guilt.⁴ Their comments are

¹ Lindy Chamberlain, *Through My Eyes: Lindy Chamberlain: An Autobiography*, (Port Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1990), 760. Note that two editions of Lindy’s autobiography will be used throughout this thesis, both William Heinemann (1990) and East Street Publications (2004).

² While she has since re-married changing her name to “Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton”, the former appellation will be used throughout this thesis for brevity’s sake, excepting reference to her updated publication, *Through My Eyes* (2004), where the current name is used.

³ See Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Julie Marcus, “Prisoner of Discourse: The Dingo, the Dog and the Baby” (1989) in *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’: A 25th Anniversary Retrospective*, ed. Adrian Howe, (Sydney: Southwood Press, 2005).

⁴ Norman H. Young, *Innocence Regained: The Fight to Free Lindy Chamberlain*, (Sydney: Federation Press, 1989); Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’: A 25th Anniversary Retrospective*, (Sydney: Southwood Press, 2005); Deborah Staines, “A Legal Trauma, A Public Trauma: Lindy Chamberlain and the Chamberlain Case”, *Studies in Law, Politics and Society*, 38 (2006).

supported by an extensive archive of public letters written in support of the couple and stored at the National Library of Australia.

In spite of revisions about public responsibility for the Chamberlain convictions, the media – the chief vehicle of the public sphere – remains the focus of ire, reproach and condemnation. There are two strands of critical thought on this issue: the first argues that representations of the case were homogenous and that Lindy was the victim of a misogynistic and prejudicial media;⁵ the second, that changes in media coverage of the case merely endorsed stereotypical readings of her femininity.⁶ In both strands of critical thought, Michael’s representation in the media is cursorily referenced, mainly as it compares with the veracity of Lindy’s own. Many have argued that, in contrast to Lindy, he escaped media scrutiny, not *in spite of*, but *because of* his gender.⁷

Concerning media contributions to the Azaria saga, Norman H. Young and Frank Moorhouse were the only critics to test and challenge assumptions about journalists writing on the case and the character and tone of news reports. In *Innocence Regained: The Fight to Free Lindy Chamberlain* (1989), Young made passing reference to a group of “responsible” journalists, the most notable being Malcolm Brown from the *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)*, whose coverage throughout the inquests, trial and subsequent legal proceedings remained neutral and objective. While Young recognises dissenting views amongst the rank and file of journalists, his stance on the media is mostly critical. This thesis aims to more fully appreciate the role of news workers, their changing views and the extent to which the media exerted a prejudicial influence.

⁵ Belinda Wilson, “The Making of a Modern Myth: The Chamberlain Case and the Australian Media”, (MA diss., Murdoch University, 1990); Adrian Howe, “Chamberlain revisited: The Case Against the Media” in *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’: A 25th Anniversary Retrospective*, ed. Adrian Howe, (Sydney: Southwood Press, 2005), 221-265.

⁶ Catharine Munro, “Witchhunt: Media representations of Lindy Chamberlain as witch and Princess Diana as angel”, *Refractory Girl*, 50 (1996): 15-16; Adrian Howe, *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*; Dianne Johnson, “From Fairy to Witch: Imagery and Myth in the Azaria Case” (1984) in *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’: A 25th Anniversary Retrospective*, ed. Adrian Howe, (Sydney: Southwood Press, 2005), 131-156; Kerryn Goldworthy, “Martyr to her Sex” (1986), in *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, ed. Adrian Howe, (Sydney: Southwood Press, 2005), 157-166.

⁷ See Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 10-11; Julie Marcus in *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 216; Christine Higgins, “Naturalising Horror Stories: Australian Crime News as Popular Culture” in *Australian Popular Culture*, ed. Ian Craven et.al., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 140.

Taking a further step than Young in his discussion about the impact of Australian news culture on the Chamberlain case, Frank Moorhouse argues that the predisposition amongst intellectuals to view the media as “a tight collective agency in the society representing or promoting or giving privileged voice to specific interests ... [is] without a researched basis”.⁸ In “The Azaria Chamberlain Case (1980-86): Hysteria and the Intellectuals”(1993), he points to a gap in academic research by stating that “none of us have done a thorough analysis of the media coverage”, and cites one possible reason for this as:

... aesthetic distaste with the style of coverage given by the then afternoon newspapers in Sydney, the *Mirror* and *Sun*, and by the Melbourne *Truth*. And then perhaps to the style of the two or three popular press reporters and photographers who followed the case for these papers (out of about thirty or so).⁹

He further rejects the view that “the media caused or sponsored the irrational lines of thinking”, while conceding that the organization may have played a role in the “callous atmosphere” surrounding the Chamberlains. On a final note he states: “it is worth remembering that the Chamberlains courted publicity, took and published the first photographs, made the first video, and contemplated the first book”.¹⁰ Moorhouse was certainly going against the grain of thought when he opposed intellectual views assigning to the media the greatest responsibility for the Chamberlains’ persecution, as Adrian Howe remarked in her criticism of his view: “no one has ever suggested any such thing”.¹¹ Of course, he could have addressed the cavity in academic research himself, offered evidence to support his contention or made additional comments about the way

⁸ For Frank Moorhouse, this intellectual predisposition is evident in the following works: Noel Sanders, “Azaria Chamberlain and popular culture”, *Intervention*, 16, (1982); Dianne Johnson, “From Fairy to witch: Imagery and myth in the Azaria case”, *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2, (November 1984); Jennifer Craik, “The Azaria Chamberlain Case and questions of Infanticide”, *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4, no. 2, (1987); Unsigned (article), “Lindy Chamberlain: victim of anti-woman witchhunt”, *Spartacist*, 121, (July-August 1987); Adrian Howe, “Chamberlain revisited: the case against the media”, *Refractory Girl*, 131-132, see Frank Moorhouse, “The Azaria Chamberlain Case (1980-86): Hysteria and the Intellectuals”, *Australian Cultural History*, 12, (1993), 169.

⁹ Frank Moorhouse, “The Azaria Chamberlain case”, 169.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 169.

¹¹ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 121.

the media operates as more than just a mouthpiece for privileged voices and opinions. So too, might he have recognised the detailed research undertaken by feminists in analyses of the Chamberlain print media coverage, in addition to the submission of a Masters thesis at Murdoch University in 1991 which provides an in-depth account of a number of press reports. Since Moorhouse's essay was published in 1993, critics have revisited the case, namely Adrian Howe and Deborah Staines, who separately offer an alternate view on the constitution of publics. Staines even goes so far as to say that the media was a product of late modern cultural technologies which shaped publics "neither passive in their reception, nor unanimous in their opinions".¹² While brief, her research is important to concerns raised in this thesis about the formation of mediatised publics within the Chamberlain case.

Despite its limitations, Moorhouse's "hunch" about the imbalance in academic research on the role of the media is borne out in my own analysis of the commonplace assumptions surrounding the Azaria case. Some of these assumptions include the way critics have either cursorily referenced television coverage of the Chamberlains without offering analysis of any actual news broadcasts, narrowed their selection of print items to only one Australian city or state claiming that it is representative of the whole, or failed to consider changes in representations of the case across time, in news and cultural industries. In this thesis, I heed Moorhouse's call for a more detailed analysis of media coverage, that takes into account the organisational, social and cultural changes occurring in the 1980s which affected the representation of newsworthy events. This will position the Chamberlain case as one of the first modern Australian media events.

Underlying this argument is a concern for the way the Azaria story coincided with a shift in the appearance and function of the traditional public sphere. The concept of a rational, participatory and judicious public in which free, white men could discuss the politics of business and state was replaced, in the late capitalist era, by a fractured and diffuse political space consisting of many publics, and often competing voices. Its fragmentation was for some – Jurgen Habermas the most prominent – associated with the

¹² Deborah Staines, "A Legal Trauma, A Public Trauma", 158.

decline and loss of a representative “public” and the rise of several publics interpreting “serious” news in a trivial manner.¹³ Others argued that the changes were mostly productive because, by widening the sphere of contestation and debate, marginalised groups such as women, migrants and children were given greater access to a politicised space.¹⁴ Issues that were once considered intimate and private were now being publicised in newspaper and magazine articles reporting on Lindy’s weight loss, marriage to Michael and parenting skills. The dissemination of alternate voices was also apparent in the actions of “ordinary” citizens who, apart from writing letters in support of the Chamberlains, were unaccustomed to speaking out in public, having their opinions heard or petitioning local parliamentary members. Even though recent studies have acknowledged the diversity of public opinion on the Chamberlain case – paralleling arguments that the public sphere was in a process of flux – views about a homogenous and impenetrable media still persist.

Print articles and television programs drawn from the first two years of media coverage might be used to confront arguments about the uniform hostility of news reports of Azaria’s disappearance. They provide evidence of a decisive shift in representations of the Azaria story, which began as a tragic disappearance at “Ayers Rock” and soon became a narrative about its central participants – the dingo, the mother, the victim, the landscape and religion. This is not to say that early media coverage caused the event to disappear entirely, just that its characters featured more prominently in representations of the story. Some of the television programs discussed in this thesis have not been analysed before in academic discourse, and therefore provide a new approach to the study of media representations of the case. With this new approach I am able to track changes in treatments of the story’s participants – their movement from description to discourse – and the resurrection of a range of culturally contingent myths about the landscape’s

¹³ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans., Thomas Burger, (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1989), xii, 142-3.

¹⁴ Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy”, in *The Phantom Public Sphere*, ed. Bruce Robbins, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); John Hartley, *Popular Reality: Journalism, Modernity, Popular Culture*, (London: Hodder Headline, 1996); Catharine Lumby, “Media Culpa: Tabloid Media, Democracy and the Public Sphere”, *The Sydney Papers* 11, no.3, (Winter 1999); Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 77-79.

hostility, Aboriginal “trackers”, the loss of children in the bush and the role of motherhood. Myths like these continue to shape and contour the ideological limits of Australian national identity and, for the most part, offer us a glimpse into the competing narratives surrounding Azaria’s disappearance.

A word on usage: throughout this thesis, I refer to the infant’s disappearance at the site formerly known as “Ayers Rock”, rather than its traditional name Uluru since, as I discuss in Chapter Four of this thesis, the former conveys the controversial debates over origin, legitimacy and identity which were articulated throughout the 1980s via the Chamberlain case. Placing “Ayers Rock” and “the Rock” in inverted commas suggests the contestability of the term and also the difficulty non-Indigenous Australians still have in settling the name of the site, even after its transfer to traditional owners in October 1985.

In addition to print and broadcast media reports used here to contest claims that an incurable prejudice permeated the Australian media in the 1980s, I will draw upon a selection of previously unanalysed pamphlets, booklets and newsletters held at the State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW). This material gives valuable insight into the diversity of public opinion on the case, and is evidence of a dialogic connection between the media and public that was most apparent between 1982 and 1984. In this two-year period, members of the public used media coverage of the case, including a television documentary hosted by Kevin Hitchcock, newspaper and magazine articles, to substantiate claims the Chamberlains were innocent and reach out for a constituency in the media through self-published titles. Needless to say, the leaflets’ authors were keen to build in the media a case for Lindy’s exoneration, as this would further strengthen and publicise their cause. Yet the authentication of their claims in the media had a rallying effect on the Chamberlain support groups, directing the tone and focus of their protests and petitions and, in a theoretical sense, implied the diversity of media coverage of the case. Expressing their discontent with the guilty verdict, the pamphleteers paralleled those who corresponded with Michael and Lindy, and whose letters (numbering some 20,000 written between 1980 and 1990) are held in archives at the National Library of

Australia (NLA) and were lately examined by Adrian Howe. The letters chronicle the response, mostly supportive, of “ordinary” Australians to the Azaria saga and are evidence of the formation of “counter-publics” in opposition to the guilty verdict. While similar in kind, there are important differences between the pamphlets and those letters that Howe examines at the NLA. For instance, the pamphleteers employed language that sought to be objective and technical, appealing to the minds of a “thinking public” dissatisfied with the verdict. By contrast, many of the archived letters were of a personal nature (addressed to Lindy and/or Michael) and “reveal[ed] the depth of emotional involvement in the Chamberlain case experienced by countless thousands of ordinary Australians”.¹⁵ Regardless of differences in the tone and approach of Chamberlain letter-writers and pamphleteers, the sheer proliferation of counter-publics at this time suggests there was a transformation occurring in the public sphere, one which affected the media as much as its constituted publics.

Assumptions have also been made about media output without distinguishing among the various print, television and radio platforms. Studies which do differentiate make only passing reference to a single television program or series incorporating the Chamberlain story, mostly Channel Nine’s *60 Minutes* and, on one or two occasions, the documentary *Azaria: A Question of Evidence* (1984) hosted by Kevin Hitchcock.¹⁶ While research on the role of the press in the Azaria event has been prodigious – a testament to the wide availability of archival material in library collections and on microfiche – writers and critics have mostly overlooked the significance of the case’s television news coverage. One reason for this oversight has to do with the often-quoted reference to comments Michael Chamberlain made in his autobiography that the case’s sensationalist element was “largely head-line induced”.¹⁷ Another reason has to do with the difficulty accessing visual material and the prohibitive costs associated with duplicating original news footage. With the assistance of staff at the National Film and Sound Archive

¹⁵ Adrian Cunningham, “Icons, Symbolism and Recordkeeping: The Lindy Chamberlain and Eddie Mabo Papers in the National Library of Australia”, *Australian Academic and Research Libraries* 28, no.2, (1997): 106.

¹⁶ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*; Norman H. Young, *Innocence Regained*.

¹⁷ Howe uses Michael Chamberlain’s comments as the basis for her decision not to analyse the celluloid media, see Adrian Howe, *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 123.

(formerly ScreenSound) I was able to overcome some of these difficulties, and even access newsreel so rare that my continuing interest prompted staff to make dubbed copies to prevent any future decay. The archival research led me to question views about the undifferentiated character of print and broadcast media reports. Obviously televised images of the couple's appearances at court, interviews with the media and intimate exchanges caught on camera added intensity to their media exposure in a way that newspapers or magazines could not emulate. But more than that was the "live" dimension of the broadcasts, in particular, the televising of the findings of Coroner, Denis Barritt, on 22 February 1981. The case's evident "publicness" was attributable to Barritt's decision to allow cameras inside his courtroom in an Australian legal first, which enabled the public to watch the case unfold in "real" time and directly participate in its outcomes. Additionally, it set a precedent for the production of modern celebrity in Australia, in which "ordinary" people became famous, as Joy Kuhl, forensic scientist for the prosecution told a conference in 1986, after it emerged that her scientific method of testing Azaria's clothing was inappropriate: "One can become a public figure without the support and advantage of actually being such a figure" (*Advertiser*, 6 February 1986).

While I highlight differences in print and broadcast coverage of Azaria's disappearance, my main focus is on instances of their convergence. This is because media reports of the event characterised wider changes occurring in the 1980s Australian media landscape, including the shift towards entertainment-based news coverage and an emphasis on "personalities" rather than "events". The Chamberlains' interview with Ray Martin on *60 Minutes*, for instance, summoned public sympathy for the couple in a personality-driven style of delivery which contrasted markedly with the "paternalistic" approach of current affairs journalism in the 1960s. Mirroring conventions used in the more "downmarket" print publications, such as bold typeface and personalised content, the program gave audiences insight into the couple's private world. The common news language typified changes to dimensions of the public sphere, in particular the conflation of "quality" and "popular" news categories. This was evident in the similar style and content of newspapers recognised as "broadsheet", such as *SMH*, and those with a "tabloidese" format, such as the *Daily Telegraph (DT)*. The crossover was also evident in

the increasing personalisation of news and current affairs television broadcasts. I trace these and other developments occurring in the 1980s public sphere through the changed appearance of Australian current affairs journalism, the public relations industry, celebrity production and mass-market audiences.

All this points to arguments made in this thesis that the Chamberlain case occurred at a tipping point in Australian popular culture following the intensification and globalisation of the contemporary media. In the 1970s and 1980s, Australia's media industry was more competitive than ever before following the advent of colour television in 1975, the government-funded Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) in 1980 and the servicing of regional areas by domestic satellites in 1985. The refining and development of simulcast and live broadcasting technology enabled television stations to stand as proxy for audiences in real-time during the unfolding of landmark events, whether they were an historic test cricket match or a murder investigation. The Chamberlain case was an event in which new and improved communication technology was utilised, changing the way news products were advertised and, in turn, consumed by audiences.

Improvements to the global flow of information cultivated the conditions necessary for a modern media event like the Chamberlain case. I use the term "media event" in a "public domain" sense, rather than in a restricted disciplinary way, simply to emphasise the mythic significance of the Chamberlain narrative, a story in many ways "owned" by the Australian public. Of course the term "media event" has developed, since the 1980s, a specific application in academic discourse, culminating in Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz's, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (1992). In their collaborative work, Dayan and Katz define media events as "*interruptions of routine; they intervene in the normal flow of broadcasting and our lives*".¹⁸ As well as distinguishing the "normal" or conventional news coverage from the spectacular, the national, the global and the compelling, they argue that media events are transmitted *en*

¹⁸ Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*, (Cambridge: Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1992), 5. The definition offered by Dayan and Katz is echoed in McKenzie Wark's description of "media events" as "exceptional moments" which are understood "in the sense of singular irruptions into the regular flow of media experience", McKenzie Wark, *Virtual Geography: Living with Global Media Events*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), vii.

direct or “live”, occur in “real time”, have a pre-planned character since broadcasters are often given advance notice of their occurrence (such as the wedding of Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana), are treated with “reverence” and “ceremony” by journalists and promote the unity, or reconciliation of certain national, communal issues.¹⁹ However Nick Couldry critiques this formulation in *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach* (2003), on the basis that media events need neither be “live”, nor “socially integrative”, since he asks, “what of societies which are in conflict and lack obvious consensus?”²⁰ Indeed, the Chamberlain case was one such media event that polarised a very broad section of the Australian public over the culpability of the accused couple, Michael and Lindy. While acknowledging these disciplinary uses of and debates about the phrase, I deploy “media event” in my own argument as it is more commonly understood – namely, as a media-driven phenomenon that is complex, spectacular and dynamically unfolding in time.

But why use the word “modern” in relation to the Chamberlain case? Of course, Azaria’s disappearance was not the only event to occupy the Australian public’s imagination. Two entirely different events that have also shaped and crystallised aspects of Australian national identity include the Glenrowan capture of Ned Kelly and the captivity narrative of Eliza Frazer. Both involve the elevation of otherwise “ordinary” individuals – Kelly, a bush outlaw, and Frazer, a navy captain’s wife – to the status of celebrity. In fact, their names are so much a part of the Australian cultural tradition that they need no further explanation. In recent times too, certain events have increased the flow of media traffic including the disappearance of Kings Cross publisher, Juanita Nielson, on 12 July 1975 and the attempt on 16 January 1979 by eighteen year-old Ukrainian woman, Lillian Gasinskaya, to seek political asylum by jumping off a ship in Sydney Harbour dressed in a red bikini. No doubt, controversial events have dotted the Australian media landscape and will continue to do so, but the Chamberlain case was the first “modern” media event, in that it followed advancements in communication, cable and satellite technologies in the 1980s, which gave spectacle to “live” audiences. The sheer persistence of the event in the public domain via nightly news broadcasts, arresting

¹⁹ Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events*, 5-8.

²⁰ Nick Couldry, *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach* (London: Routledge, 2003), 65.

headlines and frequent controversies distinguished this case from its contemporaries. The Chamberlain saga therefore took place at a turning point in popular culture in which an “ordinary” woman became a celebrity in the modern sense of the word, and the Australian public expressed a desire for, and interest in, the relentless circulation of her image.

Image production forms the basis of still further assumptions in the Chamberlain literature about the legacy of the “original” or “primary” event in a world of simulation. In contemporary research on Azaria’s disappearance, regret has been expressed for the loss or transference of meaning from the event as a result of the cycle of repetition.²¹ The overwhelming conclusion is that in late capitalist society the “natal scene” can no longer be distinguished from its representation, since the boundaries separating imagination from reality have been made increasingly indistinct. This theory has its merits, particularly if we consider the spectacularly rapid pace with which images are produced and transmitted in the modern world. However, as I argue with reference to re-enactments of the Chamberlain story (some of which have yet to be analysed in academic research) including a dramatised documentary, motion picture, opera, mini-series and (unrelated) newspaper advertisement, nostalgia expressed for “the loss of the original” must be separated from a “loss” of meaning. This is because, across time, the event continues to attract new interpretations, perspectives and alternate readings. Its evolution is dependent upon meaning-making regimes, such as the media, to shape and produce landmark events. But rather than diminishing experiences of the Azaria event, these perspectives appear to have enhanced and intensified them.

Despite the Azaria saga’s adherence to the decade of the 1980s and its socio-cultural and institutional developments, the event is not so context-dependent that its themes, characteristics and patterns of representation cannot be found elsewhere. In fact, the event compares well with other contemporary cases involving “controversial” women, that is, women causing or subject to dispute and/or argument in popular debate,

²¹ Examples of this tendency within the Chamberlain literature can be found in Noel Sanders, “Azaria Chamberlain and Popular Culture”, in *Australian Cultural Studies: A Reader*, eds. John Frow and Meaghan Morris, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993); Christine Higgins, “Naturalising Horror Stories”.

such as outback attack victim, Joanne Lees, Bali drug-trafficker, Schapelle Corby, and former One Nation leader, Pauline Hanson.²² For this reason, I devised an original five-step model to catalogue, trace and record the phases through which media events pass in their evolution, using the Chamberlain case as the benchmark (see Figure P.1). Each phase, divided into a corresponding chapter in this thesis, reveals a two-year time frame and an ideological event characterising the media reports of that period. The temporal structure I have used in this model should be considered elastic and not a definitive account of the way all media events develop. By making these two-year periods flexible, I am able to demonstrate how the model provides a good framework for looking at not just successive phases, but different forms of representation. This is the case for the final chapter in which I examine, across time, paradigmatic shifts in cinematic treatments and dramatisations of the story from the release of the first television documentary, *The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain* (1983), to the most recent screen product, the mini-series, *Through My Eyes* (2004). For the most part, while the Chamberlain media event has followed a literal historical progression, I do not wish to apply this to all landmark events as, indeed, each phase I have identified can coexist, deflate in importance and then resurface according to wider social and cultural contexts and concerns. What I am merely trying to illustrate in this thesis is that the model offers a set of propositions for better understanding the successive phases of image production attendant on the Chamberlain case, and other cases involving modern, controversial women. The five-step model challenges assumptions about the undifferentiated character of Lindy and Michael's media representations.

In terms of historiography, research on the Chamberlain case has been extensive, with a great number of scientists, criminologists and lawyers analysing the forensic evidence and the legal safeguards required to ensure similar judicial errors do not recur.²³

²² *The Australian Little Oxford Dictionary*, 4th ed., s.v. “controversial” and “controversy”.

²³ Journalist Malcolm Brown and Criminologist, Paul Wilson, offer a comprehensive analysis of the physical evidence presented at the Chamberlain trial, see Malcolm Brown and Paul Wilson, *Justice and Nightmares: Successes and Failures of Forensic Science*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1992). Stuart Tipple, solicitor for the Chamberlains from 1981 to 1988 wrote an informative essay questioning the “infallibility” of forensic science and the legal system’s reliance on scientific evidence. He suggested a number of reforms needed to be made in the preservation of test plates, maintenance of control samples, the use of clear and simple language by expert witnesses and transparent forensic laboratories, see

There are also several texts written by journalists stationed at the Chamberlain legal proceedings who offer first hand accounts of the case as it unfolded,²⁴ with a persistent number regarding the dingo as one of Australia's scapegoats.²⁵ In the realm of cultural studies, the bulk of analysis has held the media responsible for the ill-treatment the Chamberlains received, either directly prejudicing the trial in a "voyeuristic media frenzy",²⁶ or acting alongside an unjust Australian legal system to secure a guilty conviction. Most assume that in the media "patriarchal, racist and conformist attitudes were privileged", making news coverage invariable, static and overwhelmingly biased against the Chamberlains' story of dingo abduction.²⁷ Their examination of the evidence usually takes a distilled approach, with some focusing on the case's mythical dimensions,²⁸ some on its theatrical components,²⁹ others on local versus international media perspectives³⁰ and then, the vast majority, who analyse the print media to the neglect of all others. I address this imbalance in the Chamberlain literature by examining, comparing and contrasting a variety of media models demonstrating the changeability of coverage.

Stuart Tipple, "Forensic science: The new trial by ordeal?", *Law Society Journal* 24, (August 1986): 44-52. Ken Crispin, (Counsel for the Chamberlains at the Morling Inquiry) also published an illuminating study of the legal and social aspects of the case, see Ken Crispin, *The Crown versus Chamberlain 1980-1987*, (Sydney: Albatross, 1987).

²⁴ Among these are John Bryson, *Evil Angels: The mysterious disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain*, (Sydney: Hodder Headline, 2000); Steve Brien, *Azaria: The Trail of the Century*, (Sydney: QB Books, 1984); James Simmonds, *Azaria: Wednesday's Child*, (West Melbourne: TPNL, 1982); Richard Shears, *Azaria: The Mysterious Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain*, (Melbourne: Sphere Books, 1982).

²⁵ Along with Steve Brien who argued the dingo hypothesis was mere fabrication, Buck Richardson wrote in 2002 about the Chamberlain cover-up in which Aidan's identity as the real killer was concealed by his parents, see Buck Richardson, *Dingo Innocent: the Azaria Chamberlain mystery*, (Queensland: LeapFrog Press, 2002).

²⁶ See I. Freckleton, *Prejudicial publicity and the courts*, *Australian Law Reform Commission*, (Sydney, 1986); Adrian Howe, *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 2; Paul Wilson, *Media distortions of crime and miscarriages of justice*, Australian Institute of Criminology, (Canberra, 1987).

²⁷ Christine Higgins, "Naturalising Horror Stories", 140.

²⁸ Noel Sanders, "Azaria Chamberlain and Popular Culture", 86-101.

²⁹ *ibid.* Helen Grace also adopted a similar approach to Sanders in her examination of the "theatrics of the Chamberlain trial", see Helen Grace, "A Shroud of Evidence", in *Lindy Chamberlain revisited: A 25th Anniversary Retrospective*, ed. Adrian Howe, (Sydney: Southwood Press, 2005), 191-199 (note the publication first appeared in the journal, *photophile* in 1986-7). The creation of *Lindy* (2002) an opera on the Chamberlain case would appear to support claims of a theatrical narrative.

³⁰ Christine Higgins, "Naturalising Horror Stories", 135-148.

Still other analyses argue from a liberal feminist perspective, by describing the media as a patriarchal institution over-represented by men.³¹ This view is supported by statistical evidence pointing to an imbalance in the ratio of male to female journalists in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. In a study of the institutional absence of women in a selection of Australia's popular newspapers – the *Courier-Mail*, the *Sunday-Mail*, the *Telegraph* and the *Sun* – Rosemary Harris argued that men outnumbered women by 4:1 and that, in 1984, women were entirely absent from senior editorial positions in these newspapers.³² These figures appear to support the conclusion that a culture of male dominance permeated Australia's news profession at the time of the Chamberlain case. However, it would be misleading to argue that all journalists believed Lindy guilty or had the intention to sexualise her image. Such a view would overlook industry-related issues that affect the production and consumption of media texts, such as the financial constraints imposed by advertisers, the relationship between editors and copywriters, the presence of female journalists in a male-dominated environment and the individual response of news workers. In relation to this latter point it might be asked whether all female journalists are feminists, and whether all of their male counterparts are unsympathetic to women. Anne Summers contributed a worthwhile comment to this debate by opposing the prevalent view that the only way to address sexist attitudes in the media and foster a culture of femininity is to employ more women journalists, editors and producers. She argued that while it is necessary that women participate in the news making process, this alone is not sufficient; rather, it is the corporate culture that needs to be changed, along with the idea that women in high profile media positions are required, in addition to the stresses and strains of their employment, to be activists and advocates for feminism.³³

Contrary to the views one might anticipate from early feminists writers on the case, not all attributed Lindy's persecution to a hostile, predominately male, media institution. Those writing in the six years after Azaria's disappearance argued that

³¹ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 223, 225.

³² Figures taken from Rosemary Harris, 'Women, workers, ladies or chicks? How the *Courier-Mail* sees women', *Hecate*, 10, no.1, (1984): 28-48.

³³ Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police*, 2nd rev'd ed., (Victoria: Penguin Books, 2002), 6.

responsibility should be shared between the state, media and public. Dianne Johnson was the first to adopt such an approach in her articulation of the witch theme in “From Fairy to Witch: Imagery and Myth in the Chamberlain Case” (1984). Her essay targets the community and its “patriarchal social order”, the justice system for “instigat[ing] a legal vendetta” and media workers, in particular a *Sun* journalist, who “doggedly pursued his victims”.³⁴ No one group is immune from her detailed analysis of the event.

So too for Kerryn Goldsworthy, who argues in “Martyr to her Sex” (1986), that the case “elicited a violent reaction from practically the entire population of Australia, as though it somehow involved everyone and therefore demanded a personal response”. Not just the Australian public but Western society was to blame for its ambivalent attitudes towards motherhood, in what was evidently “a trial by jury, by media, and by the collective unconscious of an entire nation”.³⁵ It is significant that in early feminist work all Australians were to share responsibility for the Chamberlains’ miscarriage of justice, given the dramatic turn that would later take place in literature on the case.

Catherine Rogers, publishing in the same year as Goldsworthy, was also of the view that “we, the public” and “we, the judge”, in concert with the media and the “fantastic fabrications” of law and science, were to blame for Lindy’s conviction for murder.³⁶ In a series of notes accompanying her photographic exhibition on the Chamberlain saga she maintained that the camera lens, as much as those consuming the visual spectacle, had a role to play in the ensuing judicial error.

But by the late-1980s, feminist views about the Australian public’s contribution to the saga were modified. Critical distance from the event and, much later, the unearthing of a new archive, transformed their attitudes towards the public. Despite this, “the media”— as it was generally described underlining its homogenous character – continued to attract censure and reproach from academics. Having said that, at no stage in this thesis

³⁴ Dianne Johnson, “From Fairy to Witch”, 143, 183, 141.

³⁵ Kerryn Goldsworthy, “Martyr to Her Sex”, 158-9.

³⁶ Catherine Rogers, “The Nature of Evidence” (1986), in *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, ed., Adrian Howe, (Sydney: Southwood Press, 2005), 168-70.

do I apologise for or excuse the media's misreporting of facts, the questionable tactics used by some journalists to obtain interviews with the Chamberlains, or the oftentimes sensationalist coverage. Instead, I hope to revisit media perspectives on Azaria's disappearance from a twenty-first century feminist viewpoint and highlight the evolution of a variety of representations related to the primary event.

Adrian Howe is one critic whose opinion about those responsible for Lindy's vilification has altered, but she remains steadfast on the stereotypical nature of media coverage of Lindy, and the comparative lack of importance of news representations of her husband, Michael. Regardless, Howe's research marks the most significant contribution to the Chamberlain case by a feminist academic. In 1989, 1997 and 2005 she returned to the saga, each time revising and reconsidering the evidence in its developing social and cultural context. Her work encapsulates, unlike any other critic, the mood and attitudes of the period in which she wrote. Her first essay, "*Chamberlain Revisited: The Case against the Media*" (1989), was borne out of a series of lectures on "Women Who Kill" delivered at La Trobe University in the 1980s. The essay was later the basis for a play in which the media was put on trial for murder, and the Australian public charged with "aiding and abetting" the crime. The dramatic transformation Howe's essay underwent was stimulated, no doubt, by the emotional language she had employed in discussions about the inherent bias in the media and its overtly patriarchal sentiments.

It is difficult, however, to be persuaded by Howe's rhetoric in relation to Lindy, given that she offers no control sample or comparative analysis with Michael's own media representation. Howe, as the play's author, even silences him in the performance at La Trobe University.³⁷ Of course, there is plenty of evidence to support her argument that Michael did not suffer the same level of public scrutiny or inspire the sensationalist media coverage directed at his wife. And recently, composer Moya Henderson's decision to marginalise Michael's role in the opera, *Lindy* (2002), was exemplary of this more general phenomenon in academic analyses of the case. Nonetheless, he was subjected to prejudicial media publicity, and failing to recognise this denies critics the opportunity to

³⁷ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 119-120.

explore the limits of gendered representations in the 1980s. It also begs the question, can women critically analyse the portrayal of masculinity in the contemporary media without being labelled anti-feminist? In this thesis I compare and contrast media reports about Michael's behaviour before, during and after the trial.

Turning her focus in the 1989 essay towards representations of Lindy as a witch-like killer, Howe proposes that the media "be put on trial for murder", since "the Australian media, aided and abetted by a large cross-section of the Australian people, murdered, killed in cold blood, the possibility of a fair trial for Lindy Chamberlain".³⁸ She confesses to being persuaded by "media-mediated scientific evidence" that Lindy was guilty of murdering her daughter and excoriates her own "suspension of critical acumen and feminist sensibility that was astonishingly derelict in a trained thinker and a self-defined feminist".³⁹ Despite the passionate regret she displays in response to her own duping by the media, Howe admits that by 1986 there were sections of the media which reclaimed Lindy as a "normal, natural woman". Howe argues that Lindy's portrayal as a slim, attractive figure was timely given that she now conformed to the "media's notion of femininity", and she provides evidence of an enduring obsession with Lindy's body, even after her reclamation by the press.⁴⁰ This thesis aims to redress blanket assumptions that there was a sustained bias against Lindy in the media and that she remained a victim of stereotyped representations.

That the media endorsed feminine stereotypes despite changes in the Chamberlain press coverage is a view advocated by Australian Associated Press (AAP) journalist Catharine Munro. Like Howe, she describes the media's "hostile response" to Lindy, highlighting the difficulty women experience in their attempts to redefine or control mediated productions of self. Comparing media representations of Chamberlain and the late Princess Diana, she concludes that women are often polarised into categories of "good" and "bad". She argues that changes in media coverage of Lindy merely show her swapping the "broomstick" for the "Hoover" as, by now an innocent woman, she

³⁸ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 223.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 222.

⁴⁰ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 255-7.

presented a more acceptable image of a “good wife and mother”.⁴¹ Munro adequately conveys the obstacles women must overcome in their promotion to public life, but processes of change and the complexity of women’s interactions with the media are overlooked. This subject is addressed in Chapter Three, where I examine the rise of publicity industries and those strategies Lindy and other controversial women have employed to avoid stereotyping.

A year after Munro’s essay was published, Howe returned to the Chamberlain case, analysing the same “overtly misogynist script” the media had composed for Lindy years before. But in “Imagining Evidence, Fictioning Truth – Revisiting (Courtesy of OJ Simpson) expert evidence in the Chamberlain case” (1997), her remarks about the gendered structuring of Lindy’s image are passing, favouring instead a comparative analysis of the regimes of knowledge and truth produced in the Chamberlain case and in the trial of North American football star, O.J. Simpson.⁴² In particular, she highlights the displacement of witness testimony and the tyranny of expert knowledge demonstrated in “two great trials by media”.⁴³

But by 2005 Howe had re-focused her attention on Lindy’s media representations, firstly in the introduction to her edited compilation of feminist essays, *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’: A 25th Anniversary Retrospective* (2005). Here, she begins by colouring the “crime” scene at “Ayers Rock”– the monumental backdrop to Azaria’s disappearance – to suggest that the frontier and its characters (“Aboriginal trackers”, “dingoes” and “white campers”) inspired the “fervid imagining of a sensationalising, unscrupulous and frequently misogynous media”.⁴⁴ At this stage it appears little has changed since her first essay in 1989, in that she still finds evidence in the media of “a damning configuration of misogynous slurs” against Lindy, an unmistakable “trial by sex” that led to her wrongful imprisonment, and a gendered condition that was “quite

⁴¹ Catharine Munro, “Witchhunt”, 16.

⁴² Adrian Howe, “Imagining Evidence, Fictioning Truth- Revisiting (courtesy of OJ Simpson) expert evidence in the Chamberlain case”, *Law, Text, Culture* 3, (1997): 83.

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 2.

simply inconceivable” for Michael Chamberlain whose “trial was not permeated with a deeply ingrained cultural suspicion of a non-conforming masculinity.⁴⁵ Her latest return to the case, commemorating its twenty-fifth anniversary, is an attempt to:

... exorcise the demons manifested so dramatically during the long and seemingly never-ending saga of the death of Azaria Chamberlain. Those demons include trial by media, blind faith in scientific evidence, a paralysing incapacity to think critically about media representations of supposedly ‘deviant’ and criminal women, deeply entrenched misogynous beliefs about the existence of innately evil, witch-like women and, of course, a conviction based on circumstantial evidence.⁴⁶

The Australian public – either as a dominant social and cultural group or comprised of smaller marginalised groups – is entirely absent from Howe’s list of Chamberlain “demons” and there is an obvious change since 1989 in her attitude towards the community at large. Instead of dwelling on the nation’s hostility towards the couple, she says it is time to “celebrate the people who were not caught up in the wave of media-driven hysteria”.⁴⁷ This she does in an insightful and detailed analysis of the Chamberlain Papers (alluded to earlier) held at the NLA. More than anything, the archive disputes claims about the homogeneity of publics and their articulation of mainstream voices. Instead, such letters provide evidence of a “kinder, gentler and more compassionate nation composed in part of people describing themselves as ‘quiet, good living people, and not cruel’ who engaged with the ‘trial of the century’ in an open-minded and sympathetic way”.⁴⁸ One question this thesis asks is whether the media – an institution which shapes and contours the public sphere – can, as Howe proposes, remain homogenised and undifferentiated in its representation of events in a culture that articulates marginalised voices and produces counter-publics.

⁴⁵ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 7-12.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁷ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 12.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 300.

The mostly uncontested assumption in the Chamberlain literature, that the media articulates a single, mainstream voice in which women are victimised and discriminated against, requires further consideration, especially in light of the women's movement and those technological and social changes I alluded to earlier when discussing the fragmentation of the traditional public sphere. Deborah Staines' argument is nearest to my own, in that she says that out of the Chamberlain case a range of publics was constituted and a multiplicity of voices articulated. In "A Legal Trauma, A Public Trauma: Lindy Chamberlain and the Chamberlain Case" (2006) she outlines critiques of Habermas' idealisation of the public sphere as a site of rational debate. Using Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge's discussion of the media's function under late capitalism, she identifies in the Chamberlain case "publics and publicity mobilised across spaces striated by media technologies and social diversity".⁴⁹ Her argument is that the publics formed in relation to the case were active and diverse in their articulation of opinions.

I intend to elaborate further on the changing functions of the modern public sphere in relation to the Chamberlain case, and the differing publics it produced. I also intend to argue that changes to "domains of access"—that is, those spaces guaranteeing individual participation in public life that were carved out of the virtual expansion of the public sphere—also affected the appearance and function of the mass media. This is because the media and public sphere were so intertwined in the late twentieth century that changes to one must have affected the other. All this is to argue that the Chamberlain saga coincided with an elemental shift in the structural platform of the public sphere, that which heralded the rise of complementary and, often, contradictory viewpoints. Certainly, the "domains of access" were not open to all and not everyone had an equal say in the modern public sphere of the 1980s. Nonetheless, Azaria's disappearance and aftermath marked a turning point in contemporary understandings of the public sphere and its increasing diversity.

One political theorist whose work gives insight into the modern public sphere is Henry Mayer. In *The Press in Australia* (1964) he describes changes to the way

⁴⁹ Deborah Staines, "A Legal Trauma, A Public Trauma", 158-9.

individuals accessed, interpreted and debated issues in public life as symptomatic of the wider shifts taking place. Some of the questions he asks are relevant to this thesis because they interrogate conventional ideas about agency, consumption and bias, as in the following: “Do different media meet different needs and gratifications and do people fairly actively select their consumption to fit in with these?”⁵⁰; “How far would one expect the media to be autonomous and critical in any society?”⁵¹ and “What did these views [on hegemony] say to those who did not find the evils [in the media] self-evident, or who found other systems worse, or who saw in the system’s critics only the ruling class of tomorrow?”⁵² In the context of the Chamberlain case, Mayer’s remarks imply a diversity of opinion in the modern public sphere, giving individuals an opportunity to negotiate or even resist the “barriers” and “traps” laid by the media.

Since the 1960s others have elaborated on Mayer’s theories, including but not limited to John Hartley (1995), McKenzie Wark (1995), Catharine Lumby (1999) and Graeme Turner (2004). To varying degrees, they recognise in the mass media age the democratisation of the public realm and its inclusion of once marginalised voices, especially those of women and migrants.⁵³ In *The Politics of Pictures: The Creation of the Public in the Age of Popular Media* (1992), Hartley describes the transition in the late twentieth century from a “physical public domain” to a diffuse, representative political space constituted by “pictures”.⁵⁴ Given that so many “pictures” produced in the 1980s captured scenes from the Chamberlain case, I use aspects of Hartley’s research to challenge ideas that the media was wholly antagonistic to the claims of innocence of Lindy and Michael. Similar theories advanced by Turner and Lumby will be used to substantiate claims that the Chamberlain case occurred at a tipping point in popular culture, as seen in the diversification of the public sphere.

⁵⁰ Henry Mayer, *The Press in Australia*, (Melbourne: Langsdowne, 1964), 4.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 18.

⁵² Henry Mayer, *The Press in Australia*, (Melbourne: Langsdowne, 1964), 19.

⁵³ For McKenzie Wark’s critique of the Habermasian public sphere, see McKenzie Wark, “The Anti-Public Sphere”, *21C: The Magazine of the 21st Century*, 2 (1995).

⁵⁴ John Hartley, *The Politics of Pictures: The Creation of the Public in the Age of Popular Media*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 35.

Regarding methodology, this thesis is grounded in archival sources primarily obtained from the National Film and Sound Archive. From these archives I conduct a content analysis of a range of textual and visual media from newsprint ephemera to film, stage and television programs. This has enabled me to test some of the more commonplace assumptions amongst critics about the role of the media, the formation of publics, the relevance of gender, constructions of celebrity and mythology and the effects of the story’s re-telling across time. In the main, print articles and television broadcasts have been chosen for their provocative and sometimes pejorative language, methods of framing used and timing in relation to wider developments taking place in the Chamberlain case. An original model will frame the dimensions of this argument (Figure P.1).

In the model, the heading “Ideological Event” denotes, as the word “ideology” implies, the “scheme of ideas” or “characteristic way of thinking” governing a particular historical time or period.⁵⁵ In this model, there are five ideological events which are socially determined and constitute the prevailing set of beliefs impacting upon the evolution of the Chamberlain case as media event. The second heading “Developmental Phases of Representation” details any changes in the portrayal of the event in media and cultural institutions. The final heading “Outcome” traces the effects of the Ideological Event on the Chamberlain case.

Figure P.1: Developmental model for a media event (Chamberlain case)

Ideological Event	Developmental Phases of Representation	Outcome
Metaphorization (1980- 1982)	Metaphors isolated in media coverage; Symbolisation and system of signs invented.	New reading practices developed in the media; alternate meanings created for those people, places and spaces involved in primary event.
Dissemination (1982-1984)	Dialogic connection established between media and public.	Public resistance in the form of unofficial and alternate discourses. Case becomes widespread.

⁵⁵ *The Australian Little Oxford Dictionary*, 4th ed., s.v. “ideology”.

Commodification (1984-1986)	Consumerism; subject bestowed cultural value.	Raised profile of individuals in primary event; Celebrity making.
Mythologisation (1986-1988)	Media events interpreted through national festivities; Objects assume totemic significance and signify the process of myth making is underway.	Mythological order created; Widespread reflection on the event's meaning and significance; Event becomes part of the process of nation building.
Simulation (1988-1990 and beyond)	Repeated reference to primary event in other/alternate contexts; Event serves as a cultural benchmark and is linked with national/social memory.	Questions raised about a loss of meaning in the primary event as subsequent representations claim authenticity.

Chapter One traces the first two years of media coverage in which there was a significant shift in the way the Chamberlain case was reported. Initially Azaria's disappearance was described as an "event" involving the abduction of an infant from a camping ground at "Ayers Rock". Both the tabloid and broadsheet press recounted the incident using a number of different story angles, but all with the same intention – to describe the dingo attack on 17 August. However, by October 1980, while a number of scientific experiments were being conducted into the authenticity of the couple's claims, these story angles were concretised into metaphors with emphasis placed less on the event and more on its central participants, including Azaria, the dingo, the parents, religion and the landscape. These "participants" operated within a wider discourse in which the media's scepticism towards the Chamberlain story was increasingly apparent. The first phase then marks a foundational step in the way media discourses were generated.

Offsetting earlier media scepticism, between 1982 and 1984 counter-publics formed to oppose the "official" verdict on Azaria's disappearance, and their increasing involvement comprises the second phase of development in my media model. As far as timing, these interventions occurred at a significant point in the narrative, that is, after Lindy had been sentenced to life in prison, after Michael was found to be an accessory to murder, and after the failure of appeals to the Federal and High Courts. Yet, despite the legal affirmation of their guilt, subtle changes in the tone and structure of media reports

suggested an attitudinal change was taking place. Some news items described the formation of Chamberlain advocate groups in every capital city in Australia while others canvassed the possibility the family was innocent. Then, in 1984, members of the public began to express their concern in alternate and popular media – mainly print materials – constituting a form of “subjugated knowledge” on the subject of the Chamberlains’ innocence. Along with the news media, they contributed to wider perspectives on the Chamberlain event by sometimes resisting and sometimes supporting more dominant readings of Azaria’s disappearance. It was at this time that various individuals tried more diversified means of reaching their audiences, for instance, by establishing the “Azaria Newsletter” and various pamphlets to gain publicity for their cause. Similar attempts to reach out for a constituency were made by Schapelle Corby’s supporters who, like the pamphleteers, developed a public forum of ideas, this time using the internet as their communications outlet. In each case a public space of articulation was reasserted, and views about the innocence of the accused were being dispersed in spite of, and in resistance to, the court’s existing guilty verdict. The Chamberlain case, arguably one of the first occasions in which public opinion was expressed on a mass scale, should be regarded as a model for a contemporary media narrative.

Further evidence of change in the modern public sphere can be traced in the third phase of development between 1984 and 1986, a period spanning the discovery of Azaria’s matinee jacket, Lindy’s release from prison and increased competition in the media for her exclusive story of wrongful imprisonment. From the intense media coverage, in the modern sense of the word, Lindy became a celebrity and exemplified a wider shift in the production of public figures in Australia. Previously, celebrities were drawn from the sporting field and television screen, their fame earned through merit and achievement. By contrast, Lindy was an “ordinary” woman caught in extraordinary circumstances, rising to prominence because of “unfavourable public recognition”.⁵⁶ To some extent, her fame was contagious – even those journalists covering her story made a name for themselves, most notably John Bryson, Malcolm Brown and Ray Martin. Alongside the celebrification of “ordinary” individuals, a public relations industry

⁵⁶ Varying definitions of celebrity are contained in Chris Rojek, *Celebrity*, (London: Reaktion, 2001), 18.

developed to promote individuals in crisis, with Lindy one of the early beneficiaries of this service in Australia.

Even though celebrity management predates the Chamberlain case, the industry was little utilised until the 1980s when technological innovation changed the way individual identities were marketed on a mass scale. Cultural industries afforded Lindy the opportunity to stage and negotiate fee-paying appearances and exercise greater control over her image. Of course, these efforts were limited by the news medium in which she was being interviewed or photographed and, at least in the beginning, there was very little scope to exploit her publicity. Once released from prison, however, Lindy could select the magazine or television program of her choice by selling the story to the highest bidder and, in some cases, shape the questions she would be asked and anticipate responses she might make. Today, the cultural power she wields positions her as a media elder stateswoman, the figure to whom others frequently defer, as exemplified by the part she played at the 25th anniversary conference on the Chamberlain case, “Nation, Media, Myth”, held at Macquarie University on Sunday 14 August 2005. Lindy was invited to be the keynote speaker at this “closed” conference, reserved for academics, writers on the case, curators, the campsite witnesses from August 1980 and advocates for the cause. Ultimately, by identifying the reconstitution of the modern public sphere in relation to Chamberlain’s image, we are able to see how, and to what degree, her status in the media changed.

Lindy’s celebrity status was also linked to the subsequent mythologisation of Azaria’s disappearance, principally between 1986 and 1988, since tied to the case’s acquired celebrity was the revival of a number of myths. This fourth phase of development in my media model marks the time at which reflections upon the historical importance of the Chamberlain case and its primary figure began to emerge in media, academic, museological and filmic discourses. Parts of the media, as well as a number of feminists, began to publish articles on the cultural impact of the dingo baby story which was bound up with debate concerning the handover of “Ayers Rock” and the 1988 Bicentenary. The desire to project in the Bicentenary a forward-thinking and

multicultural nation mirrored reflections on a case that had raised hard questions about (among other things), non-Indigenous belonging. In fact, the Chamberlain narrative can be read in relation to settler anxieties about the past, in particular, the grievous treatment of Aboriginal people, raised in discussions about the handover of “Ayers Rock” and the Bicentenary. Evidence of this period of recasting was also seen in the exhibition of the first full-length feature film on the case *Evil Angels* (1988) and, in the same year, the National Museum’s purchase of a series of Azaria artefacts which coincided with the display of Bicentennial memorabilia. In the assemblage of an Azaria exhibition and in the production of a film about the case, a desire to project a progressive nation – one that had moved on from its history of racial and religious discrimination – was expressed. The persecution of the Chamberlains and the attendant social guilt, mirrored feelings about Aboriginal persecution articulated in the 1980s.

A similar mythic production occurred in the Peter Falconio case in discourses that were continuous with, but not the same as, those surrounding the Azaria Chamberlain saga. The British media read his presumed death and the attempted abduction on the remote Stuart Highway in Central Australia of his girlfriend Joanne Lees, through a danger discourse that pivoted on non-Indigenous relations to Australia’s desert landscape. Settler-colonial fears about the hostility of this region were again aroused in the Falconio case, just as they had been years earlier in response to Azaria’s disappearance. Comparing these two outback disappearances suggests the interplay of social and cultural forces behind the representation of modern media events.

The fifth and final phase in the development of a modern media event concerns the anxiety associated with the proliferation of images of the Chamberlain case after 1988. Noel Sanders, in particular, compares the case with Goya’s artwork, finding similarity in the way the paintings and the case depict formlessness and an absence of meaning. His view underlines a more general phenomenon in which the original event has suffered a loss or transference of meaning. At this stage it is worthwhile making a distinction between the loss of an original and the loss of meaning. There is little doubt the original event suffered some form of loss, erosion or diminution as a result of its

compounding interpretations, but this did not necessarily entail a loss of meaning. By analysing cultural representations of the event in the docu-drama *The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain* (1984), the Hollywood motion picture *Evil Angels* (1988), the Australian mini-series *Through My Eyes* (2004), and the opera *Lindy* (2002), I trace the way in which the story of Azaria's disappearance resembles a narrative with multiple meanings, perspectives and avenues for exploration. Thus, by contesting the claims that the existence of another – the copy – has compromised significance of the original event, I will suggest, via Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation, that meaning has proliferated in the reproduction of Azaria's disappearance. Questions arising from this discussion include whether mass media coverage can be neatly separated from an historical event and whether meaning can exist outside of the social and cultural systems in which it is interpreted and produced. While this thesis, as with most academic research, raises more questions than it answers, Chapter Five offers one explanation for continuing public interest in the Chamberlain story as a constantly shifting arena of meaning.

It remains then, to ask what previously undisclosed "truth" or new perspective might the recent proposed sale of the trial notes penned by juror, Yvonne Cain, or the lifting of an embargo on Lindy's "private" manuscript collection at the NLA produce in the Chamberlain saga.⁵⁷ If these hitherto concealed documents are any indication, then the case will continue to pique the interests of institutions and publics alike and provide researchers with new and critical evidence to examine. Situating the event within wider social and cultural changes taking place in the 1980s provides a pattern from which to infer the evolution of other flashpoints in the modern public sphere. It also provides a starting point for analysis of the "Australian dingo press"⁵⁸ and arguments that news

⁵⁷ On Friday, 7 July 2006 news broke that one of the Chamberlain trial jurors had listed for sale notes she taken during the trial of Lindy and Michael Chamberlain in 1982 on Britain's internet auction site, "eBay". While having sought permission for the sale from Lindy, Yvonne Cain's decision was met with controversy, particularly from those who argued the 81 pages of notes and related material should be housed in a museum. Cain was later forced to remove the items from the website by the Northern Territory Government, after concerns were raised about whether it contravened local legislation (*DT*, 7 July 2006).

⁵⁸ Julie Marcus, "The Dingo, the Dog and the Baby", 202.

workers resembled “a pack of baying journalistic dingoes”⁵⁹ and a “howling chorus”,⁶⁰ since this thesis asks the question, “Dingo Media?”

⁵⁹ See frontispiece for reference details.

⁶⁰ In the Moya Henderson opera, *Lindy* (2002), news workers comprise a “howling chorus”.

CHAPTER 1: METAPHORISATION 1980-1982

“... with all its characters and identities, the case has tended to creak a little at the joints”
(*Sun-Herald*, 26 September 1982)

Within six weeks of Azaria Chamberlain’s disappearance, a distinct change occurred in media reports of the tragedy. Around October 1980, focus on the primary event – a baby’s disappearance from central Australia – had shifted, with emphasis placed instead on the story’s central participants, including the dingo, the mother, the victim, “Ayers Rock” and the family’s Adventist religion. The incident was reported through these characters in a shift that was symptomatic of the wider changes taking place in Australia’s media landscape. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the increasing commercialisation of news industries led to an intensification of forms of popular culture. News workers placed greater emphasis on entertainment in print and television programs as a way of attracting audiences, and so the traditional separation between “popular” and “quality” media began to collapse. The result was the cross-fertilisation of “tabloid” practices in the “broadsheet” press, which is clearly seen in the first two years of Chamberlain media coverage.¹ While there is a tendency to trace the transformation of news discourse to large-scale events in the 1990s such as the global mourning at Princess Diana’s funeral, in an Australian context it appeared the shift had taken place much earlier, as evidenced by media reports of Azaria Chamberlain’s disappearance.

In theoretical studies of rhetoric, metaphor is defined in relation to catachresis as “translatio”, the “transfer or substitution employed when a proper term does already exist and is displaced by a term transferred from another place to a place not its own”.² Concerning the Azaria case, this definition implies a literal displacement of the meanings associated with characters in the Chamberlain story. For instance, the proper term “Ayers Rock” was substituted for the cultural anxieties associated with

¹ Throughout this thesis I will use the terms “tabloid” and “broadsheet”, following Henry Mayer, who has qualified the exercise by stating: “While it has been made clear that the quality-popular division is not a very useful one in Australian conditions, I shall, rather reluctantly, accept it as it has been accepted internationally. The moralistic overtones are not of my making, and when I use the terms I do not wish to imply that one type is better or worse than the other, but simply that they are different to some extent”. Henry Mayer, *The Press in Australia*, 8.

² Patricia Parker, “Metaphor and Catachresis” in *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice*, eds. John Bender and David E. Wellbery, (California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 60.

“out there”, “an eerie and unsettling place”, the dingo substituted for a scapegoat, the victim for a symbol of innocence, the mother for a murderer, while Adventism no longer stood in the public mind for a religious group and its beliefs, but for the modern-day cult it resembled which had lately received media coverage in the Jonestown suicides. All in all, these five metaphors constitute a foundational step in the development of media discourses in the Chamberlain case in the 1980s.

At this stage, it might be worthwhile anticipating some possible objections to my argument that in media coverage of the disappearance, a range of metaphors crystallised. After all, “Ayers Rock” is a physical location, the dingo is a native animal and Adventism is a set of beliefs. But it was precisely the way in which these elements were represented in the first two years of media reports that showed their meaning to be more than just literal or even one-dimensional. Analysing the personification of these characters within the Chamberlain news story reveals a tendency, in the modern public sphere, to personalise events.

Further objections might also be raised about the narrow selection of metaphors used – why identify five, and not six or seven? For Christine Higgins, in media coverage of the Chamberlain case, a series of cultural oppositions were generated in the story’s central figures including Azaria, Lindy, the dingo, Michael Chamberlain, religion, Aboriginals, forensic evidence and objective truth.³ Through these participants a “plethora of powerful mythic associations related to the site and the events” were produced causing news workers to “read fact as if it were fiction and to construct the story as an archetype of ‘the strange tale’ with Gothic overtones”.⁴ No doubt, news workers and the public at large interpreted the Chamberlain event via these figures and the mythologies they aroused in a connection I have highlighted in Chapter Four of this thesis. However, media representations of the story, particularly in this early period, showed that many of the participants Higgins isolates in her essay were, in fact, conjoined. It is for this reason that analysis of Michael Chamberlain’s media coverage should fall within the purview of discussions about religion since he was an Adventist minister; that the role of Aboriginal “trackers” should be analysed alongside “Ayers Rock”, the physical site in which they were culturally situated by

³ Christine Higgins, “Naturalising ‘Horror’ Stories”, 139-40.

⁴ *ibid.*, 137.

the media, that forensic evidence relates to the “victim” from whose clothing much of the physical evidence was obtained and that the “truth” be associated with Lindy Chamberlain, as the only living witness to the crime.

It will be the purpose of this chapter then to offer a detailed analysis of Azaria’s disappearance through the news language it engendered, showing how the focus on more symbolic styles of reporting – on particular personalities, their images and the metaphors with which they were substituted – signalled the definitional collapse between the “quality” and “tabloid” press and “public” and “private” spheres. For the reason that certain participants were being elevated in the Azaria news story, it is far more expedient to analyse the Chamberlain press coverage according to the symbols it generated, than to group news output based on a particular market “voice”. Thus, I argue that changes to the modern public sphere, including a crossover in the language and type of media reports that surfaced, led to the metaphorisation of the Chamberlain media event.

Tabloids, broadsheets and the Azaria event

Traditionally news workers, social commentators and academics have divided media output into two categories, “tabloid” and “broadsheet”.⁵ The division is, more often than not, a value judgment based on what is seen as appropriately serving the public interest. As a result, “tabloid” news has evolved into the “popular” medium and been associated with more “vulgar” representations. According to Geoffrey Craig, quoting Gaye Tuchman, the distinction is defined as one between, “hard news [which] concerns information people should have to be informed citizens, and soft news [which] concerns human foibles and the ‘texture of our human life’”.⁶ Indeed, there is a long history of separation between high and low culture, perhaps beginning with Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* (1835-40), which described the threat

⁵ For social commentators and news workers who have divided media output along these lines, see Stuart Littlemore, *The Media and Me*, (Sydney: ABC Books, 1996); Phillip Knightley, *A Hack’s Progress*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1997); Richard Keeble, *The Newspapers’ Handbook*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1988).

⁶ Geoffrey Craig, “Press photographs and news values”, *Australian Studies in Journalism* 3, (1994): 192.

posed by democratic, middle class values to the aristocratic elite.⁷ Similar apprehensions arose during the Industrial Revolution, as improved public access to print culture led to a change in the way news products were marketed and consumed.

While the traditional separation of literature into high and low culture has appeared “natural”, if not functional, for Australian political and media critic, Henry Mayer, the division is less stable than it first appears. Indeed, there are obvious differences between, for instance, *The Australian* and *DT* newspapers but, as Mayer argues, divisions based on “content” and “readership” suggest the “quality” and “popular” press have a lot more in common than widely accepted views would indicate.⁸ In his groundbreaking study, *The Press in Australia* (1964), he illustrates how news categories, in general, are driven by commercial instinct and the desire to attract readers, while their content – as I will argue through the example of the Chamberlain case – frequently overlaps.

Since Mayer, a range of Australian academics, including Graeme Turner, John Hartley and Catharine Lumby have extended his argument to propose the “substantial redefinition of what constitutes news” in the late twentieth century as a positive step in the move towards a more inclusive, “non-coercive” news medium.⁹ Mayer’s study is important, as the customary division of the press into quality and tabloid news has often been seen as symptomatic of the gendering of the public sphere as a whole. Catharine Lumby and John Hartley have argued as much, by referring to the historical exclusion of women and the private, domestic issues with which they were associated in the traditional Western public sphere.¹⁰ As a result, women’s issues, defined by Rosemary Harris as being “of more intimate and vital interest to women who are affected by them”, have been marginalised.¹¹ Jurgen Habermas’ conception of the “public sphere” as an “arena of discursive interaction” and a “site for the production

⁷ For further notes on the history of “high” and “low” culture, see Keith Windschuttle, *The Media: A New Analysis of the Press, Television, Radio and Advertising in Australia*, (Victoria: Penguin Books, 1985), 152.

⁸ Henry Mayer, *The Press in Australia*, 4-5.

⁹ Graeme Turner, *Ending the affair: the decline of current affairs television in Australia*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2005), 50.

¹⁰ See references to Hartley in Catharine Lumby, introduction to *bad girls: the media, sex and feminism in the 90s*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997).

¹¹ Rosemary Harris, “Women, Workers, Ladies or Chicks?”, *Hecate* 10, no.1, (1984): 45.

and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state”,¹² is predicated on the exclusion of women and the non-recognition of their intellectual, social and economic importance and achievements. Critics of Habermas describe his theory as a masculinization of the public sphere, which he depicts as “rational” and “virtuous”, in contrast with a female salon culture considered “artificial” and “effeminate”.¹³ As Turner and others have demonstrated, however, distinctions between “serious” and “frivolous” news journalism sustain the separation of the spheres and ensure that women’s issues, as distinctly “tabloid” and occupying a position of moral inferiority, remain “downmarket” where they belong.¹⁴

However, by the 1970s and 1980s, with the increasing collapse of divisions between quality and tabloid news, issues once associated with women and the “private” sphere now fell into the “public” sphere. Critics have described this shift as the democratisation of the public realm, which I argue in Chapter Three was a critical factor in Lindy’s resuscitation in the women’s press. As I will later describe, magazines like the *Australian Women’s Weekly* (AWW) began to publish intimate details of her family life and prison ordeal in a far more revealing and provocative manner than in years previously. The diversity of media coverage of Azaria’s disappearance in these print outlets showed “serious” news stories could be adequately represented in “light news” formats such as weekly women’s magazines and commercial current affairs programs.

Even though Mayer argues there have always been similarities in the properties of the popular and quality press, any distinctive differences in their approach, appeared to collapse, as I have described in the dingo baby case. Arguably, it was at this point in Australia’s cultural history that the boundaries between the public and private spheres began to blur. Tracing the shift in newspaper coverage of large-scale events, namely Azaria’s disappearance, this chapter will consider questions to do with industry climate. For instance, how did differing coverage of the

¹² Quoted in Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere”, 2.

¹³ *ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴ As Turner argues, the prevailing assumption is that the more emphasis placed on entertainment-based news over substantive content, the more “downmarket” the style of journalism is regarded. Graeme Turner, *Ending the affair*, 57.

Chamberlain case compare and contrast in the press and did sales figures play an important part in the shift towards a tabloid style in news content?

As net paid circulation figures derived from the Audit Bureau of Circulations indicate, there was a general downturn in the popularity of newspapers in most Australian states in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Figures ending 31 March 1980 point to a decline in the number of newspapers sold across the country, with the only notable exceptions being, *The Australian*, *The Age*, and the *Northern Territory News* (Figure 1.1). That there was a downward trend in the Australian press industry is supported by Keith Windschuttle in *The Media: A New Analysis of the Press, Television, Radio and Advertising in Australia* (1984), in which he described the period between 1960 and 1980 as characterised by “stagnation and decline”.¹⁵

In response to declining sales figures, the competition posed by television in 1956, colour transmission in 1975, radio stations that pitched their broadcasts to the mass consumer market and improvements in commuter travel which changed the way individuals consumed the news,¹⁶ the print media placed greater emphasis on entertaining news formats. Rupert Murdoch advocated this in an address to the 91st Annual Convention of the American Newspaper Publishers’ Association in 1977, when he encouraged fellow newspaper workers to broaden their readership by marketing to the “everyday consumer”.¹⁷

Whether it was Murdoch’s advice or the grim reality of print circulation figures, in the following years newspaper proprietors changed the style, presentation and content of the news. By employing bold headlines, arresting photographs, news supplements, reader competitions, jackpot lotteries and by-lines, they attracted the everyday consumer in an unprecedented way. Some academics have traced this phenomenon to flashpoints in the 1990s, including the O.J Simpson “Bronco chase” in Los Angeles in 1995 and Princess Diana’s funeral in 1997. As figures inspiring mass public sentiment, OJ Simpson and the late Princess Diana changed the way images of celebrities have been produced and consumed globally. My contention is,

¹⁵ Keith Windschuttle, *The Media: A New Analysis of the Press*, 31.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 37-8.

¹⁷ Keith Windschuttle, *The Media: A New Analysis of the Press*, 39-40.

Figure 1.1:

“Audited Net Paid Circulation Figures”
Courtesy of Audit Bureau of Circulations

PUBLICATION	HALF YEAR TO 31 MARCH 1979	HALF YEAR TO 30 SEPT 1979	HALF YEAR TO 31 MARCH 1980	HALF YEAR TO 30 SEPT 1980	HALF YEAR TO 31 MARCH 1981	HALF YEAR TO 30 SEPT 1981
New South Wales¹						
<i>The Sun</i>	338,511	374,726	342, 284	348, 715	342, 244	358, 825
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	387,173	399,450	361, 520	358, 907	345, 917	387, 868
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	320,671	321,054	315, 692	308, 801	306, 781	307, 933
<i>The Australian</i>	115,984	120,943	124, 982	126, 966	126, 484	127, 728
Victoria						
<i>The Age</i>	236,971	243,761	244,981	243,367	244,238	251,178
<i>The Sun News Pictorial</i>	646,628	649,133	637,332	629,381	628,301	634,333
<i>The Herald</i>	418,605	429,716	404,912	393,185	383,233	374,757
Queensland						
<i>Courier-Mail</i>	269,901	270,515	270,614	269,588	269,701	269,927
<i>The Telegraph</i>	156,959	159,478	155,541	153,928	153,995	151,128
South Australia						
<i>The Advertiser</i>	233,688	232,373	233,917	227,708	230,261	230,329
<i>The News</i>	165,925	173,173	166,372	164,248	162,992	176,012
Western Australia						
<i>The Daily News</i>	115,332	117,994	115,117	117,229	115,190	120,741
<i>The West Australian</i>	250,251	252,671	252,842	252,603	252,782	252,893
Northern Territory						
<i>The Northern Territory News</i>	12,349	13,210	14,337	14,375	14,823	14,606

¹ Note the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) does not appear in this table because, as advised by Heather Craven the Director of Marketing and Communications at the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC), the newspaper did not join the bureau until 1990, leaving no records prior to this date.

however, that a decade earlier in outback Australia, another case piqued the public interest, highlighting those changes to celebrity production and revealing to the public matters once deemed “private”. The legacy of the Azaria Chamberlain case for modern media events is one of the larger concerns of this thesis. Occupying this chapter will be the first two years of media coverage in which focus on participants as metaphors in a narrative replaced concerns about the event itself.

Breaking the story: 17 August 1980

As Azaria’s disappearance occurred on a Sunday, commonly regarded in the industry as a slow news day, the majority of reports were delayed twenty-four hours to enable journalists to contact local authorities and confirm details of the attack. The isolated location of “Ayers Rock” further postponed efforts to obtain an exclusive story, and not until Tuesday, 19 August (nearly two days after the disappearance), did the majority of Australia’s newspapers report the incident, with the exception of two Sydney tabloids, the *Sun* and its rival the *Daily Mirror (DM)*, which together broke the news of a dingo attack in their afternoon editions on Monday 18 August 1980 (Figure 1.2). Both newspapers headlined the infant’s disappearance, employing a similar strategy in the use of the word “snatch” to convey the infant’s sudden seizure, with “Baby girl snatched by dingo” (*The Sun*, 18 August 1980) and “Dingoes snatch baby girl” (*DM*, 18 August 1980) differing only in grammatical tense. The act of “snatching” also appears in their opening paragraphs, contributing to an overarching theme of bestial attack in each story.

On the following day, in *The Australian*, the country’s only national newspaper, Azaria’s disappearance was reported in a similar manner to its tabloid counterparts, with “snatch” found three times in the article, including in the headline “Killer dingo snatches baby” (19 August 1980). On this occasion, the likely culprit is a “killer dingo”, also seen in the story’s coverage by the Brisbane *Courier-Mail (CM)* in its headline, “No Trace of Killer Dingo” (19 August 1980). The common language utilised by the Sydney tabloids and the Queensland and national broadsheets, the *CM* and *The Australian* respectively, suggests an intersection of news values in descriptions of Azaria’s disappearance. Certainly the stories appear vastly different in layout; for instance, *The Australian* article appears on page two of the newspaper with

Figure 1.2 (a)

THE Sun OVER ONE MILLION READERS
No. 22,535
Telephone 20844 Letters Box 504 GPO Sydney 2001
MONDAY, August 18, 1980 20 cents

CITY FINAL **SUPER VALUE**

TRAGIC TOURIST COUPLE BABY GIRL SNATCHED BY DINGO

**CAMP
RAID:
200
IN
HUNT**

**OLIVIA
STEPS
OUT IN
STYLE**

By KERRY YATES
OLIVIA Newton-John is in Sydney with a new hairstyle.
She's had her long blonde locks layered into a shorter, softer style and feathered to frame her famous face.
The casual wash 'n' wear hairstyle (you simply run your fingers through the hairstyle to comb it) will no doubt be copied by Olivia's fans.
It's easy, it works best on hair that is naturally wavy.

A WILD animal — believed to be a dingo — snatched a baby girl from a tourist campsite at Ayers Rock last night and made off into the bush.
The baby's frantic mother, a minister's wife, believes she saw the wild dog flee with her infant in its mouth.
Bloodstains were found on the baby's sleeping bag.
More than 200 police, rangers and tourists today launched a massive search of scrubland around the campsite.
Searchers are scouring dingo lairs around Ayers Rock, but say they have little hope of finding the baby alive.
The baby's father, Seventh Day Adventist minister Pastor Michael Chamberlain, 36, said today he had given up hope of finding his daughter.

HOLIDAY STARS
THE SORT OF PEOPLE YOU GET ALONG WITH BEST

CONT P 2

43 PAGES TODAY • WEATHER: Sunny periods. (Map P.37) • LOTTERIES: Opera House 701, P.46; New Jackpot 1766, P.36. • FINANCE: P.44. • TV: P.22.

Front-page headline in *The Sun*, Monday 18 August 1980.

Figure 1.2 (b)



Front-page headline in the *Daily Mirror*, Monday 18 August 1980 (Courtesy of the *Daily Telegraph*).

few stand-out features, resembling the simple typeface of the *CM*, while *The Sun* and *DM* articles are both cover stories with bold headlines. Their differences, however, are lessened by the common theme the newspapers share – the desire to convey a swift and brutal attack.

In emphasising the cross-fertilisation of media output, I am not suggesting this phenomenon was first articulated in the Chamberlain case, as such a claim would be unsupportable, given the sometimes sensationalised treatment of other widely publicised events including the disappearance of journalist Juanita Nielson or Prime Minister Harold Holt. But the breadth and frequency of these overlapping story angles renders the Chamberlain case an outstanding example of changes occurring within Australia's media landscape in the 1980s, comparable in significance to, say, the 1890s when the Australian legend of Ned Kelly was formed. It is also worthwhile, considering resemblances the Chamberlain case bears to other high-profile media events such as those involving British backpacker, Joanne Lees and former One Nation leader, Pauline Hanson, to suggest that Lindy Chamberlain typifies the characteristics found in modern celebrity culture.¹⁸

The intersection of story angles on Azaria's disappearance, despite differences in newspaper style, location and even proprietor, suggests other structuring forces were brought to bear upon news texts. Sometimes a successful headlining formula was enough to inspire news workers within other states to apply the same language in their report on the dingo baby story. In identifying this similarity, I suggest the number of different story angles reveals less about the newspaper's status as either a broadsheet or tabloid, and more about the "tabloidisation" of the public sphere, what Graeme Turner defines as: "... a broad-based cultural movement visible in certain media forms, which is engendered by the commercialisation of modern life and a corresponding decline in what are usually called 'traditional values'".¹⁹

In New South Wales, for instance, the populist newspapers, *The Sun*, *DM* and *DT* possessed the greatest market share, as did *The Sun-News Pictorial* in Victoria,

¹⁸ See Chapters Three, Four and the conclusion to this thesis for further discussion about Joanne Lees and Pauline Hanson.

¹⁹ Graeme Turner, *Ending the Affair*, 54; Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 76-7.

while the quality Queensland broadsheet, the *CM* and its South Australian counterpart, the *Advertiser* were the only exceptions to the rule of tabloid dominance. And yet, in the *CM*, a tendency towards sensationalism marked its coverage of the Chamberlain story. In an article entitled, “Doubt on dingo as child killer” (20 August 1980) the first paragraph begins; “EVERYONE’S agreed. It’s just not like the dingo. At least, not a dingo in the wild”. The use of the collective noun “everyone” not only solicits agreement between the newspaper and its audience on the subject of shared values, but also shows the Brisbane newspaper adopting language commonly found in the populist press (Figure 1.3). For instance, there is an assumption that broadsheets employ a formal language register that rarely addresses the reader directly in news copy. This assumption is, however, undermined by appeals in the *CM* to a consensus of public opinion in which “everyone” agrees the Chamberlain story is suspicious.

The rise of bylines, emboldened typeface, catchy phrases, large-scale photographs and other “typographical devices” across newsprint media in the early 1980s might be considered a response to prevailing market forces.²⁰ Statistics on Australia’s “Box Revolution”, which referred to a rise in the number of television sets purchased by consumers, reflected the high level of competition in the communications industry at this time, with 97 per cent of households across the nation owning at least one black and white television set in 1981.²¹ Even radio outlets were part of the move “downmarket”, with the regular format of drama, quiz and panel shows supplemented by music entertainment and service announcements.²² Indeed, as David Bowman argues: “By the eighties, newspapers, including their editorial executives, were permeated by the commercial instinct to a degree unknown for decades”.²³ This is not to suggest, however, the homogeneity of press types in the 1980s, but to argue that differences in news coverage were dissolving, to the extent that Azaria’s disappearance exemplified changes within the Australian media landscape.

²⁰ Typographical devices are those textual features disturbing the monotony of the frame, eg: multiple headlines and press photographs.

²¹ Keith Windschuttle, *The Media: A New Analysis of the Press*, 15.

²² Roger Fowler, *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*, (London: Routledge, 1991), 46.

²³ David Bowman, *The Captive Press: Our newspapers in crisis and the people responsible*, (Victoria: Penguin, 1988), 47.

The tabloids recognised their increasing market dominance over the broadsheets. *The Sun* boasted “over one million readers” and appealed to the cost-conscious buyer with a “super value” cover price of twenty cents. The *DM*, also twenty cents, was marketed to audiences as “The 80s paper” with the “biggest week-day sales in NSW”. Both newspapers consistently used descriptive language and simple clause structures. Readers of *The Sun* were accustomed to this easily accessible formula with regular features such as the “Page 3 girl”, the new jackpot lotteries section and the newspaper’s routine invitation to adopt this or that particular viewpoint through the use of by-lines, as illustrated by the *DT*’s Ken Anderson in non-editorialised news pieces. Readers of the *DM* were also introduced to competitions such as the “Mirror – Grace Bros Food Game” along with supplements including the “Super Shopper 12 Page Food Guide” and “League lift-out” (*DM*, 15 October 1980).

Appearing for the first time in 1981, newspaper bingo temporarily inflated circulation figures and was a marketing tactic used alongside the addition of supplements and lift-outs, an early prototype of today’s newspapers. In fact, by November 1981, “Mirror Bingo” and “Big Race Guide(s)” had become a permanent fixture in the *DM*, even flanking the newspaper’s front-page banner, and in subsequent pages promising readers that the “Magnificent Mirror Bingo could change your whole life!” (*DM*, 24 November 1981). As my research has further shown, changes to the style of newspapers in the 1980s were also reflected in the slogans used by proprietors to market their products, including “Big Value Tele” for the Sydney *DT* and offers of light entertainment, such as cartoons, in prominent sections of the newspaper, that is, in the first two pages (*DT*, 30 October and 1 November 1982). In fact, the “Peanuts” cartoon became a regular feature alongside the *Telegraph*’s Chamberlain news coverage, raising questions about the relationship between items in close proximity on the news page.

Common “tabloid” features including cartoons, daily promotions, reader lift-outs and by-lines also found their way into the *Sun-Herald*, with readers offered, in one instance, a “Viva! Holiday for Four to Honolulu”, an entire section devoted to the day’s sport promising “All the latest sport inside” (31 October 1982) and a “Special

report from Malcolm Brown at the [Chamberlain] Murder Trial” (24 October 1982). What can be derived from these examples is that the Azaria case was being read contextually as an entertainment narrative and alongside the development of more reader-friendly lift-outs. This changed the way newspapers were being consumed, as did the addition of lifestyle supplements including “The Good Weekend” magazine (*Sun-Herald*, 30 October 1982). Popular entertainment features appeared in the country’s newspapers for the first time between 1981 and 1982 during the Azaria inquests and Lindy’s trial for murder, in a coincidence which shaped the way the Chamberlain narrative was being read in Australian newspapers at the time.

Even when debating legal interpretations of the Chamberlain trial verdict, the *Sun-Herald* triumphantly declared in its editorial, “We’re the Biggest ...” and “*The Sun-Herald* outsells *The Sunday Telegraph* both in NSW and nationally” (31 October 1982). Competition from a pressing tabloid phenomenon prompted newspapers like the *Sun-Herald* to renovate their content and appearance, reflecting arguments that the distinction between “tabloid” and “broadsheet” media was in the process of dissolution at this time.

A focus on entertainment in the Australian print media in the early 1980s could also be seen in the *Sun*’s coverage of the Azaria saga. This was demonstrated in the frequent use of cross-heads or sub-headings to narrow the story’s content and give low-budget readers maximum information for little time spent. For instance, in the newspaper’s first report on Azaria’s disappearance, snappy cross-heads accompanying the article, including “tragic tourist couple”, “camp raid: 200 in hunt” and “dingo takes holiday baby” do more than just summarise the story’s main points; they support the paper’s headlining format: “Baby Girl Snatched by Dingo” (18 August 1980). Indeed, these features can be increasingly detected in the language of broadsheets which, given the market’s swing in favour of the tabloids, adopted the successful formula.

By 1982, in the weekend newspaper, the *Sun-Herald* which boasted “The biggest sale of any paper in Australia”, a number of cross-heads are used to describe what the title identifies as “The dingo case – fact and fiction create a mystery”.

Written by *Herald* features writer, Malcolm Brown, the story's participants appear as sub-headings, with "the family", "the coroner", "the police", "the Rock" and "the scientists" behaving as symbols, both orienting the reader and constituting the metaphorisation of elements within the narrative (*Sun-Herald*, 22 February 1981). Brown's 1982 observation that it was now difficult to imagine a "post-Azaria world – without the mystery, the Rock, the church, the dingoes", seems to confirm the place of these metaphors in the national consciousness (*Sun-Herald*, 26 September 1982). While cross-heads are not exclusive to tabloid newspapers, in conjunction with emerging bolder headlines and highly emphatic language, they point to the new style characterising Australian newspapers at this time.

The shift in focus from the event to the story's participants, also marked by the shift towards a "popular" style of coverage, coincided with the use of a more conversational dialogue in news reports. This time, writing for the *Advertiser* after petitioning the "Northern Territory Department of Community Development" for permission to interview Lindy, Malcolm Brown described their conversation as follows: "Come on Lindy, come on", I said. "Every journalist in Australia wants to know what sex your baby is" (*Advertiser*, 3 November 1982). Brown's dialogue is yet another example of the soft news style permeating Australia's print media, alongside the more prevalent use of by-lines and the individual promotion of journalists via the Chamberlain news coverage.

While Mayer argues that the characteristics often decried as "tabloid" can be detected in early forms of the printed press in Australia, particularly in the *Sydney Gazette* published in 1803, the *Referee* (1886-1939) and the *Arrow* (1889-1933), coverage of Azaria's disappearance in the 1980s suggests a turning point in the degree of similarity between those identified as "popular" and those identified as "broadsheet" newspapers.²⁴ Malcolm's Brown's own involvement in this transitional process was evidenced in his growing reputation as the "*Herald* man" and "reporters"

²⁴ Henry Mayer, *The Press in Australia*, 21. For a list of Australia's early newspapers including the *Referee* and *Arrow*, see Victor Isaacs and Rod Kirkpatrick, *Two hundred years of Sydney newspapers: a short history*, (New South Wales: Rural Press, 2003); Victor Isaacs, Rod Kirkpatrick and John Russell, eds., *Australian Newspaper History: A Bibliography*, (Queensland: Newspaper History Group, 2004).

bible". He was a journalist to whom others in the profession frequently deferred.²⁵ While Brown is well known for his sympathetic stance towards Michael and Lindy, as demonstrated in his coverage of the event,²⁶ attempts by other journalists to personalise the news did not have as positive an outcome for the Chamberlains.²⁷ For example, in *The Sun* newspaper's article "Dingo Baby Family *Harassed*", the phrases "who says she saw" and "[who] claimed today" are known in linguistic grammar as modal expressions or oral cues and are frequently used in news texts that possess the "illusion of a 'person' with a voice and opinions".²⁸ The presence of such devices in this instance, however, interposes doubt in the Chamberlain story: "Mrs Lindy Chamberlain, who says she saw a dingo snatch her baby daughter, Azaria, last month, claimed today her family had been the target of rumours and innuendo in its home town". (*The Sun*, 4 September 1980). The terms "who says she saw" and "[who] claimed today" are descriptive processes indicating the speaker's opinion and/or the probability of the action being described. They show how the writer can make value judgements about the credibility of the subject in the clause. In this instance, it is Lindy Chamberlain "who says she saw" and not "who saw" the dingo abduct her daughter. It is the same witness "[who] claimed today" rather than "stated today" that she had been the focus of localised harassment.

Adopting such a syntactical approach inevitably shapes the direction of the text and the subject being described. While historically tabloids have often used modal expressions as a way of reaching audiences with an approving or doubting voice, it was in the early 1980s that broadsheets began to employ, on a large scale, the same linguistic devices in news text. For many of the broadsheets covering the Chamberlain case, as earlier described in examples from the *Advertiser* and *CM*, the shift from generic to symbolic reporting styles coincided with the defining of an authorial voice, in what became for Bill Hinchings in the Melbourne *Herald* and Malcolm Brown in *SMH* an opportunity for career promotion. Together, they joined

²⁵ John Bryson, *Evil Angels*, 98.

²⁶ In one instance, after the jury delivered its verdict Brown famously shouted to them "you pack of bastards". According to Norman H. Young, he was one of a number of journalists who advocated for the Chamberlains' innocence. Norman H. Young, *Innocence Regained*, 12-13.

²⁷ Roger Fowler has termed this presence behind the news, the display of "individual subjectivity", describing how writers frequently use this method to encode their own judgments within the news text. Roger Fowler, *Language in the News*, 64.

²⁸ *ibid.*

already established tabloid identities in Geoff de Luca of the *DT*, Steve Pivetta and Shane Maguire of the *DM* and Network Ten television news identity, Kevin Hitchcock, in constructing and framing the events and people surrounding the Chamberlain case.

A crossover in the language and stylistic features of the popular and conservative press was also reflected in the broadcast coverage of the Chamberlain case. Television journalist Jim Brown appeared as the regular “Eyewitness News” reporter for Network Ten and the station’s breakfast program, “Good Morning Australia”, two programs devoting significant airtime to the developments surrounding Azaria’s disappearance. In the following example extracted from a newsreel in 1982, Brown describes his own misapprehension about the forensic evidence being heard at the Chamberlain trial, revealing how journalists often encode their views into news broadcasts:

JIM BROWN: Now I wouldn’t pretend to understand the nature of the scientific evidence that’s been presented in this court over the last couple of days but I think a fair interpretation of what’s been going on is that Professor Boettcher says Mrs Kuhl’s evidence is wrong and he’s right. This is Jim Brown in Darwin for Eyewitness News (Courtesy of National Film and Sound Archive).

His language in the following description of testimony given by opposing witnesses, Professors Vernon Pleuckhahn and James Cameron, at the trial again imposes his opinion:

It’s fair to say that the only thing these two experts could agree on was that the baby’s jumpsuit was done up during the bleeding. The Crown prosecutor Ian Barker QC then successfully sought an adjournment of 24 hours to prepare his cross-examination ...” (Courtesy of National Film and Sound Archive).

On these two occasions Brown provides his audience with “a fair interpretation of what’s been going on” by making comments on what the average Australian viewer’s response to the news might be. This fulfils what Roger Fowler describes as a

“discursive competence”, or appeal to an audience on the basis of commonly held values.²⁹ In general, such appeals have been identified as part of the changing style of television presentation and delivery, that which Graeme Turner argues is characteristic of a shift in Australian current affairs journalism in the 1980s.³⁰

Brown’s reporting represents only a narrow selection, and therefore cannot be used to make definitive statements about television coverage of the case as a whole. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that the personalised approach he adopts was common to both popular and quality print and broadcast news mediums. Acknowledging a crossover in television and print language is important, as it suggests an industry-wide tendency to view the Chamberlain story through its participants rather than the event itself. The decision to use one sign over another, in a “socially live selection of signs”³¹ generated a series of metaphors out of Azaria’s disappearance – those to which I will now turn in discussions about the dingo, the victim, “the Rock”, the mother and Adventist religion.

The Dingo: An unlikely thief?

Out of the five metaphors created in the media coverage of Azaria’s disappearance, the dingo was perhaps the most evocative, reviving settler and modern day fears about disorienting and hostile landscapes, the precariousness of the individual in the Australian bush and the liminal nature of the animal, which is neither wild nor domesticated. When reporting the incident at “Ayers Rock”, many newspapers emphasised the beastliness of the attack on Azaria, with some, as I have earlier suggested, using provocative language to construct the animal’s deviance, as in “snatch” and “killer dingo”. In the Brisbane *CM*, a “killer dingo” “fed by tourists” was held responsible for the attack (*CM*, 19 August 1980); while in the *DM*, “a pack of dingoes” “snatched” Azaria in their “jaws” (*DM*, 18 August 1980). As *The Sun* argued, the animals at “Ayers Rock” were no ordinary canines, in fact they were described as behaving “like wolves” and despite being “normally wary of man”, acting in an “uncharacteristic manner” (*The Sun*, 18 August 1980). There are twelve

²⁹ Roger Fowler, *Language in the News*, 44.

³⁰ Graeme Turner, *Ending the affair*, 76-7.

³¹ Roger Fowler, *Language in the News*, 19.

attributes assigned to the dingo in the article (including its mustard colouring, predatory instinct, unusual behaviour and habitat), with only half that number of attributes being assigned to either Lindy or Michael. In fact, the reader's knowledge of the dingo is far more complete than it is of the victim, who is simply described as a "baby girl" from Mt Isa "weigh[ing] ten pounds" and on holidays with her family before her disappearance (*The Sun*, 18 August 1980).

Whereas some newspapers pointed to the dingo's monstrosity in lengthy descriptions of its behaviour, others portrayed the animal as a thief intent on stealing the infant from her slumber. As such, Wollongong's newspaper, the *Illawarra Mercury*, described "A shape just like a dingo...slinking out of the tent" (*Illawarra Mercury*, 19 August 1980); while, the *Central Western Daily*, in Orange, reported on a dingo, which made "no sound" when it carried Azaria off in its mouth (19 August 1980). For Noel Sanders, the tendency of newspapers to portray the dingo as a thief is a metaphor sustained in convict discourse:

The dingo stands as a metaphor for thieves, criminals and the poor in Australia, as a metaphor for aggressors against property, in fact, rather than as murderer ... even in Lindy Chamberlain's words, 'the dingo has *taken* my baby', the dingo is a thief rather than a murderer.³²

The dingo signified the displaced individual in urban society as well as the criminal and the escapee, to which Belinda Wilson refers in the *Age* newspaper headline: "dingo *on the run* from man".³³ News descriptions of this kind not only anthropomorphized the animal's image, but called upon the reader's stockpile of knowledge of the way deviance is constructed in news language through certain syntactical and lexical choices. Reader familiarity with the codes and conventions of deviance meant that in the first few weeks of media coverage, the dingo was viewed as a petty thief.

In the month following the abduction at "Ayers Rock", however, much had changed in the general tone of news reports about the dingo. Indeed by October 1980,

³² Noel Sanders, "Azaria Chamberlain and Popular Culture", 66.

³³ Belinda Wilson, "The Making of a Modern Myth", 64.

during which time a number of forensic tests were carried out on dingoes in captivity, its image had clearly altered. In some instances, the dingo as agent disappeared from the narrative altogether, replaced by either a subject-less headline or the term, “Dingo baby”. In fact, in *The Australian* newspaper’s first coverage of the incident, not only had the animal disappeared, but also its active agency; in “New Search for Baby Clues” the dingo is referred to only in the last two paragraphs of the article. The remaining seven paragraphs describe the “effort to solve the mystery disappearance of baby Azaria Chamberlain” (paragraph one), “the search” (paragraphs two and four) and “finding any trace” of the infant alive (paragraphs six and seven). Where the word “dingo” plays a more prominent role in a newspaper’s narrative content, as the examples from *The Sun* and *DM* indicate, it no longer takes the position of agent in the clause, but forms part of the nominal group “dingo baby”. This turn of phrase enables the newspaper to distinguish the narrative from others, assuming that the public is familiar with the investigation and unlikely to misconstrue “dingo baby” to mean “young dingo”, as the following excerpt noted: “It wasn’t a dingo baby of course. Not a dingo pup. The phrase was just a convenient, shorthand way to describe one of Australia’s most bizarre police investigations” (*Sun-Herald*, 22 February 1981). Some of the examples of the emerging “dingo baby” phrase include: “Dingo Baby: Bizarre Zoo Tests” (*DM*, 23 October 1980); “Dingo Baby: New Hunt” (*DM*, 15 October 1980) and the sub-head “Dingo Baby: New Inquiry” (*The Sun*, 2 October 1980). By October, Azaria was collectively known in news language as the “dingo baby”, a pseudonym for the victim to whom media focus had lately shifted.

As the preceding extracts from a range of Australian newspapers beyond October, 1980 have shown, the dingo was either discarded in representations of the case or its role altered within the grammatical structure of headlines, so that “killer dingo” was replaced by “dingo baby”; this being indicative of the tonal shift in the print media in response to Azaria’s death. Having entered the popular vernacular as a result of Azaria’s disappearance, the term “killer dingo” reappeared in 1984 in two unrelated cases of dingo attacks, where the Australian Capital Territory’s *South West News* and the Northern Territory’s *Midweek Territorian* reported on the police hunt for a dingo that had “ravaged flocks” and killed a pet dog in their respective 4 May and 7 November editions. This works as a reminder that, in news as in other texts, criminality is socially defined. In the context of the Chamberlain case, news reports of

Azaria's disappearance after October 1980 omit the animal altogether along with the label "killer dingo", implying a set of alternate circumstances to explain the event. Rather than being attacked by a dingo, it seems the infant had either vanished – having been swallowed by the landscape – or fallen victim to another malignant (human?) agency. Some, including, *DM* went so far as to suggest it was a "maniac", quoting Michael Chamberlain as the rumour's source (*DM*, 7 October 1980), while others, including *The Sun*, stated Alice Springs police were unconvinced by the dingo theory: "At this stage police still have an open mind on the disappearance" (*The Sun*, 2 October 1980).

By the time Coroner Denis Barritt handed down his findings at the first Inquest on 20 February 1981, the newly constructed "dingo" metaphor had generated enough publicity to suggest the guilty verdict passed against the animal had done little to tarnish its image. In fact, it prompted many to argue the dingo was incapable of committing such an offence and any charges against it should be withdrawn, a claim which coincided with the rise of Australian environmentalism and attempts to preserve in the 1980s native species, such as the dingo. In one example, the *Weekend Australian* reported comments from the president of the Australian Native Dog Foundation, Mr Bill Harris, that: "the dingo had been convicted on evidence so conflicting and baffling that the animal ought to have no case to answer" (*Weekend Australian*, 21 February 1981). Such a view was also reflected in comments made by members of the public who wrote in the letters section of their local newspapers, one even addressed to Lindy, declaring: "I know a dingo took your baby ... a two-legged dingo like you".³⁴

Refutation of the animal's role in the event was also implied in news reports of the scientific experiments being staged across the country. *The Sun* described the experiments at Adelaide Zoo as involving "a dingo tearing apart a young goat, dressed in baby's clothes" (23 October 1980) – a controversial experiment, in which the young goat was simulated to look like Azaria, with the same height and weight dimensions. This experiment fell under scrutiny when some, including Lindy Chamberlain, questioned whether an animal in captivity would necessarily act in the

³⁴ Dianne Johnson, "From Fairy to Witch", 142.

same manner as a wild species of dingo. Moreover, could a goat imitate the movements of a nine and a half week-old human infant? Another problem was with the lack of ethical design in these experiments: having animals appear as human effigies dressed in baby clothes was not only farcical, but a breach of the rights of animals held in captivity. Despite these early criticisms – especially from animal rights activists – still further scientific tests were conducted which had as props “two plucked chickens dressed in clothing similar to that worn by Azaria” and “a large piece of beef [wrapped] in a disposable nappy” (*The Australian*, 24 October 1980). The unconventional nature of these tests and their failure to produce definitive results led members of the press to describe them as “bizarre experiments” (*The Australian*, 24 October 1980) and “bizarre zoo tests” involving the “sacrifice” of animals (*DM*, 23 October 1980). The manifold response from the public to these experiments suggested a growing suspicion towards the Chamberlain family. But what is also indicated early in news reports was the changing status of the alleged culprit. The dingo’s evolution from “killer” and “thief” to “innocent scapegoat” by October 1980 marked changes in the tone of press reports.

The Mother: Anguished mum tells

While some press representations focused their coverage on the alleged perpetrator, the dingo, and/or the brutality of the attack, others chose to focus entirely on Azaria’s mother as the story’s victim. *DT*’s first report differed from other news coverage by offering Lindy’s point of view and detailing an inner world of consciousness using her own words (Figure 1.4). For example, the headline – “Anguished mum tells: I saw my baby stolen by dingo” – is an assertion of the mother’s speech act achieved through the projected clause, “I saw my baby ...” (*DT*, 19 August 1980). Its effect is to legitimise the news piece by installing the mother, rather than journalist Geoff de Luca, as its author through an emotional rendition of the tragic sequence of events. The following six paragraphs support such a reading, with Lindy’s comments punctuated by quotation marks, for example, in the descriptive: “At first I thought the dingo might have bitten my baby, Azaria, and taken something else from the tent”; and in references to her speech: “Lindy Chamberlain said”.

Figure 1.4

HIGHEST MORNING SALE IN N.S.W. (ABC AUDIT)

The Daily Telegraph

Phone 2 0924 SYDNEY, TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 1980 Price 20c

MORE BUDGET LEAKS
—Page 2

WEATHER
SYDNEY: Fine
City 20, L'pool 21
STATE: Showers
Details — page 29
(Interstate freight extra)

Anguished mum tells I SAW MY BABY STOLEN BY DINGO



An anguished mother told last night how she chased a dingo which snatched her baby daughter from a tent near Ayers Rock.

Lindy Chamberlain said: "At first I thought the dingo might have bitten my baby, Azaria, and taken something else from the tent."

"I ran toward the tent and yelled at the dingo: 'Get out!'"

"I dived into the tent. I saw the baby had gone."

"I felt desperately among the bedding — and I then realised the dog had my baby."

"I ran outside and screamed: 'The dingo has got my baby!'"

"Then I shouted for anyone who had a torch to help try to find the dog."

"I chased it into the scrub . . . but it disappeared in the darkness."

An all-day hunt by hundreds of people yesterday failed to find any

By GEOFF de LUCA

trace of the 10-week-old girl.

The searchers, helped by Aboriginal trackers, hunted through sandhills round the famous rock.

Barbecue

Azaria was taken by the dingo on Sunday night while she was sleeping in a small tent at the Ayers Rock camping ground.

She was with her two brothers in the small tent when the dingo snatched her from her carry-basket.

Her parents, Michael Chamberlain, 38, Seventh Day Adventist minister from Mt Isa, and Lindy, 32, were about 20 metres from the tent at a barbecue site when the dingo struck.

The family had arrived at the camping ground on Saturday night.

The distraught parents said yesterday they would erect a small monument to Azaria in the camping grounds.

"We have given up any hope for our baby girl," Mr Chamberlain said.

"We have been terribly upset by this ordeal but I hate to control myself and practise my faith."

"I am used to counselling people in these situations . . . I hope I can cope with it myself."

About 30 local people, tourists, police and rangers searched round the campsite on Sunday night but found no trace of the child.

Continued Page 3
Dingoes on trial again — Page 12

Mrs Chamberlain . . . distraught

Baby Azaria . . . seized from tent by a dingo

CRONIN, REDDY OUT — Back Page

LOTTO P. 9. Lotteries: Opera House 701, P. 34; Jackpot 1766, P. 35. TV, P. 4. Finance, P. 17. Telo-Trading 2 0924

Article from the *Daily Telegraph*, 19 August 1980 (Courtesy of the *Daily Telegraph*).

While the article's projection of Mrs Chamberlain's emotional state might be construed as sensational, especially in the context of Michael's autobiographical remark that journalists of his calibre "did unspeakable damage to our cause",³⁵ de Luca's positioning of Lindy as the primary witness seems more likely to empower her account. Several times in the article her story is affirmed in the words "told" and "tells" and then through reference to the couple's statements, "the distraught parents said last night". Unlike other articles which either elide Lindy's statements altogether (*The Sun*, 18 August 1980), state erroneously that both parents witnessed the abduction (*Advertiser*, 19 August 1980; *SMH*, 19 August 1980) or modify the certainty of Lindy's proposition by using the words "said she saw" or "believes she saw" (*The Sun*, 18 August 1980), the *DT* adopts Lindy's perspective and places her as the "seer" – the one to whom greatest credibility is given.

While some representations of the Chamberlain case reveal a tendency to show women as always acted upon, never assuming any active role for themselves, in the *DT* article, by giving her a voice, de Luca authorises Lindy's tale of abject horror and disbelief. This is evident both in written text and paralinguistic features, where in an accompanying photograph of Lindy, the caption attributes to her the emotional state of being "distraught". Even though an emotive tag such as this might guide the reader's interpretation of the text, the photograph and accompanying report in the *DT* legitimate Lindy's obvious distress. This was an important observation to make, given the criticism Lindy later received for her impassivity during the inquests and trial.

By contrast, in *The Sun* newspaper coverage, any direct speech from Lindy is paraphrased and she simply appears as a "frantic mother". This appellation seems to suggest an organic link between anxiety and the maternal experience, as if hysteria were a natural response to the tragedy and a condition of her gender. In addition to those comments about her "frantic" disposition, *The Sun* provides information about Lindy's social role and function through her description as a "minister's wife", thus giving clues about her husband's identity and profession, but little of her own. In fact, it is not until page two of the newspaper that she is formally identified as "Mrs Lindy Chamberlain". Despite both parents described as being "in shock" following the

³⁵ Michael Chamberlain & Lowell Tarling, *Beyond Azaria: Black Light, White Light*, (Melbourne: Information Australia, 1999), 128.

strange disappearance of their daughter, there is very little in the account of Michael's behaviour to suggest his state of mind. He is referred to as the "baby's father", a "Seventh Day Adventist Minister" and "Pastor Michael Chamberlain", but his response is never singled out. Differences in the couple's response to the tragedy are emphasised further in *The Sun's* report of their statements to police. Michael is directly quoted as saying: "This [tragedy] must not be allowed to happen again"; while Lindy's only speaking part is rephrased in "[Lindy] believes she saw" (*The Sun*, 18 August 1980). Michael's speech is then supported by background information concerning his age and profession, enabling the reader to construct a more composite picture of him as a 36 year-old husband, father and clergyman. By contrast, Lindy's sole means of identification is through her "frantic" reaction to the disappearance.

Similar to initial representations of Azaria's mother in *The Sun*, the construction of a gendered discourse of social status in the *DM* sees Lindy referred to as either "the baby's mother" or "the woman" – her identity concealed until paragraph nine when she appears as the wife of Pastor Michael Chamberlain (*DM*, 18 August 1980). Moreover, out of the thirteen separate quotation marks indicating Michael's speech patterns in this article, only once is he referred to as the baby's father; every other time he is addressed as "Pastor Chamberlain". Differences in Michael and Lindy's media representation in this early period suggest that gender was a factor in popular responses to the Chamberlain story. As succeeding chapters in this thesis will illustrate, however, Lindy was not the only one subjected to rigid gender interpretations. Michael also fell under scrutiny during the trial when his overly emotional response appeared to contradict expectations of masculine behaviour in Australia (see Chapters Three and Four).

While there were subtle differences in media coverage of the couple, it was not until the findings of the first inquest were quashed and another convened that Lindy became the sole focus of press reports. At the second inquest the term "mother" dominated newspaper headlines when *The Age* newspaper published on its front-pages "Mother killed Azaria, SM told" (*The Age*, 2 February 1982) and "Azaria's mother on charge of murder" (*The Age*, 3 February 1982). By the time the trial was convened in 1982, "Lindy" replaced "Mrs Chamberlain" in a range of newspaper

headlines, including “Lindy denies any cover-up over Azaria’s death” (*SMH*, 28 September 1982) and “Guilty! Lindy gets life for Azaria murder” (*DT*, 30 October 1980).³⁶ As *Evil Angels* (1988) author, John Bryson, so accurately observed, by the time the Supreme Court trial started “No one now referred to her any other way, even in newspaper headlines. “Lindy” was a name now more familiar to the nation than the first names of footballers and tennis stars.”³⁷

With Lindy as their principal subject, newspapers reported on her failure to show emotion in court – “Lindy Chamberlain stood in the dock as the verdict was given, her face pale but emotionless. She looked directly across to the jury” (*DT*, 30 October 1982); her excessive emotion – “Mrs Chamberlain’s face was tear-stained” (*SMH*, 30 October 1982); or her expression which “varied from occasional tears to a strange, pale emptiness” (*Sun-Herald*, 24 October 1982). At other times Lindy’s appearance guided the bulk of media commentary: “Lindy Chamberlain has brought with her an impressive maternity wardrobe” (*Sun-Herald*, 26 September 1982). Since news reports emphasising Lindy’s physical appearance are plentiful, it will be the concern of later chapters to discuss their evolution and wider impact on conceptions of femininity in the media. Here, I have highlighted the transition, from “Mother” to ‘Lindy’, in the naming strategies used by the press at the first and second inquests, in relation to wider changes occurring in the Australian media in the 1980s, with its shift towards news participants.

The Victim: the dingo baby

In the first four to six weeks after Azaria’s abduction, the Chamberlain case was collectively identified through the words, “baby” and “dingo”. In the *Advertiser*, the disappearance was headlined “missing baby”(19 August 1980); in *The Australian* and *DT* it was the “baby hunt” (21 August 1980 and 20 August 1980 respectively); in *The Age* and *DM* it was described as the “baby search” (20 August 1980 and 19 August 1980 respectively); while “baby girl” dominated the *SMH* news story (19

³⁶ It was common for journalists to build their reputation on a story; in this case, the *Herald’s* Malcolm Brown was perhaps the most consistent writer on the Chamberlain case. Similarly, in the July 2001 attempted abduction of British backpacker, Joanne Lees, the *Centralian Advocate’s* Mark Wilton became the first to scoop an interview with the victim after her ordeal.

³⁷ John Bryson, *Evil Angels*, 394.

August 1980) and “Dingo baby” in *The Sun* (4 September 1980). Early emphasis on the story of abduction had the victim at the forefront of a range of press articles. By October 1980, however, news language became increasingly provocative, drawing upon the conventions of crime reportage to describe the police investigation, with terms such as “mystery”, “hunt” and “clues” frequently used (*DM*, 15 October 1980). Reports at this time also replaced descriptions of the initial “child-snatching” (*The Sun*, 18 August 1980) with suggestions Azaria had “vanished” with no apparent explanation (*The Sun*, 23 October 1980), while the certainty underscoring early reports in “Dingo Takes Holiday Baby” (*The Sun*, 18 August 1980) was replaced with the more ambivalent “Zoo Test on Dingo in Baby Mystery” (*The Sun*, 23 October 1980). Subsequent headlines emphasised the failure of preliminary scientific tests to identify traces of the dingo: “Lost Baby Riddle Deepens” (*DM*, 7 October 1980). The crime genre to which the word “riddle” belongs was further projected in cross heads embedded in the *DM* article: “Dingo hunt: Couple Quizzed” and “Dingo Kidnap – 2 Quizzed” (*DM*, 7 October 1980). The role of the victim at the centre of the disappearance was often surpassed by the media’s metaphorisation of the story’s other participants, in particular the baby’s mother, Lindy. Examination of Chamberlain metaphors to this point reveals a decisive shift in press language from October 1980, bearing out the observation of Chamberlain solicitor and author, Ken Crispin:

The tone of the articles in the press also changed. Initially it was largely a matter of phraseology. The Chamberlains’ account of what had happened was no longer reported as fact, but as “allegations”. The involvement of the dingo began to be described as “the dingo theory” or “the dingo story”. Various experts were quoted, but their views always seemed to point to the unlikelihood of a dingo having taken the child. By the time Liz Hickson’s article appeared on 1 October 1980, the climate of opinion had swung against the Chamberlains.⁴⁴

For Crispin, the climate of suspicion was marked by a shift in media focus, in what I have argued to be a movement away from the event to a symbolic investment in its characters. Indeed, when Liz Hickson’s article was published in the *Woman’s Day*

⁴⁴ Ken Crispin, *The Crown versus Chamberlain*, 2.

magazine in October 1980, the missing infant, Azaria, was replaced by descriptions of her mother, Lindy. Initially intended to be a “factionalised” account of the night Azaria disappeared, the article was, without Hickson’s consent, mistakenly edited by one of her colleagues and published as a verbatim transcript of the interview with Lindy. Later seized upon by the Chamberlain prosecution team at the trial in 1982, the article showed inconsistencies in the story Lindy had provided to Hickson compared with initial statements to police.⁴⁵ The magazine also stated that Lindy had written a “thousand word thesis” on dingoes, later proved at the 1986 Commission of Inquiry to be a project from the fifth grade containing a paragraph on wild species of dogs, such as the dingo. A transformation in the tone of articles written after October 1980 implies the role of media selection in the meaning-making process, which saw interest in the victim replaced by an intense focus on her mother.

Then, at the second inquest, when it was decided the Chamberlains would stand trial for murder, the words “baby” and “dingo” changed in line with the case’s shifting status, so that “Azaria” emerged as the media’s shorthand reference. More often than not, however, “Azaria” described the case itself, rather than the victim, as the following examples illustrate: “New Azaria Inquest” (*DM*, 19 November 1981); “New Azaria Hunt” (*DM*, 24 November 1981); “Azaria Shock: New Hearing Ordered!” (*DM*, 25 November 1981) and “Azaria parents stunned: Friend” (*Herald*, 21 November 1981). As these headlines reveal, unlike the event’s other participants, Azaria was becoming less the victim in the story of her own disappearance and more the identifier in a trial involving her parents, their religion, the dingo and the “Ayers Rock” landscape.

“Ayers Rock”: the dead centre

Much was made of the fact Azaria disappeared from “Ayers Rock”, a location variously known in Australian culture as “the red centre”, “the dead centre” and the “holy navel”.⁴⁶ In initial news reports of the dingo abduction, many focused on the

⁴⁵ Ken Crispin, *The Crown versus Chamberlain*, 2.

⁴⁶ In Chamberlain critical literature “the Rock” is referred to as “a huge beast at rest” (Richard Shears, *Azaria: The Mysterious Disappearance*, 1), as possessing a “quality of enormity” and “endurance” (John Bryson, *Evil Angels*, 28), and as signifying a “monumental presence” (Helen Grace, “A Shroud of Evidence”, 192).

remote locality and size of “the Rock”, with the local newspaper in Orange, New South Wales, describing the crime scene as “out there” (*Central Western Daily*, 19 August 1980), while the *CM* somewhat narrowed the terms of reference to “the famous Rock” just “1000km from Adelaide” (*CM*, 19 August 1980). Beliefs that the “Rock” was somehow responsible for Azaria’s disappearance were contained in observations made by the London *Observer* newspaper: “an eerie and unsettling place which seemed as if the thing itself had played a part in the events” (*Observer*, 5 September, 1982).⁴⁷ At the time the article was written in 1982, in both international and Australian media coverage, the “thing” was beginning to resemble, if not a perpetrator, then a silent witness to Azaria’s disappearance.

In *The Age*, the location provided a unique angle of representation, with the newspaper’s first report carrying the headline: “Baby that vanished in dingo country” (*The Age*, 19 August 1980). Here there is neither an instigator (agent) nor recipient (goal), only a circumstance suggestive of an act of Nature and/or God, commensurate with nineteenth century depictions of the lost child in the bush.⁴⁸ Unlike other newspapers, which focused on either the dingo’s bestial attack or the response of the victim’s parents, this article rests on the location of the disappearance in “dingo country”. Moreover, detailed descriptions of the area, including the absence of moonlight, cold temperature and thick scrub terrain, imply the landscape simply swallowed up the infant. Senior Constable Frank Morris, whose comments added to the confusion over the baby’s whereabouts, was quoted as saying: “Whatever happened, there is no chance the baby could have survived the night in the freezing temperatures after it was taken” and that, despite “an all-day search by about 100 people” there had been no trace of the infant found (*The Age*, 19 August 1980). The unlikely turn of events is also considered in this newspaper alongside the behaviour of Azaria’s parents in the hours following her disappearance. The couple is ascribed little emotion, and only Michael appears in the seventh paragraph with: “Mr Chamberlain, of Mt Isa, said all hope of finding Azaria alive was now gone” (*The Age*, 19 August 1980). Even though this comment captures Michael’s sense of hopelessness, without direct quotation there is little scope for his emotional

⁴⁷ Christine Higgins, “Naturalising ‘Horror’ Stories”, 138.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the myth of lost children in the Australian bush see Peter Pierce, *The Country of Lost Children: An Australian Anxiety*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

connection with the reader. Resignation of this kind is indicated in the very first paragraph, where it is stated the Chamberlains have sought permission to erect a memorial at “Ayers Rock”, rather than contribute to the ongoing search for her body: “A Seventh Day Adventist minister said yesterday that he and his wife would build a small monument to their daughter ...”. In this instant, even before the Chamberlains have been identified by name, their religion forms the basis of a first introduction to the reader. Subsequent comments by Michael about seeing his daughter at the resurrection of Christ (a forthcoming event for Adventists) seemed to confirm views held by many Australians that the Chamberlains’ reaction to Azaria’s disappearance was unconventional. Thus, associative links between the baby that “vanished” in “dingo country” within “freezing temperatures”, in a “terrain [which] was too bad”, combined with the Seventh Day Adventist religion of the parents, imply an unusual set of circumstances surrounding the disappearance.

The Adelaide *Advertiser* similarly focuses on the area in which Azaria disappeared and the search to locate her, but with markedly different tonal effects. In the breaking news headline, “Search fails to find missing baby”, the selection of the term “missing” rather than “vanished” seems to convey the possibility Azaria might be found. Details of the search to be conducted – “A big search ... will resume at first light today” (*Advertiser*, 19 August 1980) – compare with what *The Age* newspaper described as the futile efforts of police “... to find any trace of the girl” (*The Age*, 19 August 1980). Differences in tone are also indicated in the way facts are arranged within the body of the text. For example, in the first paragraph of *The Age* report, focus is on an Adventist family’s wish to construct a memorial for their daughter. In the *Advertiser* there is no mention of the memorial or the family’s religious affiliation, only the search (the process), the baby (the goal) and the dingo (the agent). The only indication the victim’s parents are Adventists is a reference in the thirteenth paragraph to “Mr Chamberlain, a Seventh Day Adventist minister”. Subsequent articles on the case drew on these early depictions of the Northern Territory landscape, projecting either its malignancy, as *The Age* concluded, or its staging of the now famous disappearance. For *The Age* travel writer Sandra Bardwell, there is a collapsing of distances and boundaries in the Northern Territory as indicated in her description of Alice Springs – the setting of the second inquest and a place where “Straight roads,

crossing the patterns of the landscape, [have] no apparent destination”(*The Age*, 1 February, 1982). For being “a town in isolation” and “a place where extremes are the rule”, Alice Springs almost encapsulates the infant’s disappearance since neither Azaria, nor the imaginations of this writer-traveller can escape the desert.

For Malcolm Brown, there was much in the Northern Territory landscape that symbolised the Chamberlain case, both in the physical spaces and the personalities occupying them. In the *Sun-Herald* he argued there was a “sense of unreality, almost surrealism, about this sweating, palm-fringed flatland of northern Australia and the trial which has made it the focus of international attention” (11 October 1982). Juxtaposing the Azaria trial in Darwin with a series of strange and inexplicable events, Brown showed the mystery surrounding the case and the landscape in which it occurred. In one example, the Queen’s visit to Darwin in 1982 during Michael and Lindy’s trial for murder is a reminder of the surreal turn of events, when Her Majesty, the “ultimate prosecutor of the Chamberlains”, was driven within 200m of the couple (*Sun-Herald*, 11 October 1982). For journalists like Brown, who had heard of the royal visit, it appeared media attention was less focused on the Queen and more on the Chamberlain murder trial.

More than just a background setting to the Chamberlain case, “Ayers Rock” was a metaphorical and discursive plain onto which certain cultural values were inscribed by the media. In press coverage of the event between 1980 and 1982, it appeared the landscape made glaringly obvious the differences between locals and tourists, as Brown implied in his remarks about the lifestyles and habits of the “bethonged Darwinites” and “staid southerners” (*Sun-Herald*, 19 September 1982). He observed “... things just happen to operate differently this far north” (*Sun-Herald*, 19 September 1982). Indeed, the “Top End” was “the most natural place of all for the Azaria saga to come” since it revealed the “jarring oddities” of a people characterised by the harshness of their landscape (*Sun-Herald*, 19 September 1982). As Brown’s article implies, there is a collapsing of distances and a quality of timelessness about the Northern Territory, with townships and tourist sites such as Darwin, Alice Springs and “the Rock” represented as vast and intractable, yet somehow within close range. From an “outsider’s” perspective, this ambiguity renders Azaria’s disappearance just another inexplicable event occurring in the Northern Territory, where the space-time

continuum has been interrupted and the hallmarks of a modern, “civilised” city – skyscrapers, public transportation and complex communication networks – are mostly absent, as in Alice Springs: “The sky seems enormously vast and open, an impression largely caused by the absence of any buildings with more than two storeys above ground level” (*The Age*, 1 February 1982). As the Chamberlain case highlighted, time and progress are delayed in a region so remote that:

Subtler manifestations of the isolation [of Alice Springs] take longer to materialize: stories from the friendly local people about the hazards of falling ill, of obtaining a new windscreen, the price of some fresh produce (\$2.50 for a kilo of pears), the late arrival of the daily interstate newspapers (“The Age” costs \$1) (*The Age*, 1 February 1982).

Examination of print articles such as these reveals the way in which the landscape provided a framing device for media representations of the story. The cultural anxieties associated with “the Rock”, as one of five mythological symbols attending the Chamberlain case, will be examined further in Chapter Four.

Religion: An ambassador for Jesus

News reports published in the days and weeks after Azaria’s disappearance frequently made reference to the family’s religion, with Lindy described as “a minister’s wife” and Michael as a pastor in the Seventh Day Adventist Church (*The Sun*, 18 August 1980). As early as 4 September 1980 rumours circulated in the press that Azaria was a “spastic” child and “sickly baby”, sacrificed as part of a cleansing ritual performed by Adventists (*The Sun*, 4 September 1980). In addressing these claims, Lindy argues that any suggestion Azaria was a “human sacrifice for our church is still very, very far-fetched” (*The Sun*, 4 September 1980). Indeed, allegations the infant was a religious sacrifice were fuelled by suggestions that the name, Azaria, meant “sacrifice in the wilderness”, that the family’s garage housed a white, baby’s coffin, that the Chamberlains owned a Bible with a passage underlined in red about the sacrifice of a child with a tent peg and that the Chamberlain children

were frequently dressed in black. As the Morling inquiry later found, all of these allegations were without foundation.

In conjunction with their unorthodox religion, these disparate rumours did little to assuage public concerns about the Chamberlains' guilt. Then, one month after *The Sun* published these rumours, the press revealed that forensic experts at Adelaide Zoo had filmed an animal "sacrifice" as part of their investigations into Azaria's death (*DM*, 23 October 1980). This seemed to coalesce with popular beliefs about the infant's own tragic end. Subsequent unrelated reports described the theological scandal affecting the Adventist church and its nineteenth century spiritual leader, Ellen White (*The Australian*, 28 October 1980). Whether the contents of the report would have been newsworthy before the Chamberlain case is a matter for speculation, but it does demonstrate the media's heightened awareness of a religion whose prelate, Michael, and wife, Lindy, were themselves facing scandal.

Following the press-led association between the Chamberlains' religion and themes of "sacrifice" and "scandal", a number of reports at the first inquest in February 1981 cited religion as one of the main obstacles in their bid for public sympathy:

Today, when signs of Christian faith are perhaps not as abundant as they were, parents who had lost a baby might be excused for thinking harshly of their God, or writing him off altogether. The Chamberlains knelt and thanked their God. To them, Azaria's death simply showed He worked in mysterious ways (*Sun-Herald*, 22 February 1981).

The article then describes how: "It would be fair to call them an unusual people, if only because of their exceptional faith" (*Sun-Herald*, 22 February 1981). Such comments reiterate the response of many Australians towards a couple whose apparent faith and acceptance of Azaria's death confounded expectations from the outset. Twelve months later, after the Chamberlains had been found guilty, many tabloids speculated on Lindy's religious upbringing in Whakatane, New Zealand, citing her disruptive childhood as a reason for Azaria's murder. In an exclusive report, *DT* revealed Lindy's "secret" and "gypsy-like" lifestyle within the Adventist Church,

stating: “This – and other details of Lindy’s life and background – [have] been one of the best kept secrets of the Dingo Baby saga” (*DT*, 1 November 1982). Her formative years spent amongst the “guardians of the secrets” (ie members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church), is a description which shrouds the religion in a cloak of mystery (*DT*, 1 November 1982). Additionally, the *DT* drew attention to what it perceived to be the unusual or unconventional behaviour of Adventist adherents: “[Lindy’s] parents did not even record her birth in the local paper, *The Beacon*” (1 November 1982). Indeed, the “secret” rituals and unconventional practices of the Adventist Church, particularly their observance of the Saturday Sabbath, framed much media reportage of the case. Focus on the couple’s religion is again revealed in a headline published in November 1982 in which Lindy’s brother tells: “My sister Lindy: God still loves her” (*DT*, 4 November 1982). Similarly, in the *Advertiser*, Lindy is called upon to refute claims her childhood was spent in the Adventist community in Tasmania (*Advertiser*, 3 November 1982).

While in the bulk of media representations of the case the Chamberlains were viewed through the lens of their Adventist faith, it was Michael, as the minister of an unorthodox religion, whose eagerness to cooperate with the media aroused great suspicion. Feminist critics have long argued that Lindy was to suffer the most trenchant criticism and “vilification” by the media, in contrast to Michael who “was not subjected to an obsessive, near-hysterical public scrutiny”.⁴⁹ Adrian Howe contends that any suggestion Michael was subjected to “a trial by sex is quite simply inconceivable”, and cites as evidence the public scrutiny of Lindy’s appearance and behaviour. Howe also challenges comments made by fellow Chamberlain critic, Norman H. Young, that Michael *and* Lindy were judged by the Australian public as “cold” and “sinister”, on the basis that it was “Lindy who captured the nation’s attention, relegating Michael to little more than a shadowy background figure”.⁵⁰ Indeed, feminist appraisals of the event have taken quite literally Michael’s charge as an “accessory” to murder as an indication of his relative lack of importance in public and legal discourse on the case. And, while the depth and volume of media representations on Lindy cannot be equated with Michael’s own, it is important not to overlook evidence to suggest he was also the object of public scrutiny. As my own

⁴⁹ Adrian Howe, *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 10.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

analysis of news articles here and in Chapter Four indicate, Michael was severely judged for his uncompromising religious beliefs and stoic acceptance of Azaria's fate.

For many Australians, Michael's comments to the press in the week after Azaria's disappearance – "We must just remain at peace and do the best we can to be calm" (*DM*, 26 August 1980) – were characteristic of the strange behaviour exhibited by those adherents of a marginal religion. Interestingly too, as news articles concentrated on Lindy's mode of dress and changing physical shape, Michael's "masculinity" was being questioned. As the *Sun-Herald* observed, Lindy, "always had been the stronger of two strong parents", while Michael, "seemed to show the strain more than his wife" (*Sun-Herald*, 22 February 1981). Then there were reports at the trial arguing he was "slipping into paranoia" (*Sun-Herald*, 31 October 1982), sometimes "exhausted" and other times seen "shaking his head" in disbelief (*Sun-Herald*, 31 October 1982). Further reports described their opposing reactions to the verdict: "Lindy Chamberlain stood in the dock as the verdict was given, her face pale but emotionless. She looked directly across to the jury. Her husband Michael's eyes dropped when the jury announced its verdict of guilty. His hands stretched out to clasp that of his wife's" (*DT*, 30 October 1982). Two days later, the *DT*, remarked how "A shattered Michael Chamberlain collapsed", having been given a suspended sentence and issued a \$500 fine (*DT*, 1 November 1982).

During the trial, Michael's response to physical evidence presented by experts led to descriptions of him as "suddenly taken ill" and "not feeling well" (*SMH*, 25 September 1982), while in another day's sitting, when Azaria's bloodstained clothing was exhibited, the couple's reaction is described in the following manner: "Lindy Chamberlain sat expressionless ... and Michael Chamberlain, quite ashen, sometimes turned away and winced" (*Sun-Herald*, 19 September 1982). Those times when Lindy lacked the necessary show of emotion, appearing either stoic or cold, Michael's response was judged by sections of the media as over-emotional and feminine. His actions were the subject of further scrutiny following comments made by Constable Morris from the Alice Springs Police Force, who testified in court that Michael had said his daughter's death was "God's will" and had sought permission to take photographs of a dead dingo, being particularly interested in "its jaws" (*SMH*, 16

September 1982). A newspaper editorial written after the trial even questioned whether, if the roles had been reversed and Michael charged with murder and Lindy an accessory after the fact, he would have received the same level of support from advocate groups across the country as did his wife (*Sun-Herald*, 21 November 1982). Much later, *The Australian Magazine* acknowledged the widespread criticisms directed at Michael, pointing to those who argued he had an “uncertain” and “self-effacing” demeanour (11-12 August 1990). Answering the charges against his conduct, Michael Chamberlain wrote in his autobiography, *Beyond Azaria: Black Light, White Light*:

In my ultimate pain I was thinking about still being an ambassador for Jesus Christ, and I misread the culture of the average person. I misread the Australian culture. And in my personal devastation, I misread how the media would portray us.⁵¹

Misjudging the mood of the Australian public was a mistake for which Michael would be long remembered, even after the courts exonerated the couple of the crimes in September 1988. Ultimately, silence on the topic of Michael’s media representation raises questions about how gender is managed within liberal feminist discourse. Charting Michael’s comparative representation highlights not only the metaphor of religion with which he was associated in the media, but also the imbalance in feminist critiques of the case.

Conclusions

This chapter has analysed a number of shifts in the media’s representation of the Chamberlain case and the crystallisation of five principle metaphors: the dingo, the mother, religion, the victim and the landscape. I have argued that the case occurred at a tipping point in the public sphere, when increased media competition and the growth of alternate communicative technologies led news workers to adopt a more entertainment-focused approach in their coverage of the Chamberlain event, employing popular “tabloid” modes of narration in the “broadsheet” press. A detailed

⁵¹ Michael Chamberlain and Lowell Tarling, *Beyond Azaria*, 113.

content analysis of a range of primary source material in both print and broadcast media has illustrated the frequent use of provocative and sensationalised language across the news industry.

This type of analysis has also shown that the practice of narrative selection, which frequently led news reporters to focus on participants in the event, had wider implications for the meaning of Azaria's disappearance and its public reception. Thus, it is not enough to simply analyse the Chamberlain case as a fixed event. Changes in the tone, style and focus of news reports require a detailed analysis to detect their shifting nuances and approach. By identifying a series of metaphors within the media coverage of Azaria's disappearance, I have also challenged customary views held in the main by feminists that Michael was spared the public scrutiny Lindy endured. While their experiences cannot be equated, arguments that Michael was immune from the effects of negative publicity and wider social judgements, are open to debate.

Thus, the first phase of "metaphorisation" is critical in examining how media focus on the case's central figures shaped their public image, encoding between 1980 and 1982 an element of doubt in the Chamberlain's "dingo theory". In the next chapter, I will examine the way members of the public became directly involved in the meaning-making process, sometimes contesting and at other times supporting media narratives through letters, pamphlets, booklets, petitions to parliament and mass public rallying.

CHAPTER 2: DISSEMINATION 1982-1984

“What runs round Ayers Rock on its back legs with its arms in the air?”

*“A dingo doing a victory lap”.*¹

One of the many dingo jokes circulating in October 1981, recorded and compiled by Graham Seal.

*The joke served as the lightning rod, the conductor of a potentially destructive current of thought, earthing it in the field of apparent common sense and common knowledge.*²

Paul Reynolds considering the effect of dingo jokes on Azaria Chamberlain’s disappearance.

In findings delivered at the first coronial inquest in 1981, Magistrate Denis Barritt cleared the Chamberlains of any involvement in their daughter’s murder. The conclusion reached was controversial, not least because the Coroner recommended changes to the implementation and practice of Northern Territory law enforcement and scientific procedure. Communal contempt for the verdict was expressed in the circulation of a range of anti-establishment literature in the form of dingo jokes, caricatures and satirical verse. In many of these narratives the animal was depicted as a scapegoat and an unwitting victim of institutional authority. By the time Lindy and Michael were convicted in February 1982, however, a series of texts published by members of the public once again opposed the court’s ruling. In place of dingo jokes, individuals penned pamphlets, letters of petition and works of non-fiction expressing communal beliefs that the verdict was manifestly harsh or inadequate. The bulk of this correspondence is held at the National Library of Australia (NLA), while a small number of pamphlets, newsletters and booklets are housed at the State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW). While I will briefly examine letters derived from the larger collection via Adrian Howe’s pioneering research and my own, my intention is to focus on the previously unanalysed material kept at the SLNSW. It is here that views about Lindy’s innocence were disseminated, providing an intellectual foundation for the pro-Chamberlain movement. Writings of this nature contributed to what Howe

¹ Graham Seal, “Azaria Chamberlain and the Media Charivari”, *Australian Folklore*, no.1, (March 1987): 71.

² Paul Reynolds, “The Azaria Chamberlain Case: Reflections on Australian Identity”, *Working Paper*, no.47, (July 1989): 5.

describes, with reference to the archived letters at the NLA, as a “counter-public”, one that resisted official representations of the event. The formation of counter-publics has been regarded, in the work of Jurgen Habermas and others, as symptomatic of the “decline, degradation, crisis, or extinction of the public [sphere]”.³ The loss has been associated in the twentieth century with the rise of the mass media and other forms of electronic technology. However, in this chapter I will be considering an alternate view, one which has only recently been highlighted by Deborah Staines in examinations of the increasing diversity of the mass media in the Chamberlain case. I will take her argument one step further by suggesting that the event articulates changes to the modern public sphere in the 1980s and can be compared with other contemporary flashpoints, such as the case involving Bali drug-trafficker Schapelle Corby. Thus, examining the articulation of multiple and often contradictory voices, I will argue that the Chamberlains provide a case study of the constitution and reformation of publics around contemporary media events.

Waltzing Azaria

There is a ballad sung to the tune of Australia’s unofficial anthem, “Waltzing Matilda”, which provides evidence of early folkloric reaction to Azaria’s disappearance (Figure 2.1).⁴ Entitled “Ode to Azaria”, the song recasts from the original, anti-establishment sentiments about the unequal relationship between squatters and shearers in the 1890s into a modern contest between Lindy and the dingo. In one reading the dingo is positioned as the “swaggie” or Aussie tramp, a folk hero martyred for his sustained opposition to authority⁵ in the form of the “mounted

³ Bruce Robbins, ed., *The Phantom Public Sphere*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), viii.

⁴ Different versions of “Ode to Azaria” have been published in a range of academic texts, including Graham Seal, “Azaria Chamberlain and the Media Charivari”, 75; Norman H. Young, *Innocence Regained*, 23; Christine Higgins, “Naturalising ‘Horror’ Stories”, 135-148. In the index to this thesis I have reproduced the longest version of the song.

⁵ Russel Ward argues that the “sheep-stealing swagman who ‘sprang into the billabong’ became the culture-hero of Australian nationalism acknowledged alike by bushman and city-dweller, radical and conservative, and recognised even by foreigners”. In particular, his image recalled the folk-memory of hatred for figures of constituted authority and the system by which individuals received “patronage from above”, see Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), 197, 214, 296.

Figure 2.1

“Ode to Azaria”

(Sung to the tune of Waltzing Matilda)

Once a jolly pastor camped in a caravan
under the shade of a kurrajong tree
and he sang and he prayed as he watched the baby’s bottle boil
“You’ll be a seventh day adventist like me”.

Seventh day adventist, seventh day adventist,
you’ll be a seventh day Adventist like me
and he sang and he prayed as he watched the baby’s bottle boil
“You’ll be a seventh day adventist like me”.

Down came a Lindy to snatch up Azaria
she picked up the scissors and stabbed her with glee
and she smiled as she shoved that baby in the camera bag
“It’s fun being a seventh day adventist like me”.

Seventh day adventist, seventh day adventist
It’s fun being a seventh day adventist like me
And she smiled as she shoved that baby in the camera bag
It’s fun being a seventh day adventist like me

Out came a dingo nosing around the camp fire
Lindy winked at Michael and said “it wasn’t me...”
what happened to the baby you put into the camera bag
give it to the dingo and you’ll get off scot free

Up jumped the dingo and ran past the camera bag
you’ll never blame her murder on me
and Azaria’s ghost may be heard as you pass by the kurrajong tree
“Mummy was the one who did away with me”

(Courtesy of Graham Seal)

policemen” or Lindy, in this parodied interpretation of events.⁶ Portrayed as an “underdog” in the narrative, the dingo projects a tendency in Australian settler folklore to support those disadvantaged or caught “against the odds”. The overwhelming justification for this view, according to Graham Seal, was the persistent belief that Lindy and Michael had got away with murder. These feelings grew in intensity during the first inquest in 1981 and then, later, at the Supreme Court trial in 1982, in the dissemination of jokes, songs and humorous verse (Figure 2.2). Thus, added to reconfigurations of the popular Australian folksong, “Waltzing Matilda”, was the production and circulation of a host of dingo jokes that gave versification to anti-Chamberlain sentiments. Dingo jokes served a critical function by reconfirming non-Indigenous relations to the bush and blocking any possibility the Chamberlain story was true. As Paul Reynolds argues, there is a “common element of denial” in this type of humour, “usually denial of potentiality for danger”.⁷ By dismissing the veracity of the couple’s story, fears of the threat posed by wild animals could be reduced, if not ameliorated. Ultimately, the joke concretised in apparent common sense the belief that dingoes do not, and cannot, act in a predatory manner against humans, as Reynolds’ comment in the epigraph to this chapter suggests. But, whereas his description of dingo humour endorses a “potentially destructive”, “laconic and macabre” reading of folklore, in Seal’s view the jokes function in wider social and cultural debates about morality and communal expectation.⁸ More than minimising any latent danger buried in the bush, they highlighted the limitations imposed on individual behaviour by Australian society and culture.

Oral modes of storytelling convey the views and motivations of a cross section of Australians and give insight into the nature of their “unofficial” and secondary expressions. In this discussion they provide a point of comparison for my own argument about the production of pamphlet literature in the Chamberlain case between 1982 and 1984. This is because, rather than widening the gap between “official” and “unofficial” forms of knowledge, the pamphlet became a site for intersecting and mostly contradictory discourses. Previously unanalysed, the pamphlets held in archives at the SLNSW contain evidence of a change in the way

⁶ Graham Seal, “Azaria Chamberlain and the Media Charivari”, 76.

⁷ Paul Reynolds, “The Azaria Chamberlain Case”, 5.

⁸ *ibid.*

Figure 2.2

TOP 20 HITS

1.	On the Prowl	5501' Dingos
2.	Hopelessly Devoured by You	Azaria Newton-John
3.	Come on Baby Light My Fire	Dingo Feliciano
4.	Torn Between Two Dingos	Azaria Chamberlain
5.	Breakfast in the Rock	Dingo Tramp
6.	Stop Draggin' My Baby Around	Linda Nicks
7.	Don't Let the Dingo Go Down on Me	Elton Chamberlain
8.	I Hate the Baby	John-Paul Dingo
9.	You Took the Baby Right Out of my Mouth	Dingo Loaf
10.	You Can't Stop the Dingo	The Village Babies
11.	Tent of the Rising Sun	Eric Burdon and the Dingos
12.	What's New Puppydog	The Babies
13.	How Much is that Dingo in the Window?	Tom Dingo Jones
14.	It's a Heartburn	Azaria Tyler
15.	Walkin' the Baby	The Rolling Dingo
16.	Saliva and other Bruises	The Dingo Supply
17.	You Ain't Nothin' But a Dingo Dog	Elvis Chamberlain
18.	They Called it Dingo Love	(unreadable)
19.	The Dingo Rock	Baby Cool
20.	Dingo on the Run	Azaria McCartney and Wings

(Courtesy of Graham Seal)

groups of “ordinary” Australians were articulating their concerns about the case. Each writer was opposed to the guilty verdict and disseminated his or her views in a variety of printed publications, not just pamphlets, but in books, booklets, newsletters and petitions. The term “dissemination” which, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is from the Latin “disseminare” meaning to “scatter” or to “spread information widely” appropriately describes the circulation of such ephemera at community rallies, public meetings and through the Azaria Information Service.⁹ In fact, in the two-year period with which this chapter is concerned, the Azaria Newsletter was founded and the first outdoor public rally held on 4 November 1982.¹⁰

As the pamphlets reveal, dominant and popular discourses intersected and overlapped as official forms of knowledge: reference maps of the “Ayers Rock” campsite, photographs of “canis familiaris” (the dingo), facts and statistical figures, transcripts from the trial and appeals processes and, most of all, excerpts from television and radio news reports, print articles and magazine interviews were contained alongside the “unofficial” – personal anecdotes and stories, analogies and quotable comments from prominent individuals. Such varying content conveys the difficulty in separating the so-called “hegemonic” from “popular” discourses which frequently coincided. Rather, by sourcing evidence for Michael and Lindy’s exoneration in a range of media output, the pamphlet authors found a sympathetic voice in the media and a support base for the Chamberlain advocacy movement. This is not to say that the entire mass media was supportive of the couple’s innocence or that the actions of pamphleteers lacked self-interest as, no doubt, by finding collaborative views in the media, they could publicise their aims and appeal to wider audiences. Nor do I wish to suggest that discourses were all the same and homogenised; one need only compare exemplary text types to get an understanding of how an official discourse, as represented in a legal document or newspaper article, might differ from an unofficial discourse as it appears in the popular and informal conventions of a pamphlet. Instead, what I hope to suggest is that the stories told by the media about Azaria Chamberlain’s disappearance did not always differ from those told by the public. This is because the traditional concept of the public sphere, the site of critical public discussion and debate was fragmenting. Discourses of varying kinds

⁹ *Paperback Oxford English Dictionary*, new ed., s.v. “dissemination”.

¹⁰ Adrian Howe, *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 39.

collided and multiple voices, as distinct from the homogenous voice of white, middle class, male citizens was now being heard.

The Phantom Public Sphere

As illustrated, there was clearly a change in the way ordinary people began to access the public sphere and articulate their viewpoints in heterogenous, plural communities. The historical climate in which interest groups forged new ways of speaking in the public sphere needs to be addressed if the Chamberlain counter-publics are to be sufficiently understood.

The public sphere has traditionally been associated with the liberal bourgeois model advocated by Jurgen Habermas in which white, middle class men debated issues of business and state. However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the traditional public sphere was in a process of fragmentation and decline. The conventional separation of the public and private worlds, based on the different functions of men and women in society eroded as new categorisations of the public sphere and changes to its political function occurred.¹¹ The effects of these changes were visible in the press where, from a “business in pure reporting”, it became an institution managing “ideologies and viewpoints” and in the role of the newspaper publisher who, once a “merchant of news”, became a “dealer in public opinion”.¹² The changes Habermas outlines correspond with arguments in the previous chapter about the emergence of popular culture and the exercise of “tabloid” practices in the “broadsheet” press, that is, a greater emphasis on entertainment and the shifting tastes of audiences. Here, the changes he refers to imply a shift in the way individuals began to access the public sphere. Traditionally, the public sphere has been associated with men and therefore “symbolically aligned with the mind, contractual and commercial relationships, and reasoned debate”.¹³ Women, migrants and children, along with other members of marginalised groups have been traditionally excluded. In sociological analysis, this division was determined for some time to be a conventional and symbolic, rather than a “natural” association of men with the public sphere of

¹¹ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, xii, 142-3.

¹² *ibid.*, 182.

¹³ Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha: Life in a tabloid world*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 88-9.

rationality and reason, and women, with the domestic sphere of nurturing, biology and emotion.¹⁴

However, the advent of consumer culture, mass media and the expansion of the state into the intimate space of the family overturned this traditional dialectic, which meant the concept of a fundamentally masculine public sphere disappeared altogether.¹⁵ The lost public was replaced by “publicness” in its “diverse forms” as “a multitudinous presence among the conditions of modern life”.¹⁶ Evidence of this fragmentation could be seen in the proliferation of “alternate public spheres” and “counter-publics”, frequently read as signs of the increasing feminisation of popular culture. But the term, “public sphere”, is regarded by many feminists to be inadequate as, traditionally, it symbolises a space from which women are excluded. By contrast, counter-publics recognise differences in gender, race and ethnicity and are opposed to mainstream (dominant) cultural forms. It seems fitting that the rise of counter-publics has been read symbolically as an outcome of the feminisation of the public sphere, given that those which formed to oppose the Chamberlain trial verdict consisted mainly of women.¹⁷ Women outnumbered men in their demonstration of support for the couple, whether it was shown overtly or behind-the-scenes, at those times when individuals lobbied politicians (Zillah Williams), edited newsletters (Nonie Hodgson) or oversaw the growing number of advocacy movements (Betty Hocking).

The climate in which these counter-publics formed illustrated the projection of private lives into the public sphere, as celebrities were increasingly drawn from more diverse backgrounds and were, instead, cultivated from everyday life. Private emotions and family grievances were no longer confined to the domestic sphere, but publicised in newspapers and monthly periodicals. For instance, when the couple relived the night they lost their daughter in *Woman’s Day* (WD) magazine, when their plans to have another baby were reported in the *Sun-Herald*, when Michael’s

¹⁴ The separation of spheres according to gender is outlined in Gaye Tuchman, “The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media”, in *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, eds., Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels and James Benet, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 14; Myra Macdonald, “From Mrs Happyman to Kissing Chaps Goodbye: Advertising reconstructs Femininity”, in *Critical Readings: Media and Gender*, eds., Cynthia Carter and Linda Steiner, (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2004), 41-67.

¹⁵ Bruce Robbins, *The Phantom Public Sphere*, viii.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, xii.

¹⁷ Adrian Howe, *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 65.

struggles as a single parent made news in *DT* and when Lindy's prison ordeal and extreme weight loss were publicised in the *Australian Women's Weekly*. Whether these intimate representations distorted important political issues, or redeployed them in differing contexts, is a matter of conjecture. Arguably though, they assisted the public in its identification with the Chamberlain family on more than just a superficial level. And, importantly, issues that would otherwise have been labelled "political", those concerning the proper functioning of the legal system, the utility of forensic science and the power of chief ministers and politicians to intervene in judicial matters, were now being interpreted through the Chamberlain case as a modern media event.

In the contemporary public sphere, the representation of private and not collective interests was, for Habermas, a lamentable condition of modern life:

... the public sphere itself becomes privatized in the consciousness of the consuming public; indeed, the public sphere becomes the sphere for the publicizing of private biographies, so that the accidental fate of the so-called man in the street or that of systematically managed stars attain publicity, while publicly relevant developments and decisions are garbed in private dress and through personalization distorted to the point of unrecognizability.¹⁸

While Habermas' observations might articulate concerns about the increasing personalisation of the news and lack of objectivity, the outcomes he identifies as being detrimental, the loss of a rational public, have been interpreted by some critics as an opportunity for those so marginalised to access the cultural and discursive power that media publicity of individuals affords.¹⁹ This is not to suggest that everyone who claims a right to speak in the public sphere will be equally heard, or that their views will be universally represented in a single language, just that there are now spaces from which their resistance to dominant viewpoints may be launched.²⁰

¹⁸ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 171-2.

¹⁹ See entire article in Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere".

²⁰ Catharine Lumby describes the fragmentation of the public sphere in these terms in "Media Culpa", 120-1.

One critic who challenges the “shallow” and “hegemonic” view of the mass media Habermas articulates is Deborah Staines. In “A Legal Trauma, A Public Trauma: Lindy Chamberlain and the Chamberlain Case” (2006), she re-examines the effects of the media on the Azaria saga, by identifying the mass media as a vehicle of the public sphere and, therefore, a part of the counter-publics that evolved. In doing so, she becomes only the third critic (after Frank Moorhouse and, to a lesser extent, Norman H. Young) writing on the case to challenge views about the media’s privileging of mainstream values and vested interests. Rather, she argues, late modern cultural technologies have reconfigured notions of the public, to the extent that in virtual communities multiple and diverse viewpoints are produced: “The proliferation of new media communication technologies only increases the range of these non-traditional-mediated social relations”.²¹ This is further substantiated in her comments that the publics the mass media produced in the Chamberlain case “were neither passive in their reception, nor unanimous in their opinions”.²² Elaborating on elements of Staines’ brief, but important, argument about the role of the media in constituting multiple and contradictory popular voices, will add weight to claims made here that the Chamberlain case revealed heterogeneity in mass media coverage of the case in the 1980s.

On shifts within the modern public sphere in which multiple publics, that is “consumers” triumphed, John Hartley identifies in *Popular Reality: Journalism, Modernity, Popular Culture* (1996) the “perforation” or reversal of certain epistemological and cultural boundaries, including those that favour:

origins over destinations
 producers over consumers
 urban over suburban
 male over female
 the voice of authority over the *vox populi*
 truth over desire
 word over image

²¹ Deborah Staines, “A Legal Trauma, A Public Trauma”, 159.

²² *ibid.*

printed archive over popular screen.²³

If the Chamberlain case is imagined against the background of a “newly privatised, feminized, suburban, consumerized public sphere”,²⁴ then the context in which the counter-publics emerged on Lindy’s behalf might be further elucidated. Varying discourses converged in the Chamberlain case (regarding Michael and Lindy’s innocence), making it difficult to discern their origins and authenticity. And yet, channelled through pamphlets, newsletters, bon mots and other printed ephemera, the *vox populi* triumphed over the official word on Azaria’s disappearance. The suburban consumer, as demonstrated in these publications, wielded a cultural power that had the potential to overturn official decision-making processes.

Rather than seeing, as does Habermas, the formation of counter-publics as symptomatic of the fragmentation and decline of the public sphere, it is possible to read their emergence within an “expand[ing] discursive space” in which western democratic societies exercised their fundamental right to criticise the state and its governance.²⁵ This was the case for Chamberlain supporters, whose dissemination of ideas about the couple’s innocence indicated the increasing level of diversity in the public sphere. Granted, not all Australians publicised their views about the trial verdict or were taken seriously when they did, but by channelling forms of popular culture, individuals developed new ways of speaking about the traumatic event of a baby’s disappearance.

In the twenty-first century multimedia age, counter-publics are represented in internet chat rooms, online forums and blogger sites. Grassroots movements resembling those constituted in the wake of the Chamberlain trial verdict are now represented in virtual public spaces. These spaces exist along the information superhighway and provide avenues for debating local and international issues. Their significance as frequently accessed public domains has lately been recognised by multinational companies seeking to market new products. For instance, the “Zero Movement” an internet-forged social group manufactured by Coca-Cola Amatil was

²³ John Hartley, *Popular Reality*, 156.

²⁴ *ibid.*, 156.

²⁵ Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere”, 13-15

part of a promotional campaign to attract young consumers to the company's "zero sugar" beverage. Internet forums were established and asked questions such as "why bosses didn't have mute buttons, why there's no half-time on Wednesdays and why relationships don't have a gap year".²⁶ After it was discovered company employees had submitted the blogger entries themselves, a tactic which gives the appearance of a grass roots movement and is known in cyberspace as a "flog" or "fake blog", the experiment was abandoned.²⁷ And, while the "teaser campaign" was ill-conceived, the decision to use the internet to muster counter-culture credibility suggested the relevance of unofficial forms of expression in shaping public opinion.

The case of convicted Bali drug-trafficker, Schapelle Corby, offers another counterpoint to the Chamberlain saga in the way her supporters utilised emerging communications technology to voice their discontent with the verdict. Corby was convicted and sentenced to twenty years in Kerobokan prison and fined 100 million rupiah (AU \$13,875) for having smuggled 4.1 kilograms of marijuana into Indonesia in October 2004. The former Queensland beautician maintained her innocence throughout the ensuing legal proceedings by arguing the drugs were planted in her boogie board bag while she was in transit from Brisbane airport. Many Australians, outraged at the verdict, began to channel their anger into varying forms of individual political protest, with some boycotting supermarket products imported from Indonesia, others cancelling holidays to Bali or avoiding travel agencies specialising in bookings to South East Asian destinations.²⁸ At one point, the webmaster overseeing the official Corby website was forced to intervene by reminding those posting comments that "This is a support site ... Keep the hate speech and threatening language under control".²⁹ Alan Singer's weblog from Melbourne, Australia conveyed similar sentiments by enjoining Australians to sign an on-line petition for Corby's release:

²⁶ Joshua Gliddon, "Less than Zero", *The Bulletin*, 1 February 2006.

²⁷ The *Sun-Herald* magazine reported the coining of the term "flog", defined as "a blog that appears to be written by an individual but is actually maintained by a corporate marketing department or a public relations firm". The final word on flogs is that they resemble "your dad at a disco: awkward, embarrassing and, ultimately, unwanted", see Natalie Trombetta, "Word of the week", in *Sunday Life: The Sun-Herald Magazine*, 4 February 2007, 8.

²⁸ Paul Toohey, "An Eye for an Eye: Who's to blame for the Corby fiasco- and how it's hurting Australia", *The Bulletin*, 7 June 2005, 26.

²⁹ Anne Summers, "Prisoners of a nation's prejudices", *SMH*, 17 June 2005, 2
<http://www.smh.com.au/news/Opinion/Prisoners-of-a-nations-prejudices/2005/06.html>

We are Citizens of Planet Earth demanding the release of Schapelle Leigh Corby held presently in the Balinese jail awaiting trial. Your countries [sic] policies on treatment of human [sic] in this way is inexcusable and this non-since [sic] must stop. We are united in our front against capital punishment for this crime and shall protest with actions of our own. The following petition is signed by those whom [sic] are boycotting Indonesia for all travel, services and any companies whom [sic] are based in that country. Citizens of earth will not sit and allow this to happen without us making this fight, and we are NOW BOYCOTTING INDONESIA UNTIL YOUR LAWS CHANGE AND MS. CORBY IS RELEASED. We will not forget about her!³⁰

In language redolent of the way Lindy Chamberlain's supporters presented a united front in pamphlets, referring to themselves as part of a "thinking public" commanding "worldwide interest" (in this instance, "Citizens of Planet Earth"), the Corby petitioners politicised via the internet their dissatisfaction with the guilty verdict.

In an article for *SMH*, Anne Summers compared the mobilisation tactics and methods used by supporters in both the Corby and Chamberlain cases:

Twenty-five years ago the chatter and the rumours were pretty much confined to personal conversations. Dinner parties were the scene of impassioned arguments and the swapping of dingo jokes. Today, the instant communications of the internet have given Corby's situation an even greater currency. Her website is an organising tool that Chamberlain-Creighton's supporters could never have imagined.³¹

No doubt, the internet has changed the way publics are constituted and produced in late capitalist society, with marginalised individuals and those expressing unofficial or counter-stereotypical views now gaining access to a globalised political realm. And, in this light, Summers' arguments about the more sophisticated communication tools used by Corby's supporters compared with those of Chamberlain in 1984 are logical.

³⁰ Alan Singer 'Headhunter' Blog, "Seize the day: online petition for Schapelle Corby", comment posted 31 March 2005, http://headhunter.typepad.com/seize_the_day/2005/03/online_petition.html (accessed 18 February 2006).

³¹ Anne Summers, "Prisoners of a nation's prejudices".

However, confining the avenues of resistance used by Lindy's supporters to conversations at suburban dinner parties overlooks their traditional and non-traditional forms of protest in newsletters, pamphlets, mass rallying and public petitions. These early interventions were a precursor to those used two decades later by Corby advocates.

Without the existence of these counter-publics, the Chamberlain convictions might never have been quashed or, at least, addressed in the public manner in which they were later considered. While the petitions made by Corby's supporters did not have the same effect on the Indonesian legal system (as did those of Chamberlain on the Northern Territory government), by championing her cause they exercised a kind of "virtual" democracy within the modern public sphere, thereby indicating the relevance of the Azaria event to other modern phenomena. As there is a pre-history in the Chamberlain case concerning the fragmentation of the modern public sphere, I now turn to the social movements constituting this process.

The Popular, Private Eye and Forensic Campaigns

Research published by Norman H Young in 1989 revealed that protest groups rallying in support of the Chamberlains and against the sentence imposed on Lindy were formed between 1982 and 1984. Key pieces of scientific evidence were re-examined in this period, including the testing reagent used by forensics to determine the presence of blood in the Chamberlains' car, the arterial blood spray pattern under the dashboard and tears within the terry-towelling fabric of Azaria's jumpsuit, the results of which proved that a dingo, and not Lindy, was responsible for Azaria's death. In what I have termed the dissemination period, a counter-public emerged to oppose the official finding on Azaria's disappearance, yet the evidence referred to by Young on the timing of the pro-Chamberlain movement undermines the sentiments expressed in *Time* magazine at the outset of this chapter. Here it was argued that debates over Lindy's conviction grew tiresome in the two years after the verdict was announced in 1982. Describing the case as "passé", the implication was Australians had grown weary of an event that had dominated news coverage and been the subject of endless speculation. In this scenario, one might expect to see a general downturn in the volume of correspondence (including letters sent to politicians, the Northern

Territory Government and even to Lindy in prison in support of her release), perhaps even a paucity of public demonstration and waning of media coverage, since after all, the legal aspects of the case were resolved and the suspect found guilty by her peers and sentenced to life in prison.

However, across the country in 1984, organizations were established to plead for the couple's innocence, including "The Plea for Justice Committee", "The Chamberlain Innocence Committee" and "The National Freedom Council".³² In the same year, the first edition of the *Azaria Newsletter* was published revealing a strong network of advocate groups in every state in Australia except the ACT, with NSW registering four branches in South Murwillumbah, Cooranbong, Parramatta and Wahroonga. According to the newsletter, the groups were responsible for "encouraging media coverage, placing newspaper ads, organising rallies, display stands, collecting donations and approaching well known citizens for support".³³ Members often used the publicity surrounding the case to their advantage with "well known citizens" including, the retired Supreme Court Judge Sir Reginald Scholl, Senator Mal Colston and artist, Guy Boyd, making public declarations of support for the Chamberlains through popular media channels as in radio and television appearances and other public speech acts. The sudden coherence of letter-writers and demonstrators, in addition to the founding of advocacy groups in the two years after the trial verdict was handed down, suggest a counter-public emerged out of a period characterised by Belinda Wilson as one of "communal dissatisfaction".³⁴ Claims made by *Time* magazine that the case had passed its expiry date are also disputed by Michael Chamberlain who, in the program hosted by Tim Webster, *The Case For Lindy Chamberlain* (1987), stated that public sentiment during the High Court appeal in 1984 shifted in its support for the couple's innocence.³⁵

Further evidence that public interest in the case intensified in 1984, rather than diminished, is contained in arguments made by *SMH* journalist, Malcolm Brown.

³² A smaller committee had been established to "Free Lindy" in November 1982, the week after her conviction was entered. Meeting at the Seventh Day Adventist College at Cooranbong, NSW the group later became known as the "Chamberlain Innocence Committee" (*Advertiser*, 5 November 1982).

³³ *The Azaria Newsletter*, (Cooranbong, New South Wales: Chamberlain Information Service) no.1, (April 1984): 2.

³⁴ Belinda Wilson, "The Making of a Modern Myth", 16.

³⁵ *The Case for Lindy Chamberlain* (special news feature), aired Network Ten, 1987.

Writing for the *National Times*, he argued that in this period a free-Lindy campaign erupted in three distinct phases: “the popular campaign, the private-eye campaign [and] the forensic campaign”.³⁶ Young draws on Brown’s identification of these phases in *Innocence Regained: The Fight to Free Lindy Chamberlain* (1989). Using Socratic dialogue from Plato’s *Republic* – “I’ve just escaped two waves; but the third...is the biggest and the most difficult of the three” – Young identified the first wave of public agitation in the proliferation across the country of protest groups which culminated in a petition of 131,000 and then, on 3 May 1984, 150,000 signatures to Governor-General Sir Ninian Stephen. Later that year, the publication of Phil Ward’s *Azaria! What the Jury Were Not Told* (1984) was a catalyst for the second wave of agitation, in which the author took literally the “human intervention” argument proposed at the first inquest. His theory, implicating a group of “Ayers Rock” locals in the cover-up of Azaria’s death, received substantial press, and prior to publication, was the subject of a round table discussion and news special, *The New Azaria Claims* (1983). Lastly, the “third wave” of public agitation followed the dismissal of appeals to the Federal and High Courts in 1983 and 1984 which, incredibly, galvanised the pro-Chamberlain movement in the face of defeat.

In this two-year period, media coverage of public demonstrations, new investigative leads and the failure of the appeals process were the most significant indications of widespread dissatisfaction with the guilty verdict. Concurrently, a selection of news workers began to show their support for the pro-Chamberlain movement, including Malcolm Brown (*Sydney Morning Herald*), Kevin Childs (*The Age*), Kevin Hitchcock (Channel Ten), Mike Lester (Channel Nine) and Ken Blanch (*CM*), while Bill Hitchings (*Herald*) and Jim Oram (*DT*) were late defectors to the Chamberlains’ cause.³⁷ James Simmonds was also recognised by the *Azaria Newsletter* as a journalist who had “consistently remained objective and fair”.³⁸ Those journalists Young identifies as having made positive contributions to the case support my theory of an intersection between 1982 and 1984 of unofficial and official discourses within the public sphere. In turn, the unexpected convergence between the media and those counter-publics rallying against the convictions is evidence of the

³⁶ Norman H. Young, *Innocence Regained*, 1.

³⁷ *ibid.*, 12-13.

³⁸ *The Azaria Newsletter*, (Cooranbong, New South Wales: Chamberlain Information Service), no.9, (August 1985): 1.

supportive role played by certain individuals working within the country's news organizations.

Young's argument on the media is the only one to attribute to certain journalists a degree of sympathy for the Chamberlains in their news coverage. While Adrian Howe analyses the media's "decriminalisation" of Lindy following her release from prison in 1986, in particular her reclamation as a "normal, natural woman", she suggests that the process was made easier by Lindy's slimmed appearance now that in the media's eyes she more closely resembled "a woman who looked feminine and attractive".³⁹ In Howe's view then, it would appear that the resuscitation of Lindy's image in 1986 was simply the veiled return of a media obsession with her body,⁴⁰ which interfered with wider attempts to publicise the couple's innocence. Any shift in public opinion, therefore, was attributable to a spontaneous "groundswell of public support" in the couple's favour and the publication of John Bryson's *Evil Angels* (1985), rather than any overt media influence. But Bryson was a journalist and, as Young's list demonstrates, he was not the only one questioning the guilty verdict in the media. And while in recent literature on the case the public's role has been reconsidered, it appears the media remains a masked villain, incapable of redemption or any deeper conceptualisation. But this view overlooks the often contradictory and changeable views and attitudes expressed in the contemporary mass media, as it does the shifting nexus of power between producers and consumers. Evaluating the media's impact on different phases in the pro-Chamberlain movement shows how newswriters played a substantive role in campaigns to free Lindy.

The Counter-Publics

Coinciding with the case's twenty-fifth anniversary in August 2005, Adrian Howe published the results of her pioneering study into the Chamberlain manuscript collection, an archive of some 20,000 news clippings, correspondence and letters from a broad cross-section of the Australian public written between 1980 and 1990. Held at the NLA in 70 archive boxes, the letters Howe examined challenge a range of assumptions about the volume, gender and demographic of Lindy's supporters;

³⁹ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 255-6.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 257.

essentially, they dispute claims that “the public” was overwhelmingly convinced of the couple’s guilt.⁴¹ This body of writing constitutes for Howe what the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, calls “an insurrection of subjugated knowledges” which, in practice, is antagonistic and opposed to everything surrounding it.⁴² Howe’s argument was informed by Foucault’s seminal work, *Power/knowledge* (1980), in which subjugated knowledges are considered disqualified because of their “naivety”, lack of “scientificity” and “cognition”.⁴³ Since the letters are produced by “ordinary” people, they too display a “naivety” and lack of “scientificity” comprising, for Howe, a counter-public, “one that, paradoxically, maintained an awareness of its subordinate status, even as it claimed to represent a silent majority”.⁴⁴ This paradox of self-identity is crucial to the operations of a counter-public, which despite an “unofficial” status, claims to represent views widely-held in the community.

Tensions in the self-identity of Howe’s diverse counter-public can also be found in a selection of pamphlets preserved at the State Library of New South Wales. One such author, Pastor George W. Rollo, identifies in his 30-page pamphlet, *Azaria Mystery: A Reason to Kill* (1984), a global concern for injustice in which “worldwide interest has judges, lawyers, doctors, scientists, clergy, politicians, police and the people in the street still searching for the truth”.⁴⁵ In identifying this diverse group of individuals of varying professional status, Rollo makes the assumption that a counter-public already exists, one that, as Howe maintains with reference to her own analysis of Chamberlain correspondents, recognises its subordinate status while claiming to represent a silent majority.⁴⁶ The implication is that, while being inferior to more official regimes of knowledge, pamphleteers understood how their writings contributed to the formation of a majority consensus in which the Chamberlains’ innocence was maintained.

⁴¹ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 27-8.

⁴² *ibid.*, 15, 29.

⁴³ Michel Foucault, *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), 82.

⁴⁴ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 29.

⁴⁵ George W. Rollo, *Azaria Mystery: A Reason to Kill*, (Penrith, New South Wales: Dixie Print, April 1984), 1.

⁴⁶ This argument can be compared with Howe’s own in the existence of a “silent majority” of Chamberlain supporters, see Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 29.

Rollo's pamphlet is part of a previously unexamined collection of printed publications held at the SLNSW, which bear close resemblance to Howe's case study and might be examined as part of the "counter-public" movement that emerged between 1982 and 1984. The State collection contains three pamphlets by Veronica M. Flanigan, George W. Rollo and Terence O'Keeffe, one booklet by Glenn Rosendahl, one book by Phil Ward, the *Azaria Newsletter* numbering fifteen issues and published by the Chamberlain Information Service, the circular published by the Plea for Justice Committee *Fight for Justice, Free Lindy! No motive, no body, no depression, no weapon, no confession, no sense*, and Guy Boyd's edited collection of witness statements *Justice in Jeopardy: Twelve Witnesses Speak Out*. All of these texts were published in the same year (1984) and unanimously opposed the "official" word on Azaria's disappearance. I have identified the writings produced by Flanigan, Rollo and O'Keeffe as "pamphlets" because of their ephemeral and political nature – all are unbound, self-published and less than 49 pages in length. This is distinct from the spiral bound "booklet" published by Glenn Rosendahl, and the soft-cover "book" by Phil Ward. In terms of their similarity, correspondents in the collections Howe and I have separately examined wrote to redress what they felt was a grave miscarriage of justice. Many lent their support to Lindy and vouched for her good character, their own rage and incomprehension at the verdict's announcement and the failure, in their minds, of forensic evidence to adequately convict her for murder.

But the pamphleteers also differed from Howe's assorted letter writers, largely because they targeted a wider audience. Pamphleteers wrote to generate maximum public interest from a diverse and, doubtless, sceptical readership. In the majority of cases they called upon readers to act and speak out as a way of drawing further attention to the legitimacy of the pro-Chamberlain movement. They generally appealed to a "widespread people", and "thinking public",⁴⁷ whom the authors stated were dissatisfied with the court's ruling. Each protested against a Crown prosecution team "relentless in its determination to get a 'guilty' verdict",⁴⁸ the legal process in which "absolutely credible witnesses [were turned] into unreliable mistaken dull-

⁴⁷ Veronica M. Flanigan, *The Azaria Evidence: Fact or Fiction?*, (Wahroonga, New South Wales, 1984), 23. Pastor George W. Rollo also referred to a number of "thinking men and women" who remain dissatisfied with the trial verdict, see George W. Rollo, *The Azaria Mystery: A Reason to Kill*, 1.

⁴⁸ Veronica M. Flanigan, *The Azaria Evidence*, 12.

heads”,⁴⁹ the “lack of objectivity” in the Northern Territory police force⁵⁰ and the casting-aside of Aboriginal testimony that supported the Chamberlains’ account.

While many of the letters at the NLA were penned by a self-proclaimed “‘silent majority’ of ‘thinking Australians’”,⁵¹ unlike the pamphlets, they did not require the reader to act or speak out. Instead, the letters were addressed to Lindy and written for a variety of reasons, some in response to her autobiography *Through My Eyes* (1990), John Bryson’s *Evil Angels* (1985) or as a way of expiating the writer’s guilt for having colluded with the guilty verdict. Such writings were more likely to contain personal recollections, anecdotes and outpourings of emotion. For Howe, they mark “an important milestone in the history of emotion in Australia”.⁵² Their personalised approach differed from the language used by pamphleteers which, apart from a few exceptions, sought to maintain objectivity in an effort to generate maximum media and public interest. Two writers succeeded in their efforts to gain publicity: Glenn Rosendahl, who sent copies of his booklet to the Defence trial solicitor six weeks prior to the High Court appeal, and Pastor George W. Rollo, whose pamphlet – described by the “Azaria Newsletter” as being “in clear defence of the family” – received international attention when it was distributed on an Adventist speaking tour of Canada and the US.⁵³

As well as appealing to different audiences, the NLA and SLNSW collections also varied in their methods of distribution. Some of the archived letters at the NLA, as Howe states, were posted to “‘Lindy’ at Ayers Rock, or to the Darwin courthouse or prison, or simply, Darwin”.⁵⁴ Writings in the SLNSW collection, however, were distributed at local rallies and demonstrations with the exception, that is, of two texts: Australian artist Guy Boyd’s *Justice in Jeopardy: Twelve Witnesses Speak Out* (1984), which was distributed by Gordon and Gotch through local newsagencies, and Phil Ward’s *Azaria! What the jury were not told* (1984), later deposited by its author

⁴⁹ George W. Rollo, *The Azaria Mystery*, 7-8.

⁵⁰ Veronica Flanigan, *The Azaria Evidence*, 12-13.

⁵¹ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 66.

⁵² *ibid.*, 36 (Note the incorrect publication of the Chamberlains’ conviction date as “October 29, 1980”).

⁵³ *The Azaria Newsletter*, (Cooranbong, New South Wales: Chamberlain Information Service), no.10, (October 1985) and no.13, (December 1986).

⁵⁴ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 28.

in every letterbox in Alice Springs free of charge.⁵⁵ The pamphlets could also be ordered through the Chamberlain Information Service at Cooranbong, which advertised them in the *Azaria Newsletter*, a monthly bulletin published by the Seventh Day Adventist community.⁵⁶ Edited by Nonie Hodgson, the *Azaria Newsletter*, which could be purchased for 50 cents as a form of donation to the Chamberlain family, invited contributions from the public, stating: “It is the aim of the Newsletter to remain neutral and to provide a common ground in which various points of view may be expressed”.⁵⁷ Emphasising the differences in these two public collections suggests the diversity of public opinion on the Chamberlain saga, which would have impacted upon views propagated by the Australian media.

Historically, the pamphlet has been regarded as an instrument of the third estate, appearing in periods of social and political upheaval, as in the French Revolution. On these occasions, literate individuals (mainly men, but sometimes women) wrote, often in a satirical fashion, to express their apprehensions about the state and its governance, thus serving as indice and vector of the intellectual climate of public debate. Innovations in print technology changed the way the pamphlet was disseminated and produced in the eighteenth century, but not the recognition of its power as a communicative tool and as a sign of the public sphere’s heterogeneity. In the Chamberlain case the pamphlet emerged for the first time in 1984, when, by all other indicators – a guilty verdict and failure of two appeals processes – the convictions against Lindy and Michael would stand. Up until that point, during the first two inquests and trial, public correspondence was mostly sporadic, volatile and uncoordinated. As Network Ten journalist Kay McGrath reported after a controversial day’s hearing at the first coronial inquest, the public reaction was vocal but lacking purpose and formation:

⁵⁵ *The Azaria Newsletter*, (Cooranbong, New South Wales: Chamberlain Information Service), no.3, (August 1984). Such claims were further substantiated in my interview with Tony Cavanaugh, producer of *Through My Eyes* (2004), August 2004.

⁵⁶ Information relating to the circulation of pamphlets was provided to me in correspondence by Mrs Zillah Williams, who petitioned state government on behalf of the Chamberlains along with Mrs Betty Hocking, former Canberra, House of Assembly representative and secretary of the National Freedom Council.

⁵⁷ *The Azaria Newsletter*, (Cooranbong, New South Wales: Chamberlain Information Service), no.7, (April 1985).

KAY McGRATH: There have been several telephone threats against the Chamberlains, some of them have been cranks but police fear a particular call early this morning could be deadly serious. A male caller said he was going to “Blow her out” referring to Mrs Lindy Chamberlain. The Chamberlain’s solicitor this morning asked the Coroner Mr Denis Barritt to provide some sort of protection. When the Chamberlains returned to their hotel for lunch they were accompanied by a Northern Territory policeman. After hearing of the death threats Mr Barritt made a comment about the behaviour of the public. He said the Chamberlains had lost their child in what must have been an utterly terrible situation. He urged the public at large to reserve their judgment until all the evidence was in ...⁵⁸

The uncoordinated character of anti-Chamberlain protests described in this news report was exemplary of the two-year period following Azaria’s disappearance. At this time, bomb threats and abusive telephone calls typified reactions to the case by more vocal members of the community, as John Bryson and Ken Crispin separately describe in their recollection of events.⁵⁹ However, by the time Lindy’s conviction was recorded in October 1982, and indeed by 1984, public speech had diversified. Books, pamphlets and letters of petition were published, while the development of advocate groups implied a change in traditional forms of access to the public sphere. Of course, individuals continued to phone radio stations and respond to newspaper editorials and columns, but, in conjunction with the pamphleteers, public demonstrators were far more directed in their aims. Their actions raised questions about the meaning and definition of public opinion, along with its legitimate expression.

In postmodern society, the pamphlet has all but disappeared as an avenue for, and vehicle of public opinion, although it is debatable whether its recurrence in the Azaria saga marked the last historical moment of this kind of media. Nonetheless, the return in the 1980s of an older form of public expression should not be underestimated, given the power invested in sub-literary mediums to shape and

⁵⁸ Network Ten news broadcast aired 18 December 1980 (Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive).

⁵⁹ John Bryson, *Evil Angels*, 75.

influence wider public opinions and signify the diversity of publics, as John Hartley argues:

Today the function of the pamphlet is integrated into the institutional repertoire of newspapers, in the form of the comment column and in-depth feature, especially in weekend papers; also, something of their political function survives in the electronic media in radio talks and talk-back, and in TV ‘positioned’ documentaries.⁶⁰

In Hartley’s view, the pamphlet’s redeployment into other popular contexts has not eroded its political foundation or function, which is important if we are to understand transitions in the modern public sphere, for instance, the increasing diversity of audiences as demonstrated in the Chamberlain case. Even though the pamphlet has been superseded as an outlet for popular expression, its reassertion of a virtual public space and community of like-minded individuals remains relevant today.

The structure and form of pamphlet writings differed from those contained in Howe’s counter-public. Within the NLA collection, correspondence was generally handwritten, some pieces lacked a date or the appropriate layout of a letter, while their authors confessed to being unaccustomed to reading books, spelling and grammar.⁶¹ By contrast, most of the pamphleteers demonstrated knowledge of the setting and layout of their chosen literary medium. For instance, in his 192-page booklet *The Dark Side of the Law* (1984), medical practitioner Glenn Rosendahl employs a mixed language register, on the one hand to appeal to the reader and, on the other, to provide for the Chamberlain defence team a detailed refutation of the Crown’s scientific evidence. Demonstrating a familiarity with institutional, ie medical and legal discourse, the author states with some certainty that the verdict was unjust. In fact, his medical expertise gives him a measure of authority to speak about the Chamberlain case, and there are a number of occasions on which he refers to his profession and

⁶⁰ John Hartley, *Popular Reality*, 115.

⁶¹ Howe states that some of Lindy’s letter writers could not even properly address an envelope, and perceived themselves to be without a voice, see Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 28-9.

knowledge of scientific procedure.⁶² But he is also reluctant to maintain a stance of purely critical objectivity since, he asserts, “unofficial” legal protocol requires practitioners to play on emotion in their pursuit of a guilty verdict. The impact of cheap debating tricks, he says, is “a prospect as pleasant, a taste as delectable, a smell as sweet as pus frothing from a gangrenous and putrefying limb”.⁶³ This kind of passionate argumentation is justified on the rear cover of his booklet:

This book presents what the author believes to be a scientific and reasoned advocacy for the defence in the case of Alice Lynne Chamberlain and Another. It calls only on the facts which have been – for some time – in the public eye. Although more may be revealed (to the embarrassment of the prosecution) that should not have been necessary. What is already known is quite sufficient to establish innocence. I have been told I should write an impersonal, scholarly, dispassionate thesis. Then the law will take notice of what I have to say. I believe I say academic, even learned things in this book. But the law does not (as we shall see) restrict itself to objective, unemotional language when it addresses the communal intelligence, the ‘reasonable minds’ of the jury. Presumably because it believes that logic coloured with emotion is the way to get results. (And that, in times of dire necessity, the colour of emotion – of itself – may be sufficient). Logic is the basis of decision. Emotion is the spur to action. A jury’s task is to decide the question of guilt or innocence – it is the judge that takes action, who decides the sentence. That is why emotionalism in advocacy is immoral. I ask the reader to think – and to act. To use his reason to assess my statement, and speak out if he thinks an injustice has been done. It is his own liberty that is in peril.⁶⁴

In one respect, his language bears the emotional quality found in so many of the public letters housed at the NLA. However, Rosendahl’s shift from formal to informal registers has a guiding purpose – to widen his anticipated audience and gain

⁶² Rosendahl refers to his profession on two occasions, stating that: “As a medical practitioner, I am more than a little angry with the misunderstanding evident in the judges’ argument” and “I know only too well from medical practice ...”. Glenn Rosendahl, *The Dark Side of the Law*, (Australian Capital Territory: Weston Creek, 1984), rear-cover, 57, 73.

⁶³ *ibid.*, 97.

⁶⁴ Glenn Rosendahl, *The Dark Side of the Law*, rear-cover.

maximum publicity. At times, it is difficult to distinguish between this text and, say, a scientific report on the cause of Azaria's death, or an informed essay from a non-professional observer. This is because he integrates, alongside legal and medical terminology, quotations from the ABC's *Four Corners* program and other television documentaries. Allusion to media of popular culture and institutional discourse are the basis of his defence of the Chamberlains in this booklet. Differences in the works produced by amateurs, experts and professionals writing on the case should not be elided here, but highlighting variations in their language makes clear the kind of audiences writers sought to attract and their reasons for selecting such-and-such a medium. Thus, for Rosendahl, avoiding a "dispassionate thesis" enables him to widen his readership base to include, as well as academics and industry professionals, ordinary individuals. From this we get a sense of where his booklet should be situated in the context of the pro-Chamberlain movement and the impact it might have had on the general public. His pamphlet might also be viewed in the context of the collision of discourses, formal and otherwise, which was part of the developmental turn in the Chamberlain media event between 1982 and 1984.

There were also differences in the way the pamphleteers identified themselves. Some did not feel it necessary to state their profession, reason for writing or personal connection with the Chamberlain family. Pastor Rollo, for instance, does not inform the reader of his relationship with the family, only his "close association and careful observation of Lindy Chamberlain" in which he had "not seen the slightest trace of emotional instability but on the contrary an exceptionally healthy and outstandingly successful mother".⁶⁵ Not until the publication of Lindy's autobiography is it revealed that Rollo is both a friend and an Adventist minister in the Lake Macquarie District. Other pamphleteers directly identified themselves as being either a medical practitioner, businessman or advocate for the cause. By contrast, Howe's letter writers had a tendency to emphasise their ordinariness, with many declaring themselves to be "no one important", "just a mother", "religious" or "not especially religious, or not religious at all".⁶⁶ This is not to say that pamphlet writers abstained from religious discussion and debate, as demonstrated by Flanigan in her use of a Biblical passage equating the Adventist religion with mainstream Christian doctrine, when she says:

⁶⁵ George W. Rollo, *The Azaria Mystery*, 6.

⁶⁶ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 30.

The prosecution tried to get a lot of mileage out of the fact that the Chamberlains were so calm after the tragedy, and this was equated with guilt. Funny, that! On another occasion, a Man stood before Pontius Pilate. He also was very calm. Pilate said of Him, 'I find no fault in Him at all'.⁶⁷

Lindy Chamberlain used a similar device in her autobiography when she questioned the "so-called 'norm'" that led people to assert the couple were "weird" (see Chapter Four). Attempts made by Flanigan and Chamberlain to conventionalise the Adventist faith support Howe's claim that, as the NLA writings would reveal, religion was important in the processing of public opinion on the case.⁶⁸

Many of Howe's letter writers, too, identified with a mother's pain at losing her child, wrongful persecution and a nation's prejudice, as if it were their own.⁶⁹ Written mainly by women, the volume of such letters (around 90 per cent of the collection) can be set against the "sexist fantasy" that Lindy's detractors were mainly female.⁷⁰ By contrast, only two publications in the SLNSW were written by women: Veronica M. Flanigan's *The Azaria Evidence: Fact or Fiction?* (1984), and the *Azaria Newsletter* which was edited by Nonie Hodgson; the remainder of the assorted pamphlets, booklets, circulars and titles were published by men. The fact that the pamphlet has historically been a tool of predominately male expression is one possible explanation for this gender imbalance; another is that many women lacked the means to fund, self-publish and distribute the multiple copies required for a print-run or circulation of pamphlets.

Despite differences in gender, the language pamphlet writers used was often very similar. Like George W. Rollo, pamphleteer and member of the Wahroonga chapter of Chamberlain advocates, Veronica M. Flanigan appealed to "the minds of the thinking public" in recalling her frustration with the guilty verdict.⁷¹ By labelling Chamberlain supporters "thinking" individuals, Flanigan legitimised the authority of counter-publics and attributed to them communal knowledge and a common-sense

⁶⁷ Veronica M. Flanigan, *The Azaria Evidence*, 18.

⁶⁸ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 30-1.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 29-30.

⁷⁰ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 36.

⁷¹ Veronica M. Flanigan, *The Azaria Evidence*, 23.

understanding of the way events occur, since “Any observant schoolboy knows that when an animal, such as a cat, catches a mouse or bird, there is very little blood to be seen. The fangs which make the punctures also seal them”.⁷² Flanigan’s appeal to communal knowledge can be interpreted through Howe’s reading of Foucauldian “subjugated knowledges” which appear from “below” and have been “disqualified by ‘the hierarchy of erudition and sciences’ as ‘nonconceptual’, as insufficiently elaborated, naïve and hierarchically inferior, and ‘below the required level of erudition and scientificity’”.⁷³ This is because they, too, share a subordinate status.

Through appeals to “general common sense”, the Chamberlain pamphleteers confronted the official knowledge of experts and professionals called upon to give evidence at the trial. Using anecdotes to explain the way matter behaves in space and in collision with other objects, they challenged the results of forensic investigations into Azaria’s death and confronted the regimes of knowledge practised by the courts. This is not to say that the boundaries separating official and unofficial discourses were always clear and distinct. On the contrary, pamphlet writers identified themselves as apart from the domain of official knowledge, while using the language and literary conventions of the media and legal system to advance their own arguments. Rosendahl, for instance, combines expert and common sense knowledge regarding the blood found by the Crown Prosecution in the Chamberlains’ car. He states that any “lay person” who has “tried to hold a container of fluid in a moving car knows fluids spilt in a moving car rarely fall vertically”.⁷⁴ At other times he uses medico-legal terminology such as “exsanguination”, “scalp laceration” and “burden of proof”, even including in the appendix to his booklet a list of validated forensic experiments and a “code of ethics for Crown law officers”.⁷⁵ An overlapping of discourses implies the tensions evident in pamphlet writing as a commercial activity and as a popular medium, that is, a text intended for mass audiences. Thus, the circular nature of this literature becomes apparent in the way the pamphlet authors claim a self-appointed right to speak based on an exercise of common sense that, weighed against the Chamberlain convictions, implies the latter must be *non-sense*. The juxtaposition of different regimes of knowledge: local/national,

⁷² Veronica M. Flanigan, *The Azaria Evidence*, 17.

⁷³ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 16.

⁷⁴ Glenn Rosendahl, *The Dark Side of the Law*, 57.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 57.

official/unofficial, subordinate/dominant, popular/authoritative, sensible/nonsensical, are conveyed in pamphlet literature, thereby implying the mutability of ideological borders in the late twentieth century public sphere.

In her study of the insurrection of public knowledge, Howe points out that letters written to Lindy did not always oppose “official” narratives or align with the Chamberlains’ cause. Some of the letters she identifies in the NLA collection are filed under the headings, “nut”, “nasty” or “unusual”, and her intention is to leave these out of the analysis, since the views they contain have been catalogued elsewhere in the Chamberlain historiography.⁷⁶ These writings differ, however, from the printed publications at the SLNSW, since the pamphlets and booklets were overwhelmingly supportive of the Chamberlains’ contention of innocence, with the exception of a lengthy book (381 pages) published in 1984 by journalist, Steve Brien.

A detailed analysis of the type of language utilised by pamphleteers compared with Howe’s analysis of the public writings contained at the NLA, highlights differences in the way certain publics disseminated views about the case. As my research has shown, the pamphleteers often addressed a public rather than a private audience and appealed to local, specific and commonsense knowledge in combination with the scientific and institutionalised discourse of the courts. To some extent, their writings demonstrate the importance of diverse applications of knowledge in changing public attitudes towards the couple.

The pamphleteers, regardless of their small number (in comparison with Howe’s vast counter-public), generated in their writings a significant amount of publicity. But they did not so much rely on their own publicity as incorporate the case’s very public exposure into a reasoned defence of the Chamberlain family. For one pamphleteer, media exposure of the case had been “thoughtless”, however, he argued that, “the masses swallowed it”.⁷⁷ The remaining pamphleteers referred to articles, news specials and documentaries publishing sympathetic coverage, thereby sourcing claims about the couple’s innocence in the media. In the following section I explore the pamphleteers’ citation of various news articles and television programs

⁷⁶ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 14.

⁷⁷ George W. Rollo, *The Azaria Mystery*, 6.

implying an interlocking of media-public narratives on Azaria's disappearance. It was in their reference to favourable print and news broadcasts of the period that claims about the Chamberlains' innocence were legitimated. On the whole, this argument challenges commonplace assumptions that media coverage of the case was unchanging.

Hitchcock and Television

There are a number of references in the SLNSW pamphlets to media coverage supportive of Michael and Lindy's innocence. Among these was *Azaria: A Question of Evidence*, a program aired on the Ten Network on 4 April 1984, considered by some of the pamphleteers to be the most influential television program on the case. In a letter to his wife in prison, Michael Chamberlain suggested as much, when he described the forthcoming screening:

The new doco by 10 will be shown in Sydney April 4 at 8.30 as far as I can ascertain, it will be hot. They have some fresh evidence that could well alter the balance against us – considerably. More meetings around Australia are coming up or have just occurred. Public opinion continues to change it seems.⁷⁸

One reason for the program's success was the appointment of an amiable host, Kevin Hitchcock, who was, no doubt, familiar to audiences for being among the station's most respected current affairs journalists.⁷⁹ Another reason for its influence was the program's adoption of a new stylistic format, one that questioned the court's finding on the Chamberlain case by using fast-paced and highly edited scenes that more closely resembled the '90s electronic tabloid, *Hard Copy*, than typical news programs

⁷⁸ Letter from Michael to Lindy Chamberlain, 24 March 1984, "Chamberlain Manuscript Collection", *National Library of Australia*, (Box 69, H-L).

⁷⁹ Appendix A to this thesis includes a transcript from "Azaria: A Question of Evidence" (1984). As well as hosting this program, Kevin Hitchcock was a regular anchor for Eyewitness News. Between 5 June and 8 August 1986, he regularly reported on the Chamberlain case making it safe to assume that he would have held a rapport with audiences.

of the period.⁸⁰ In his opening address to the audience, Hitchcock foregrounds in a very personal delivery the startling new evidence to follow:

KEVIN HITCHCOCK: Good evening, I'm Kevin Hitchcock. I've been following the Azaria Chamberlain case for three and a half years. There's no doubt it's attracted more publicity than any other case in Australia's history. But there are some facts which up until now haven't come out. You will hear this information from the witnesses themselves. Most of them witnesses from the Crown prosecution. Some of them believe the Chamberlains are innocent, some are undecided but not one is convinced that the Chamberlains are guilty and all believe that in the various police and legal processes which led to the Chamberlains being convicted things occurred which should not occur in a system of democratic justice. They're speaking out because they believe the Chamberlains didn't get a fair hearing. The least we can do is give them one. Their unusual decision to make their views public has prompted Michael Chamberlain to give his first interview in almost three years (Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive).

In the opening segment, reference to “some facts which up until now haven't come out”, was no doubt, an important declaration for the pamphleteers who used the “exclusive” nature of the program to advance their own cause. It is not unreasonable to presume the producers would make dramatic claims about the content of the program to ensure viewer ratings. Nor can the legitimacy of claims that the witnesses approached the network be verified, but persistent references in the pamphlet literature to the program implies the public's direct participation in the meaning-making process surrounding Azaria's disappearance. In fact, this exchange is crucial if the escalation of an event within the media is to be understood, as well as the manner of its intensification. As one media critic has asked: “... how do you attack

⁸⁰ On 20 July 1983, NBN Newcastle broadcast *The New Azaria Claims*, a round table discussion between the program's hosts Ray Dineen and Murray Finlay, and Adventist businessmen Phil Ward and Don McNichol on claims the interviewees had uncovered a conspiracy to cover-up Azaria's disappearance at the “Rock”. The two programs differed remarkably in their quality and approach. Whether this was a result of their contextual differences, since *The New Azaria Claims* (1983) was a regional broadcast, while *Azaria: A Question of Evidence* (1984) was a national news item, or because of the changing appearance of current affairs journalism in Australia is a matter of conjecture (All films courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive).

the media without attacking its consumers? Where, in other words, does the circle of production and consumption end?”⁸¹ The collapse of the separate spheres ideology as a condition of the new media age, makes it difficult to separate the public from the private, as well as the popular from the media, since the one implies the other. In this sense, the pamphleteers might be conceived as “producers” for having disseminated their views using an older form of public discourse. In the pamphlet, they demonstrated the breaching of boundaries between public and private, individual and collective, institutional and public.

One pamphleteer even went so far as to assert that the Hitchcock documentary contributed to “[public] unease over the Chamberlain case” prompting sections of the community to revisit the scientific evidence:

Unease continues over the case, and ongoing investigations by the media have contributed to this, as vital evidence continues to emerge. Kevin Hitchcock of Channel Ten, for instance, has revealed some very convincing evidence that a dingo took the baby.⁸²

And again:

In his TV documentary, *Azaria: A Question of Evidence*, Kevin Hitchcock of Channel Ten uncovers evidence not presented at the trial. He says that most people who appeared on the programme did so reluctantly, but they did so because they were disturbed at the handling of the case by the police, and that they had not been able to present their evidence as fully as it should have been presented to the court ...⁸³

Yet again, with reference to comments made by campsite witnesses, Mr and Mrs Whittaker, who testified on the same program that they saw dingoes around the Chamberlains’ tent on the night of 17 August 1980, Flanigan argues:

⁸¹ Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha*, 84-5.

⁸² Flanigan argues the Network Ten production highlighted the police mishandling of evidence in the case. It also included lengthy interviews with campsite witnesses who had for the first time approached the media about their concerns over the Chamberlain verdict. Veronica M. Flanigan, *Azaria Evidence*, 22, 28, 22.

⁸³ *ibid.*, 28.

Kevin Hitchcock's documentary has shown that there were two dingoes at the scene on the fateful night. In the film, Mr Whittaker and his daughter Rosalie, tell of their involvement in the events of the night. More honest-looking people than the Whittakers, as they appeared on the TV screen, it would be difficult to find.⁸⁴

While Flanigan's persistent reference to the Hitchcock program might have been in response to its startling presentation of new facts, the decision to reiterate excerpts within her pamphlet suggests an alternate perspective on the role of the Australian media in the Chamberlain case. Drawing on the documentary and other examples of print and broadcast media coverage endorsing the couple's claims of innocence, Flanigan implies the varying, and sometimes conflicting, opinions expressed in the media. Glenn Rosendahl's argument that parts of the media readily disseminated views about the Chamberlains' innocence further supports this view. In his booklet *The Dark Side of the Law* (1984), Rosendahl also refers to the Hitchcock television documentary, and comments that the Crown's reliance on the presence of "foetal" blood in the family's vehicle was questionable.⁸⁵ Under the heading, "What the defence did not know", he writes:

Much of this evidence (that which did not arise in court because it was unknown to the defence) has since been made public by those witnesses in the television documentary *Azaria: A Question of Evidence*, by Hitchcock.⁸⁶

The Hitchcock documentary was largely successful in reaching a wide audience; even in the NLA Chamberlain manuscript collection, correspondents cited the Network Ten broadcast as a catalyst in their decision to write to Lindy. One woman from NSW wrote:

⁸⁴ Veronica M. Flanigan, *Azaria Evidence*, 36.

⁸⁵ Expert witnesses subpoenaed by the Crown prosecution at trial, namely Joy Kuhl, argued that deposits of "blood" found in the Chamberlains' vehicle contained "foetal haemoglobin"- blood that was specific to children under the age of six months. It was later revealed at the Morling Inquiry that the "blood" was in fact, ferric oxide, or red dust that the Chamberlains had inadvertently acquired while living in the copper mining town of Mt Isa, prior to 17 August 1980. A detailed summary of the forensic evidence presented to the Northern Territory Supreme Court is contained in John Bryson, *Evil Angels*.

⁸⁶ Glenn Rosendahl, *The Dark Side of the Law*, 73.

However, Kevin Hitchcock's wonderful programme this week, *A Question of Evidence*, should now be shown on every channel at the same time in prime time. Not one of the many fools in our population should be allowed to miss it.⁸⁷

Members of the public could purchase the program on VHS or BETA from the Azaria Information Service and were invited, via the *Azaria Newsletter*, to distribute copies to their local sitting members: "We urge you to approach your Senators to see if they would like to view the video: "Azaria, A Question of Evidence", locally, while they are in recess".⁸⁸ They could also obtain copies of the Federal Court and High Court Appeal Judgments via the newsletter for \$23 and \$2 respectively.⁸⁹ The utilisation of new video technologies in the dissemination of the documentary by Chamberlain support groups provides evidence of the case having occurred at a tipping point in popular culture, following the growth of urban culture and the forging of new arenas of public life. Even though access to audio-visual technology would have been limited to those who could afford it, an increasing reliance on alternate means of expression implied the democratisation of the public realm in the 1980s. Moreover, as satellite technology advanced and conventional lag times were overcome, simultaneous "live viewing" enabled inter-state audiences to watch the Hitchcock documentary all at the same time.

For Rosendahl, the Hitchcock documentary disputes a number of claims made by the Crown prosecution at the trial. Principally, it forms the basis of his argument about the derogation of witness testimony and, in conjunction with a *Four Corners* episode, suggests the inadequate forensic methods used by Crown investigators. In addition to the Network Ten program and the ABC production, Rosendahl uses "official" knowledge to undermine the verdict, this time relying on *The Australian Law News* magazine and his own recollection of facts, which have for some time been highlighted by the media and revealed in "the public eye".⁹⁰ Pamphleteers marketed the Chamberlain case to Australian audiences using compelling evidence drawn from,

⁸⁷ As cited in Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 61.

⁸⁸ *The Azaria Newsletter*, (Cooranbong, New South Wales: Chamberlain Information Service), no.2 (June 1984). Copies of the program could be purchased from the Chamberlain Information Service for \$35 and \$5 on loan, see above.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Glenn Rosendahl, *The Dark Side of the Law*, rear-cover.

of all places, the media. In fact, they used the media for self-promotion and appealed to doubters by arguing that the Chamberlains' plight was a communal issue that required local interventions.

Evidence of a dialogue between the media and public on the subject of Azaria's disappearance is also seen in the language used by individuals sympathetic to the Chamberlain cause. For example, in the Hitchcock program, fifteen witnesses are described as "speaking out ... [in an] unusual decision to make their views public", which echoes the way in which pamphlet writers compelled their readers to also "speak-out" in a public declaration of support for the Chamberlains.⁹¹ In another instance, new forensic evidence in the case is introduced into the Hitchcock program using the phrase "new facts" stamped in red across the screen to mimic an official court seal, and again used in pamphlets written by Veronica M. Flanigan and George W. Rollo. A similar type of language also appeared in *The Australian* newspaper article, "The Case for Lindy Chamberlain", in which the lack of a Crown motive and the emergence of "new facts" were seen as possible reasons for Lindy's exoneration (*The Australian*, 16 June 1984). This points to the coincidence of language in media and public interactions.

In addition to the Hitchcock program, pamphleteers cited various other media reports to legitimise their claims. Using an article from *The Australian* newspaper published in June 1984, author, Terence O'Keeffe, in his sixteen page pamphlet, *The Dingo Shakes its Head* (1984), describes how recent psychological examinations have shown Lindy to be in the category of persons least likely to commit murder.⁹² Similarly, Flanigan cites an article published by the *Darwin Weekend Star* in September 1983 describing Lindy as a model prisoner, and another, published in the *Perth Daily News* in April 1984, stating the results of psychological tests performed on the convicted mother had proved exculpatory.⁹³ Several times Flanigan attributes

⁹¹ For instance, Glenn Rosendahl asks his reader to "speak out if he thinks an injustice has been done". Glenn Rosendahl, *The Dark Side of the Law*, rear-cover.

⁹² While the exact publication date of *The Dingo Shakes its Head* (c1984) is unknown, its content suggests O'Keeffe wrote at a time before the convening of the Chamberlain Innocence Committee in 1985, during Lindy's three and a half year prison term and after the High Court appeal was rejected in February 1984. Furthermore, the author's close analysis of an article in *The Australian* newspaper published in June 1984 indicates the text was most probably published later that year. The sole copy is held at the State Library of New South Wales having been donated by Nancy Salas in 1991.

⁹³ Veronica M. Flanigan, *Azaria Evidence*, 18-19.

the media's positive influence to wider questioning of the guilty verdict, commenting that some journalists even showed their emotion when the jury's findings were announced in court: "And some of them [the media] also wept when the verdict was given – because they had just witnessed a callous miscarriage of justice".⁹⁴ She states that the media possessed a "level of awareness ... higher than that of the jury" because of their commitment to producing news stories for the Australian public.⁹⁵ It might be argued that Flanigan, at times, challenges callous views about journalists, referring to several instances in which support for the couple was given widespread publicity, such as in the publication of a statement issued by a member of the jury who revealed he misunderstood the onus of proof at trial.⁹⁶ On another occasion, Flanigan argues media exposure of the behaviour of Northern Territory police, who "discarded, discredited and ignored vital evidence helpful to the defence... in an effort to compel (witnesses) to change their evidence in favour of the Crown" led to persistent questioning of the Chamberlains' guilt.⁹⁷ Even though Flanigan's arguments may have contained a modicum of self-interest, and emotions she ascribed to the media remain on the whole unsubstantiated, from her writings we can infer that the fourth estate was less inflexible in its coverage of the case than has been widely suggested.

In their totality, pamphlets and other printed material held at the SLNSW provide evidence of an interaction between media and popular discourses that was instrumental in shifting public views about the Chamberlain case. Such a view was made manifest in the *Azaria Newsletter*, when Ita Buttrose, the then editor of the *AWW*, was identified as being a central figure in the pro-Chamberlain push:

Australia-wide coverage in newspapers and magazines, including *Woman's Day* and *New Idea*, have given new impetus toward total exoneration. Ita Buttrose (Australia's leading woman journalist, and a celebrated 'editor-in-chief') has embraced this tragedy with a sensitive and perceptive report on the

⁹⁴ Veronica M. Flanigan, *Azaria Evidence*, 1.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 1.

⁹⁶ Veronica M. Flanigan, *Azaria Evidence*, 3. Flanigan is possibly referring here to the female juror, Yvonne Cain who several times told the media that she had misapprehended the burden of proof required for a conviction of murder. In 1985 she was interviewed by Mike Willesee, while in 1986 was filmed in a reunion scene with Lindy upon her release from prison for the program *60 Minutes*.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 12-13.

personal aspects of the Chamberlains' plight. These interviews, extended over 4 day [sic] with front page headline coverage in *The Sun* and other major syndicated papers. Ita's refreshing, honest and incisive conclusions reflect another turning point in the media's attitudes and evaluations of the case. She remarked that, like many people in Australia, she believed it possible that Lindy Chamberlain could have murdered her daughter. Now, after having talked with Michael Chamberlain and having read the new evidence and opinions collected by the Chamberlain Innocence Committee, she believes there is sufficient doubt about the case to support the call for an Inquiry.⁹⁸

Women's magazines are credited with having provided "new impetus" for the Chamberlains' exoneration, with *WD* and *New Idea (NI)* singled out for their significant contributions, as I will further examine in the following chapter. Rather than just isolated instances of convergence, references made to the media in pamphlets, booklets and newsletters amounted to a significant media-public dialogue which was apparent when, just five days after the trial verdict, *DT* interviewed sculptor and Chamberlain advocate, Guy Boyd, whose: "phone had been ringing non stop since Monday morning and five people were working round-the-clock posting out petitions for people to sign" (*DT*, 4 November 1982).

Among the popular Sydney newspapers, *DT* was perhaps the first to report the existence of public petitions for Lindy's freedom and, in a subsequent item, covered the questioning of the guilty verdict by Lindy's legal representatives: "Judge erred, say Lindy's lawyers" (*DT*, 10 November 1982). The article included information about an appeal to have either the judgment overturned or a new trial convened. Regional newspapers also gave publicity to the growing advocacy movement in 1984. Phil Ward's text, *Azaria: What the jury were not told* (1984), was described in the *Illawarra Mercury* newspaper as a "classic whodunit", "compulsory reading" and containing "more allegations than you would hear in a month of NSW parliament sittings".⁹⁹ Even the publication of *Sun* journalist Steve Brien's *Azaria – The Trial of the Century* (1984), a text highly sceptical of the Chamberlains, did not fail to attract

⁹⁸ *The Azaria Newsletter*, (Cooranbong, New South Wales: Chamberlain Information Service), no.9, (August 1985), 2.

⁹⁹ As quoted in *The Azaria Newsletter*, (Cooranbong, New South Wales: Chamberlain Information Service), no.4, (September 1984).

media scrutiny when the author's colleagues admonished him for using questionable tactics to gain an "exclusive" with the couple. Evidence of this is in Dianne Johnson's article written for the *National Times* (inspired by Brien's interview on the *Terry Willesee Tonight* program) in which she criticises his treatment of the Chamberlains as "public property" and his use of "ambushes, stakeouts, cat and mouse games and car chases" to procure their story (*National Times*, 23-29 March 1984).¹⁰⁰

One explanation for self-criticism within the media might be the result of increasing pressure exerted by Chamberlain support groups in the public domain; the other explanation is that media workers were themselves demonstrating a wider concern for representations of the Chamberlains. This was the case for John Bryson, whose scathing article on the media's misreporting of facts in the case was published twelve months before Johnson's expose.¹⁰¹ The article "The inquisition faced by the Chamberlains", made transparent the discrepancies in media reports published before and after Azaria's disappearance (*The Age*, 10 September 1983). Since Johnson and Bryson were both practising journalists at the time their essays were published, it would appear, as early as 1983, that criticism of the media's handling of the case was being launched from within, as well as outside the media.

The interaction of media and public discourses is evident in the cross-referencing of Hitchcock's documentary and Bryson's article as evidenced by the selection of pamphlets, newsletters and booklets held at the SLNSW. To an extent, even in the NLA manuscript collection, correspondents were reportedly inspired to write to Lindy after reading Bryson's *Evil Angels* (1985).¹⁰² Adrian Howe attributes to Bryson's book her late "conversion to the Chamberlain cause"¹⁰³ and Fairfax Publishers, the proprietors of Australia's oldest newspaper, *SMH*, capitalised on the popularity of Bryson's book by purchasing prepublication rights to the title and

¹⁰⁰ Johnson's article published in the *National Times* was titled "Most tawdry account of the Azaria Chamberlain saga" (23-29 March 1984). As I discuss in chapter four, the article was famous for being the first feminist tract on the case published in the mainstream media. It formed the basis of her well-regarded essay, "From Fairy to Witch: Imagery and Myth in the Azaria Case" (1984). The Terry Willesee Tonight interview to which Johnson refers aired on 8 March 1984.

¹⁰¹ Bryson's article, "The Inquisition faced by the Chamberlains" criticised not only the media, but a judiciary where expert evidence outweighed eye-witness testimony (*The Age*, 10 September 1983).

¹⁰² Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 28. My own research into the NLA collection led to a similar finding about the relevance of Bryson's book in motivating individuals to write to Lindy and declare their support.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 18.

serialising three large extracts in its stable of newspapers.¹⁰⁴ The extracts highlighted, among other things, the instability of the Crown case against Michael and Lindy, news coverage of the disappearance and the often “symbiotic” relationship between journalists and investigating police in Alice Springs.¹⁰⁵ While the publication of extracts from Bryson’s book might have been self-serving, surely the publicity given to a text highly critical of Australia’s news organizations emphasised the shifting, and sometimes contradictory, views presented by the media.

Indeed, the publication of views sympathetic to the Chamberlains and the pamphleteers’ use of news reports to mount a case against the guilty conviction imply greater diversity in the media than the Chamberlain literature has identified. For Catharine Munro, the media remains an impenetrable male fortress, displaying an overt and sustained “hostile response” towards Lindy who, she argues, was depicted as an “evil destroyer”.¹⁰⁶ While she conceded that by the third inquest in 1995 representations of Chamberlain had altered to instead depict a “good wife and mother”, the change was but further evidence of the media’s endorsement of gender stereotypes. Munro’s findings on the monolithic character of news reports are typical of views expressed by critics.

A shift in the dissemination of views about the Chamberlains both in media and public discourse contributed to larger questions about the guilty verdict. Pamphleteers’ agitation for a review of the case, alongside sympathetic print and broadcast media coverage, challenged arguments that the media remained monolithic in their coverage of the event. Therefore, Munro’s arguments that prolonged media interest in Lindy Chamberlain revealed the way her “life [had] slipped into the weird warp of a media Twilight Zone” so that she resembled a “living sacrifice” and a “fox in a hunt with no way out”,¹⁰⁷ need to be positioned in the context of the collision of multiple viewpoints and perspectives in the emerging mediated public sphere of the 1980s.

¹⁰⁴ Norman H. Young, *Innocence Regained*, 14.

¹⁰⁵ John Bryson, *Evil Angels*, 394.

¹⁰⁶ Catharine Munro, “Witchhunt”, 15.

¹⁰⁷ Susan Anthony, “Unlucky Lindy”, *Ms. Magazine*, 17, no.6, (Arlington, December 1988), 73.

Conclusion

The dissemination phase has concerned the proliferation of views about Lindy and Michael's innocence, showing a public actively engaged in the outcomes of the dingo baby saga. In opposition to what has been argued as a period in which the media concurred with the legal assumption of guilt, I have demonstrated through previously unanalysed pamphlets and an influential television program how, in fact, the media both informed and reflected the ideological shift taking place between 1982 and 1984. What I have proposed in this chapter is a new analytic, one that identifies a positive interaction between the media and public that might be relevant for understanding the evolution of modern media events and the counter-publics formed in response to them. Deborah Staines' argument on the modern cultural technologies shaping mediatised counter-publics has been useful for considering changes in views about an essential "publicness" that the Chamberlain case produced.

Ultimately, the position I have critiqued concerns the self-evident patriarchal "skew" in media reports of the Azaria Chamberlain saga. I have challenged assumptions that the media monolithically endorses dominant ideologies since in the late twentieth century, changes to the modern public sphere have led to an increasing diversity of views articulated in news organizations. This was evident in the dialogue pamphleteers established with the media that was instrumental in shifting public opinion about the verdict. By analysing the degree to which supporters utilised media coverage in their defence of the Chamberlains, I am able to challenge assumptions about the patterns of media production and consumption.

Examining separate conclusions drawn by Seal and Reynolds, I have shown the difficulty in separating official and unofficial discourses in a public sphere in which the two frequently overlapped. This would suggest that bawdy jokes, black humour and political pamphlets exist as necessary forms of expression in a public sphere in which multiple narrations of the individual were offered. Inserting these popular responses into categories of appropriateness as either good or bad responses to the event overlooks the necessity of their production and the need to revisit through humour, deeply traumatic events that defy comprehension, which the aftermath of the "9/11" terrorist attacks has shown. And, had it not been for the dissemination of

unofficial discourses, the gavel which formalised the guilty verdicts handed down to Lindy and Michael might have been the final word on Azaria's disappearance. As I will describe in the following chapter, elemental changes to the structure and appearance of the public sphere during this period facilitated, as well as the formation of counter-publics, the intensification of representations of media celebrities, like Lindy.

CHAPTER 3: COMMODIFICATION 1984-1986

'This is not a murder case', said Defence Counsel John Winneke in his final address to the Chamberlain Morling Commission, 'it is a chameleon'

Comments made by John Winneke QC at the Royal Commission, in which Justice Trevor Morling found that a dingo was responsible for Azaria's murder (*Time* magazine, 15 June 1987).

On 7 February 1986, many Australians tuned in to watch television footage of Lindy's release from Berrimah prison. It had been five days since Azaria's matinee jacket (a garment Lindy had long insisted the infant was wearing the night she disappeared but which had remained elusive until then), was discovered at the base of Ayers Rock. In the publicity-filled days and weeks that followed her release, many in the media were given access to Lindy for the first time since her conviction three and a half years earlier. In their competition for an exclusive interview, news workers demonstrated those wider changes occurring in the communications industry, including the elevation of otherwise "ordinary" individuals to celebrity status, the development of a system of modern public relations and an unprecedented degree of chequebook journalism. In addition, there were also shifts in the style of mass-market women's magazines. Typically in the 1950s, women's periodicals contained short pieces of fiction, letters, recipes, columns and few illustrations, but by the 1980s coverage of the Chamberlain case demonstrated how the layout, style and font of these publications had significantly altered, as had the number of articles featuring celebrities substantially increased.¹ This is because in the 1980s women's magazines began to reconstitute themselves through major national news stories, finding in the Chamberlain case especially a representative woman to cultivate.

Reading the intensification of Australia's celebrity industry through the Chamberlain case gives insight into the way modern media events develop and are sustained within the public consciousness. Consequently, this chapter will consider the processes by which Lindy Chamberlain became a celebrity in the modern sense of the word, tracing the commodification of individuals and their experiences through

¹ Graeme Turner, Frances Bonner and P. David Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 122.

the production of media images using the work of P. David Marshall, John Hartley, Catharine Lumby and Graeme Turner. Furthermore, I will examine Lindy's centrality to a proliferation of discourses on the case and the mechanisms underlying the construction of her persona within certain ideological frameworks. This will entail an analysis of heterogenous but intersecting media, legal, feminist and academic discourses indicating the scale of manufacture of her public image.

Examining the Chamberlain case as an example of the convergence of print, television and radio platforms will add an important dimension to my overall argument that Azaria's disappearance occurred at a tipping point in the history and function of popular journalism in Australia. Comparing the Azaria saga with cases involving other "controversial" women in the twenty-first century provides a blueprint for analysing how media events evolve, progress and are sustained in public memory.

Celebrity as "Commodity" and R v Chamberlain as precedent

In the field of contemporary media and cultural studies there has been much written about the modern celebrity as a product of media marketing and exchange. In *Understanding Celebrity* (2004), Graeme Turner argues that: "... the celebrity is also a manufactured commodity [whose] development is commercially strategic and [whose] trade is one of the fundamental transactions within the cultural and media industries today".² Examining the features of modern celebrity, including the value placed on public individuals within discourses of consumption, provides insight into the Chamberlain case, as it does fame's construction in the twenty-first century. First, however, it is necessary to examine the characteristic difference between modern and pre-modern celebrity identities. In his seminal work *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (1997), P. David Marshall offers a number of definitions of celebrity. He begins by charting the declining discourse of heroism surrounding "great men" and religious figures in the seventeenth century, and then compares this to the twentieth century rise of the "public personality" and the "democratic myth" of his or her celebrity achievement.³ In his view, changes to the conceptualisation of celebrity

² Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 27.

³ P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 5-9.

in the twentieth century were the product of a new democratic age in which hierarchical differences of class no longer predetermined the course of one's destiny, making celebrity an "ideal representation of the triumph of the masses".⁴ As a hero of the masses, the celebrity was admired for transcending his or her social status, deriving power from the amalgamation of consumer culture and democratic aspiration.⁵

This was not, however, the case for Marxist thinkers, who regarded the celebrity's transformation in the modern age as an exercise of individualism and inauthenticity. Members of the Frankfurt school alluded to the celebrity's "vulgar association" with consumer culture generating mass deception through a "cult of personality".⁶ Less extreme exponents of this theory, including Daniel Boorstin, situate the celebrity within a consumer culture that underlines superficiality and the figure's "exchange value" over "use value".⁷ The "convertibility" and rapid succession of celebrities, he argues, are outcomes of consumer capitalist culture with its emphasis on modes of exchange, and not any one individual in the system.⁸ While Boorstin's argument adequately conveys Andy Warhol's prediction that in the new media age everyone will have their fifteen minutes of fame, his theory has been challenged for obscuring a deeper understanding and appreciation for popular culture.

By contrast, Marshall and Turner have argued that celebrities serve a social and economic function by discursively defining self and cultural identities.⁹ Rather than lamenting the loss of "direct social relations" or the commodification of the individual, Turner, for instance, suggests that one of the outcomes of celebrity culture has been the development of "para-social interactions (that is, interactions which occur across a significant social distance with people 'we don't know')" so that famous individuals become the focus of both "media attention and personal aspiration".¹⁰ This means that by-proxy relationships can be forged with celebrities

⁴ P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 6.

⁵ *ibid.*, 8.

⁶ P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 9.

⁷ *ibid.*, 11.

⁸ P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 11.

⁹ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 6.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

whose net cultural worth is, to some extent, determined by his or her level of audience recognition.

The identification of differences between modern and pre-modern celebrity identities highlights the extent to which the Chamberlain case set a precedent in Australian celebrity production in the late twentieth century. The media event surrounding Azaria's disappearance had the capacity to shape and influence reader subjectivities, as will be apparent in my analysis of women's magazine coverage of the case. The reporting of Lindy's release from prison and of her significant weight loss heralded the "beginning" of her life as a fixture on the celebrity circuit and advertised to women the possibility of their own self-improvement. Such articles were largely successful because Lindy was shown to be more candid, intimate and personal, and therefore eminently knowable. These and other characteristics typify the twentieth century celebrity with its disproportionate arousal of public interest, intense and pervasive visibility and prominence through attraction of publicity rather than any outstanding merit or achievement.¹¹

In many ways, Lindy Chamberlain fulfils the category of modern celebrity, having emerged from an obscure existence to arouse a maximum degree of public interest as the convicted murderer of her baby daughter, and then, as the victim of a seemingly flawed judicial system. Media coverage of the event was disproportionate and, as I will suggest later in the chapter, given that it was the first time a coronial finding (or any court case for that matter) had been televised live to the nation, it generated a level and intensity of exposure not seen before in Australia. It is not unreasonable to assume that Lindy's first publisher, William Heinemann, was aware of the origins of her fame and the type of publicity she attracted. During the marketing campaign to promote her autobiography *Through My Eyes* (1990) in August 1990, Heinemann emphasised her acute transformation in the brochure: "An intensely human story of an ordinary woman caught up in extraordinary and tragic events" (Figure 3.1).¹²

¹¹ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 3-4.

¹² Promotional brochure in the "Chamberlain Collection" courtesy of *The National Library of Australia*, Canberra.

Figure 3.1

WILLIAM HEINEMANN AUSTRALIA
AUGUST 1990

Through My Eyes

Lindy Chamberlain's Own Account Of The Events That Divided A Nation

"This is the story of a little girl who lived and breathed, and loved, and was loved. She was part of me. She grew within my body and when she died, part of me died, and nothing will ever alter that fact. This is her story, and mine." - Lindy Chamberlain

An intensely human story of an ordinary woman caught up in extraordinary and tragic events.

PUBLICITY

Pre-publication interview - national magazine

Two part extract - national magazine

TV exclusive feature interview

Media launch:
TV*Radio*Press

Three city author tour

ADVERTISING

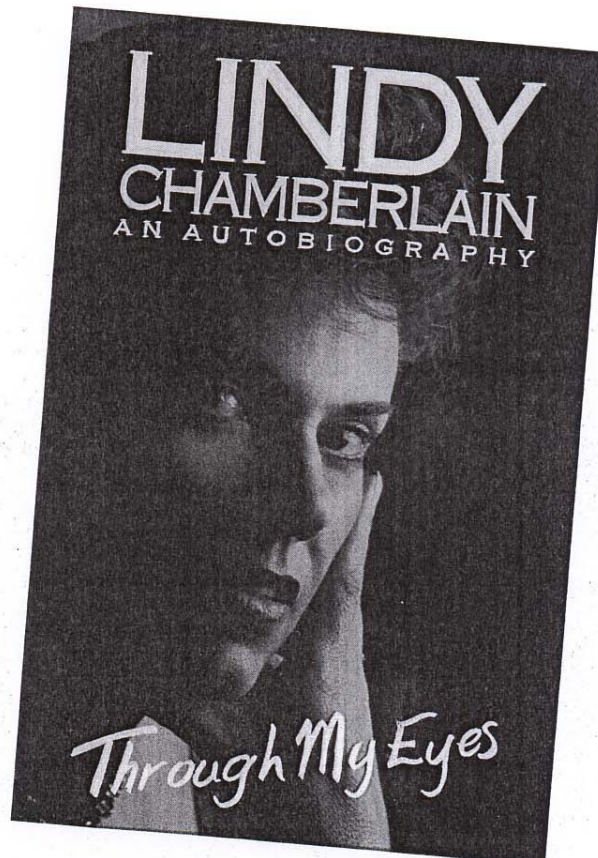
TV - Advertised Extract

Major Women's Magazine

POINT OF SALE

Show Cards

Single copy holder



So here we are, ten years later, and still the rumours and suspicion continue.

Publication to coincide with the Tenth Anniversary of the disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain

August 17, 1990

PRICE \$34.95/hb 720pp ISBN:0855613319
Paul Hamlyn Publishing Toll Free (008) 33 1290

Brochure produced by publisher William Heinemann to promote the release of Lindy Chamberlain's autobiography *Through My Eyes* (1990).

Lindy was an “ordinary” woman made “extraordinary” and the fact she was famous is, in itself, a modern phenomenon. This is because in the twentieth century, fame industries discriminated little between categories and types of celebrity.¹³ Evidence of the expansion of celebrity types is suggested in comparisons between Lindy and her contemporaries. Despite her alternating status as a witness, suspect and victim, Lindy resembled other celebrities of the period, including Olivia Newton John and the late Princess Diana. They were similar, not because of any identical experience, but because their images bore a common level of media exposure. Of course, as Turner suggests, it is important to acknowledge any productive differences, say, between sporting heroes, politicians and serial killers,¹⁴ those categories of celebrity identified by Chris Rojek through the “attribution”, “achievement” and “ascription” of fame.¹⁵ However, in the 1980s, the celebrity industry in Australia expanded as a result of the successful marketing of local film projects and their leading personalities, the development of a recording industry for Australian music professionals and the carving out of a young audience through locally produced television soap opera.¹⁶ With this pool of home grown talent, audience appetite for celebrity culture in Australia increased, altering domains of access to the public sphere and audience identification with public figures. Viewing the Azaria saga as a case study in modern media events provides a snapshot of changes to the public sphere in the twentieth century, and an opportunity to consider the way “controversial” women – those who have caused or been subject to dispute and social argument – have been represented in these times.

Chequebook Journalism and a “Live” Judgment about “Death”

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, media outlets competed for an exclusive on the Chamberlain story in response to a series of remarkable events. With a dramatic new look, Lindy was unexpectedly released from prison following much controversy over the evidence amassed against her at the trial, in part inspired by John Bryson’s book *Evil Angels* (1985), the discovery of Azaria’s matinee jacket and the petitions of a network of Chamberlain advocates. A variety of topics were on the

¹³ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 8.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Chris Rojek, *Celebrity*, 18.

¹⁶ Graeme Turner et.al., *Fame Games*, 48.

agenda for discussion, including Lindy's prison ordeal, extreme weight loss and reunion with family and friends. It was Australian Consolidated Press (ACP), however, which proved the greatest contender, settling on the figure of \$250,000 for an interview with the Chamberlains on their current affairs program, *60 Minutes* and in the popular monthly magazine the *Australian Women's Weekly* (AWW) The interview aired on *60 Minutes* on 2 March 1986, was the culmination of five separate meetings between the Chamberlains and host, Ray Martin, who lived with the family and recorded a reunion service held in their honour at the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Cooranbong. Recalling widespread anticipation of the story, John Little's *Inside 60 Minutes: The story behind the stories* (1984) relates the confusion caused by the program's pre-broadcast publicity, which led to audiences tuning into the wrong segment:

The week preceding [the Chamberlains' interview] *60 Minutes* ran a profile of the cricketer Greg Matthews. Many viewers must have thought the Chamberlains were on. In the Sydney market *60 Minutes* rated 43, an unheard of figure even for a popular sporting figure. Next week, when the first Chamberlain interview was broadcast, it rated 42 in Sydney and 50 in Melbourne. *60 Minutes* ran a second interview the following week with equally spectacular results.¹⁷

Scheduling problems aside, the program suggested the great level of interest in Lindy's story, particularly at the point Ray Martin (RM), speaking on behalf of the Australian public, interrogated Lindy (LC), in what has become one of television's most frequently quoted exchanges:

RM: Well, let me ask you face-to-face what every Australian would ask you; did you kill Azaria?

LC: No way. I loved that little girl.¹⁸

¹⁷ John Little, *Inside 60 Minutes: The story behind the stories*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 151.

¹⁸ Lindy Chamberlain, interview by Ray Martin, *60 Minutes*, Nine Network, 2 March 1986 (see Appendix B).

Escalating the human-interest factor as Lindy answered the question, the camera zoomed in to reveal a close-up shot of her welling eyes and broken facial expression. The moment of authenticity was already commodified by the audience's implied presence in this exchange, something which Paul Zanetti parodied in a cartoon for *DT*, depicting the audience as arm-chair judges complete with wigs (Figure 3.2). Lindy's interaction with Martin is soon followed by intimate scenes in which she appears in a white summer dress, playfully lifting and swinging her daughter by the arms, unwittingly revealing her matching pair of knickers underneath. While this incident may or may not have been the subject of critical comment, the intimacy and familiarity Lindy established with her audience throughout the program softened, to some extent, public opinion of her. As one man wrote in response to the interview: "His 'overall impression' was that 'most people in Australia were not prepared to accept that a woman could respond rationally, eloquently and calmly in stressful circumstances'".¹⁹

Reactions of this kind were typical of the program's successful combination of a high interest story and a personal style of delivery. In fact, Ray Martin's interview signalled a radical departure from the "formal, modern and paternalistic" approach of current affairs journalism in the 1960s. In this era, program hosts adopted stiff broadcast methods, favouring long monologues to camera.²⁰ The *60 Minutes* program, however, demonstrated, with its personality-driven style of delivery, narrative voice-overs and rapid editing, those tabloid features being popularised in the 1980s.²¹ For Graeme Turner, tabloid tendencies were most pronounced during the late 1980s and early 1990s, when television programs mirrored the highly visible formula of popular print publications, as seen in *Hinch*, *Inside Story* and *Hard Copy*.²² Emphasis on "quality" news or "traditional values" declined in proportion to a rise in entertainment and consumer television.²³ While it is difficult to say exactly the point at which these transformations took place, it appears the Chamberlain case occurred at a juncture in Australian current affairs journalism, highlighting, in a number of intimately framed media broadcasts, the movement towards a more popular medium.

¹⁹ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 54.

²⁰ Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha*, 41-3.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² Graeme Turner, *Ending the affair*, 52.

²³ *ibid.*, 54.

Figure 3.2



Arm-chair “judges” watching Lindy Chamberlain when she appeared on *60 Minutes*, 2 March 1986 depicted by the cartoonist, Paul Zanetti in the *Daily Telegraph*, 3 March 1986.

Shifting audience tastes, along with the greater commercial interest of television networks, were typical of changes occurring in the modern public sphere. Popular television hosts like Ray Martin benefited from such changes after emerging in the late 1980s as celebrities in their own right.²⁴ Scholars writing in the field of media studies often regard Martin as a pivotal figure in the transformation of Australian current affairs journalism. His rise to prominence is a further example of the expanding celebrity category of which Lindy was a part. According to Graeme Turner et al. in *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia* (2000), Ray Martin is the consummate celebrity news figure, whose ability to speak on behalf of his audience and embody the reputation of the Nine Network proved crucial factors in his career success.²⁵ In fact, posing his question in the 2 March 1986 interview with Lindy on the basis that it was “what every Australian would ask you”, Martin demonstrated an ability to stand in for viewers, while at the same time providing a critical link between the media and its audience, a feature common to all celebrities. The celebrification of individuals associated with the Chamberlain case might be interpreted in accordance with the wider changes taking place in Australia’s fame industry, as might the tendency to focus on the more personal and intimate details of media subjects. At one point in the *60 Minutes* interview, when Martin queried Lindy’s decision to end her relationship with Michael following news of her conviction and life sentence, she responded by stating:

LC: You think of your children needing comfort and your husband needing comfort and there’s just no one there, you’re powerless to do anything and consequently, if that meant me fading out of the picture I was prepared to do it even though I didn’t want to ...²⁶

Martin’s line of questioning was probing and, at times, seemed to exploit the case’s emotive potential. But, by tailoring his questions to the Chamberlains’ private world he gave audiences the opportunity to see what they might have felt was the “real” Michael and Lindy. The intimate portrait was an example of the way fame was being

²⁴ Graeme Turner, et.al., *Fame Games*, 11.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Lindy Chamberlain, interview by Ray Martin, *60 Minutes*, Nine Network, 2 March 1986.

conferred on individuals as a result of their publicity, with Lindy famous for being famous.

There were other significant changes occurring in the Australian media landscape of the 1980s that coincided with the Chamberlain case. Ethical debates about the practice of chequebook journalism and the formation of a public relations industry were often read through developments in the Azaria saga. As one observer noted, even though it was nothing new for the media to pay for stories, "...when Lindy Chamberlain was released from Darwin prison in February 1986, chequebook journalism took on a whole new dimension".²⁷ Harry M. Miller was at the forefront of the newly established promotions industry when, between 1980 and 1994, he brokered three interviews for the Chamberlains on *60 Minutes*, with their appearance fee generally set at \$25,000.²⁸ Some viewed Miller's service as evidence of the Chamberlains' grasping nature and speculated about the overall cost to the nation:

There is criticism of the price Agent Harry M. Miller extracted from the Seven Network for exclusive access to the couple (following the release of the Morling Report). Chequebook journalism is unedifying, but for some of its most notorious practitioners to use the deal to snipe at the Chamberlains is rich (*Time*, 15 June 1987)

As this *Time* magazine extract illustrates, the intensification of Australia's public relations industry in the 1980s invited a range of criticism, particularly from those who saw in celebrity promotion a worrying shift in public sensibilities. As the *Bulletin* magazine had earlier argued in response to moves to have Lindy released from prison in 1985: "Lindy Chamberlain has a story to tell and the telling is going to cost a lot of money" (*The Bulletin*, 26 November 1985). Fast-forward to today and the public relations industry has become a necessary by-product of modern celebrity culture, with even the professionals hired to manage media interest becoming famous. Miller gained notoriety for his role in promoting individuals like Lindy Chamberlain and the late television personality, Graham Kennedy. Since Chamberlain, much of his business has been focused on "crisis management", providing "ordinary" individuals

²⁷ John Little, *Inside 60 Minutes*, 150.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 152.

shot to sudden prominence with professional support and guidance to handle media publicity.

Reading the intensification of Australia's public relations industry through the Chamberlain case makes explicit the connection between Azaria's disappearance and other contemporary media events. Obviously, the industry pre-dates the dingo baby saga, as found by Marshall, who traces the history of the publicity agent to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when entrepreneur P.T. Barnum staged a number of "media events" to draw attention to his museums and circuses.²⁹ By contrast the origins, influence and reach of Australia's public relations industry are a little less clear, as is reflected in the dearth of academic research on this issue. An exception is Turner's collaborative work *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia* (2000), in which the authors identify a 1930s telephone book advertisement posted by George Fitzpatrick marketing the services of a "registered practitioner in public persuasion, propaganda, publicity", as perhaps the first example of such a phenomenon.³⁰ Others have traced the Australian public relations industry to General Douglas MacArthur's visit in 1942.³¹ In Marshall's view, nineteenth century press agents created a blueprint for today's publicity industry, by marketing landmark events to attract maximum public interest.³²

The exorbitant publicity surrounding Lindy, and the management of her image, provide a contemporary example of public relations as a "skilled discipline".³³ Perhaps it was the visibility of this industry in the 1980s that prompted the *Bulletin* magazine to satirise the media hype generated by Lindy in a cartoon depicting a dingo with sunglasses and microphone standing in front of "Ayers Rock", with the caption, "You've decided to confess?", alongside the dingo's reply, "I always wanted to meet Mike Willesee" (*The Bulletin*, 26 November 1985 – see Figure 3.3). The cartoon by Mark Cornwall implied the depth of publicity surrounding Lindy's tale of wrongful imprisonment and the precedent it established in what would soon become a market driven by story selling. As a result of intense media scrutiny, the Chamberlain case

²⁹ P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 207, 208

³⁰ Graeme Turner et.al., *Fame Games*, 34.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 210.

³³ *ibid.*, 208.

Figure 3.3



Cartoon by Cornwall, *The Bulletin* magazine 26 November 1985 (Courtesy of *The Bulletin*).

opened opportunities for an industry devoted to the preservation of public identities, led by celebrity minders, Markson Sparks, and the Harry M. Miller Group.

As with the role of the media in general, the promotional discourse surrounding modern celebrity has been seen, particularly by Andrew Wernick (1991), as a social malaise. Others such as Graeme Turner, Richard Dyer and John Hartley have argued to the contrary, by suggesting that the emergence of “smiling professions” (Hartley’s contingent of media, publicity and promotions personnel) have, in fact, brought the concept of a “public” into existence.³⁴ For Dyer, this is evidenced in the way celebrities are associated with parts of the “common vernacular” and promoted through language.³⁵ The cultural currency accruing to Lindy’s cry: “The dingo’s got my baby”, appeared in episodes of internationally broadcast US television programs, *The Simpsons* and *Seinfeld*, as examples of the promotional discourse surrounding celebrity, nation and identity.³⁶ Since celebrities are promoted through industries managing their commercial and personal success, chequebook journalism might be seen less as a maligned practice and more as a practical service enabling individuals to re-negotiate their public images.³⁷ For the Chamberlains, who were subsisting on a single parent income with enormous legal debt, the offer from ACP not only promised to alleviate their financial burden, but provided an opportunity to answer critics and rally supporters. Indeed, the practice of chequebook journalism is just one consequence of the expansion of the public sphere, the “increasing commercialisation of news industries” and the postmodern celebrification of news subjects.³⁸ In light of these events, the commodification phase identifies a phenomenon that, in many ways, was newly articulated through the Chamberlain case.

Lindy Chamberlain was a modern celebrity because media coverage surrounding her was disproportionate, a circumstance heightened by the live telecast of the findings of the first Coronial Inquest into Azaria’s disappearance on 20 February 1981. The *SMH* described the Australian legal first as producing the

³⁴ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 16.

³⁵ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 3.

³⁶ “Bart v Australia”, *The Simpsons*, Fox Network; “The Stranded”, *Seinfeld*, Third Season, Episode 27, aired 27 November 1991.

³⁷ Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha*, 222.

³⁸ Graeme Turner, *Ending the affair*, 50.

country's "biggest courtroom gallery" (*SMH*, 20 February 1981). A public gallery of this dimension was first envisaged by Channel Seven's head technician, Gary Tait, who, in the weeks before the verdict approached the Coroner to ask for principal rights to the live broadcast. It was granted on the condition that the network stream the findings to other commercial stations in a delayed time format.³⁹

Criticism followed the decision to televise since, as the *SMH* illustrated, recent controversies about the behaviour of politicians on commercial radio had shown them to be "too often deflected from the real issues by posturing for their constituents whom they imagined to be listening" (*SMH*, 20 February 1981). Similar concerns surrounded the televised promotion of Australian cricket and the "exaggeration of [the game's] grossest aspects at the expense of its subtle essence" (*SMH*, 20 February 1981). The problem was not so much with the Chamberlains; rather, it was with the dramatising potential of the medium in which their fate was to be sealed. Barritt had somewhat anticipated his critics and their objections that "television distorts reality by tempting those who appear before it to play an audience" by restricting the camera's focus to his face alone. In doing so, audiences would be less likely to draw inferences from the Chamberlains' reaction to the verdict.

In the United States, however, the practice was by now considered axiomatic to the principle of trial by one's peers following a decision by Florida's Supreme Court in January 1981 that the civil rights of a defendant on trial for murder were not violated by the televising of a court's verdict (*SMH*, 20 February 1981). Well before the murder trials of *au pair*, Louise Woodward, and football star, O.J. Simpson, the place of television cameras inside the courtroom was staunchly debated in the United States and Australia. Despite objections from the legal fraternity, millions tuned into Barritt's Alice Springs courtroom at 11.00 am on Friday, 20 February 1981 to watch the Chamberlain verdict, a number comparable in size (two million) only to those Australians who watched the moon landing in July 1969.⁴⁰

The verdict handed down to Schapelle Corby in the Denpasar District Court on 27 May 2005 was also broadcast live to the nation, with television stations and

³⁹ John Bryson, *Evil Angels*, 232.

⁴⁰ Figure quoted in Noel Sanders, "Azaria Chamberlain and popular culture", 88.

talkback radio shows employing interpreters to translate the live Bali simulcast. As Anne Summers remarks, the Chamberlain and Corby verdicts were delivered via Australian television screens to engrossed and highly mediated publics: “In both cases, the nation stopped and turned its eyes to the television to learn from live broadcasts what fate the courts had decided for these women”.⁴¹ While newspaper coverage, undoubtedly, shaped Australia’s perception of both women, television contributed to the intense exposure of their images within the media. As was demonstrated at Darwin and later in a Bali courtroom, the “live” dimension of each broadcast enabled audiences to watch the case unfold in real time and experience a sense of direct participation in its outcomes.

As well as enabling audiences to play a symbolic part in the dispensing of justice, the live verdicts involved individuals in a sphere of public debate formerly reserved for the legal profession and those who appeared before it. According to Paddy Scannell, in *Radio, Television and Modern Life* (1996) a live broadcast can simulate for audiences a kind of “presencing”, inserting them in the moment, as he states:

The ‘liveness’ of broadcast coverage is the key to its impact, since it offers the real sense of access to an event in its moment-by-moment unfolding. This ‘presencing’, this re-presenting of a present occasion to an absent audience, can powerfully produce the effect of being-there, of being involved (caught up) in the here-and-now of the occasion. This being in the moment, especially in its ‘unfolding’, creates the mood of expectancy: what’s happening? what’s next?⁴²

The importance of television cameras relaying events to absent audiences was also suggested in an editorial in the *SMH*:

As in the Azaria Chamberlain case, the television cameras rove and record events relating to court proceedings outside the courtrooms, and make their

⁴¹ Anne Summers, “Prisoners of a nation’s prejudices”, *SMH*, 17 June 2005
<http://www.smh.com.au/news/Opinion/Prisoners-of-a-nations-prejudices/2005/06>

⁴² Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 84.

impressions on the public independently of what happens inside them. If the courts persist in holding aloof from this fact, they risk putting themselves increasingly out of the mainstream of public influence and credibility. Their adherence to protocol which does not recognise the invention of radio and television as added techniques for communication between the court and the public is less than quaint. The proposition that admitting television into the courtroom would encourage posturing by judges or counsel will cut no ice with those familiar with court proceedings. It could be argued with more conviction that the exposure of posturing to the public would do a lot to help stamp it out by arousing strong public disapproval (*SMH*, 21 February 1981).

As the media was vested in the publicity opportunity, it is not surprising that their proposed arguments for televising the Chamberlain verdict would be about safeguarding, rather than imperilling, the justice system. But, contrary to the *SMH* editorial, not all journalists were convinced about the appropriateness of television cameras in Australian courtrooms. For Malcolm Brown, the case's principal concern with death made the irony of a live verdict even more apparent, as he observed: "Australians crowded around TV sets in homes, offices and shop windows to watch a live judgment about death" (*Sun-Herald*, 31 October 1982). For solicitor and author, John Bryson, the disturbing part about the two inquests was their focus on the Chamberlains rather than the deceased: "Some Inquests are about the living, rather than the dead. Both Chamberlain inquests fell into that category" ("Sunday Extra", *The Age*, 10 September 1983). So ingrained were the oppositional categories of life and death in the Chamberlain case that the decision to televise the coroner's verdict seemed only to confirm popular interpretations of the event. But historically, even though debates about televised court proceedings have been polemical, the unprecedented "live" coverage of the Chamberlain verdict set a benchmark in the production of modern celebrity in Australia when the domain of celebrity was proven to expand beyond film stars and sporting heroes to include victims and/or perpetrators of crime.

Frocks, Politics and Feminist Discourse

One reason for Lindy's celebrity was her centrality to Azaria's disappearance; as well as being the infant's mother, she was the only witness to the abduction, the investigators' prime suspect and, through representations of her image, the means by which the tragic events at "Ayers Rock" were collectively understood. In this climate, it is not surprising that she became the focus of a range of competing discourses, since media debates about her innocence amongst feminists and academics were central to the evolution of her public persona. Contributions made by Malcolm Brown, for instance, writing for the *SMH*, were not unlike those made by feminists and academic scholars who promoted an interpretation of who the "real" Lindy Chamberlain was and formed part of the discursive process by which her image was judged.

There was no "one" overarching interpretation of her persona, but rather, a series of competing discourses framing her image for different ends. While there are obvious contextual differences between an academic essay and a newspaper article, what cannot be neglected is the way in which Lindy appeared in each of these as discursively produced, a modern celebrity's "discursive effect".⁴³ Howe, Rogers and Johnson were critical of the way the media represented Lindy in descriptions of her "sultry good looks" and "ravishing" appearance,⁴⁴ as they were of those attempts to force her into an acceptable image of femininity. But what is an "acceptable" image of femininity and who decides? It seems a conundrum that a universal image of womanhood could exist, or one that suitably represented the experiences of all women (accounting for their racial, ethnic, religious and class differences), alongside objective indicators on which everyone would agree. As Tara Brabazon has argued, "it is important to confirm that 'the media' does not present a single image of women, men, youth or age. It is up to all women to sort out this cultural material and validate women who perform plurality, difference and distinction".⁴⁵ In this climate, certain feminist arguments about the impropriety of Lindy's media representation appear value-laden in their determination of the way femininity *should* and *ought* to be portrayed. While it would be contentious to argue that feminists participated in the commodification of Lindy's image (given their advocacy of less gender-inflected

⁴³ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 7.

⁴⁴ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 228-9

⁴⁵ Tara Brabazon, *Ladies Who Lunge: Celebrating Difficult Women*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002), 118.

media messages), their writings, alongside a number of academic and media texts, helped to frame her appearance in the public domain. This is not to equate feminist aims with those of the media, justice system or the academy; rather, I hope to show that the diverse number of interest groups fanning representations of her image locate Lindy at the centre of media, academic, legal and scientific discourses.

The number and range of discourses centring on Lindy's body would suggest that the practice of consumption, while not solely confined to the media, gave audiences an opportunity to read her appearance in alternate, and sometimes contradictory ways. From the outset, descriptions of her physical appearance were the subject of newsprint, radio talkback, current affairs programs and television broadcasts. At the second inquest, one observer noted how she wore an "orange and purple patterned dress ... her shoulders, bare except for the thin straps of her dress, showed the pink tint of sunburn".⁴⁶ Later that year at the Supreme Court trial, she presented a maternal figure in billowing frocks, heavily pregnant with her fourth child,⁴⁷ as the *Sun-Herald* observed: "The Chamberlains have been tightly controlled. Mrs Chamberlain has continued her dress sense in the maternity mode. She has had a new maternity dress each day" (*Sun-Herald*, 19 September 1982). A few weeks later at the announcement of the guilty verdict, the *SMH* disclosed: "Mrs Chamberlain, in a powder blue dress with white frills – the same dress she wore when giving evidence for the defence – sat without apparent emotion. Her husband sat beside her." (*SMH*, 30 October 1982). Two days later, when Lindy was sent to prison, her absence did little to assuage media interest in her physical appearance. Instead, attentions turned to her "secret childhood", where she was described as "a beautiful little girl, so natural, a little fairy." (*DT*, 1 November 1982).

Whether it was her choice of dress, averted gaze or guilty "look", the public often interpreted the Chamberlain case through its principal subject. At times, even the success of the Defence case was measured against a fleeting facial expression or the dress Lindy wore to court each day. This was no more apparent than when news of the pregnancy coincided with a critical stage in the judicial process, when the trial

⁴⁶ Richard Shears, *Azaria*, 152.

⁴⁷ For further examples of Lindy's dress at the trial, see James Simmonds, *Azaria: Wednesday's Child*, 127.

jurors were grappling with the weight of forensic evidence.⁴⁸ Believing that she might evoke the sympathies of the jury and thwart the prosecution's hopes for a guilty verdict, media pundits referred to Lindy's condition as the "forensic pregnancy".⁴⁹ Articles published in this trial period used her as an interpretive device so that readers might consider the unfolding of the case through Lindy's changing figure, as did Malcolm Brown for the *Sun-Herald*:

Lindy Chamberlain, nearly eight months pregnant, is never comfortable. She sits and squirms all day on the special chair provided in the body of the court, sometimes putting her feet up on a little stool. Occasionally she jerks a limb or moves suddenly, responding perhaps to the kicking of the baby inside her (*Sun-Herald*, 26 September, 1982).

The suggestive link between the maternal body and the "body of the court" invites the reader to interpret the day's proceedings through Lindy's stirring foetus. Here, two otherwise "closed" bodies are made publicly available both in the flesh and in representation, blurring those demarcation lines between public/private and internal/external spheres. Brown's observations imply a connection between media and legal practices in the televising of high-profile criminal cases, a subject which Catharine Lumby has considered in the context of the modern public sphere:

... the world of the courtroom has a lot more in common with the world of the media than most lawyers like to admit. That courts have always been forums for performing and spin-doctoring. That even in the courtroom, the real war has always been a war over representation.⁵⁰

As Lumby points out, the media and the legal system have in common a tendency to judge individuals as they "appear", or according to their performance in public life. Lindy did not "perform" gender adequately, Howe argues, nor did she convince the public, particularly in the weeks after Azaria's disappearance, that she was a grieving mother. But representational frameworks are not just utilised in the media, they are

⁴⁸ Ken Crispin, *The Crown versus Chamberlain*, 115.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha*, 25.

applied in western culture by academics, filmmakers, social commentators and others contributing to social debate. In this sense, Lindy's image was not simply a product of a homogenous media or stereotypical manipulation, but a complex intertwining of legal, feminist, academic and media discourses.

On the subject of celebrity image production, Christine Higgins was one of the first to contribute to the debate on Lindy Chamberlain. In an essay published in 1994 she argued that within media representations of the case a "discourse of stardom" developed around Lindy's image. Unlike the bulk of feminists writing before her, Higgins saw Lindy as more the "film star" and less "the witch" of western popular imaginings.⁵¹ Lindy's celebrity was also implied in the last 500 pages of John Bryson's book *Evil Angels* (1985), which he devoted entirely to her, rather than to Michael, the dingo and even the victim, Azaria.⁵² For this move, he was highly criticised by feminist academics, who argued that weighty descriptions of Lindy's "girlish" figure and "slowness at the bosom" merely perpetuated journalistic and patriarchal bias.⁵³ But, despite being an unusual observation, perhaps it was Bryson's comment on Lindy's ascendance in the public imagination and the differing deployments of her image. Certainly, in contemporary news discourse, she had grown into a recognisable "social type" – her mode of dress, weight gain, weight loss, pregnancy and prison diet were the subject of endless speculation and controversy, with Lindy herself remarking that each time the public saw her she was described as: "Either pregnant or just getting over it" (*AWW*, March, 1986).

There were two kinds of contradictory discourses surrounding Lindy Chamberlain's image. One emphasised her femininity, and was alluded to in representations of her as a "perfect mother"⁵⁴ with "tiny" stature (*The Herald*, 15 September 1988). Here, descriptions of Lindy's femininity were "self-evident" in her "beautiful", "darkly vivacious good looks",⁵⁵ and one-time adornment in a "black dress, red high heel shoes, [with] red poppies on her belt and a red shoulder bag

⁵¹ Christine Higgins, "Naturalising 'Horror' Stories", 145.

⁵² As described in Peter Pierce, *The Country of Lost Children*, 175.

⁵³ Kerry Goldsworthy, "Martyr to Her Sex", 162-3.

⁵⁴ James Simmonds, *Azaria: Wednesday's Child*, 48.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 27.

[which] gave the impression she was ready for a dinner date”.⁵⁶ Yet, other discourses emphasised her refusal to cry in public and “impassively” cold, disciplined, masculine presence.⁵⁷ In an era of great social debate about the impact of feminism and the role of women in society when contemporary fashion included women’s appropriation of masculine suits to diminish curves, shoulder pads to broaden the torso and heavily lacquered hairstyles to give the illusion of height, Lindy Chamberlain arguably absorbed anxieties about gender in the 1980s. As my eighty-nine year old grandmother, Dorothy, recently recalled: “She was always so beautifully dressed” and, for many women in Australia, the spectacularisation of Lindy’s image relayed changes in social attitudes towards women. Whether Lindy appeared “hard-faced” or “in shock”, in a “black dress” with “red lips”,⁵⁸ or a “floral-print sundress, bobbysocks and sneakers”,⁵⁹ the continuity of her media presence functioned in much the same way that celebrities have become immensely appealing to their audiences, in the fact that they are publicly “known”.⁶⁰ There was little need to elaborate on either headlines containing the name “Lindy” or news articles with a photograph of her beside them, since, to the Australian public, her image was so well known. Put simply, it was enough to publish the following headlines without giving any further clues as to whose identity they belonged: “Mother Killed Azaria, SM told” (*The Age*, 2 February 1982) and “My sister Lindy: God still loves her” (*DT*, 4 November 1982). Reflecting on ABC News coverage of Lindy’s prison release in February 1986, one of the station’s hosts, Wendy Carlisle, even commented that, “When ABC Radio News reported the story, there was never any need to explain just who Lindy Chamberlain was”.⁶¹

Among feminist contributors to the Chamberlain case there has been a tendency to focus on the media’s portrayal of Lindy as a witch. One of the reasons cited for such an analysis was the unnecessary attention the media gave to details of her physical appearance and what was considered to be her “self-evident” sexuality.⁶²

⁵⁶ Richard Shears, *Azaria*, 141.

⁵⁷ Richard Shears, *Azaria*, 185.

⁵⁸ Dianne Johnson., “From Fairy to Witch”, 147.

⁵⁹ Richard Shears, *Azaria*, 149.

⁶⁰ A feature of the modern celebrity is renown, see Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 38-41.

⁶¹ Wendy Carlisle, “Women Who Transgress”, Background Briefing, *ABC Radio National*, 24 July 2005.

⁶² Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 227.

Arguments that Lindy resembled the witch because she bore a “physical” mark of deviance were first advocated by Dianne Johnson (1984) and then recapitulated by Adrian Howe (1989) in her analysis of Lindy’s “filmy apricot dresses” and leg skimming “summer frocks”, as the following extract from the Melbourne, *Herald* suggests:⁶³

Mrs Chamberlain, dressed in a white three-quarter length summer frock held up by thin straps over her shoulders, walked in ahead of her husband at 10.05 am (*The Herald*, 2 February 1982).

Descriptions similar to the one above, and others which describe the “soft roundness of her tanned shoulders”, “petite figure” and “eye-catching frame” were cited as evidence of the media’s construction of a witch.⁶⁴ Also contributing to her status as a witch were accounts of Lindy’s changing shape in which she was slender at the second inquest in 1982, heavily pregnant at the trial later that year, and then “emaciated” upon her discharge from prison in 1986. For feminists, Lindy’s altered appearance was read as a sign of her transformative power.⁶⁵ The witch theme continues to resonate in academic analyses of the case, as in Belinda Wilson’s argument:

In effect, then, the Australian media with the public in tow, decided Lindy was a witch, hunted her as one, and then, symbolically, led her in her cart through the jeering mobs to the stake, just as happened to witches in the Middle Ages.⁶⁶

While the prejudice Michael and Lindy suffered should not be underestimated, the witch analogy so often associated with feminist analyses of the case, overlooks the multiple discourses attending her image and the opportunity she had to challenge media stereotypes. From the outset, Lindy’s body fuelled a range of responses often contradictory, none more so than in the months leading up to and following her release from prison in which she was described as a “stranger – tiny, gaunt, wraith-like, terribly thin and brittle” (*The Bulletin*, 26 November 1985), looking “much

⁶³ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 228.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁵ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 4.

⁶⁶ Belinda Wilson, “The Making of a Modern Myth”, 152.

younger” than her 38 years (*Sunday Territorian*, 27 October 1985) and even sporting a “fashionable” wardrobe (*AWW*, March 1986). The *Sunday Territorian* recorded its response to her dramatic weight loss by comparing the once “chubby face” with a now “healthy woman”:

The slight, five foot nothing, smiling woman that greeted my Editor Gary Shipway, and myself in the Darwin Jail last Tuesday did not look at all like Lindy Chamberlain of the inquests and trial. Gone were the hard eyes and sullen gesture, the chubby face with the petulant mouth, and the rolling gait of a woman accused of murdering her baby ... Instead we were greeted by an attractive, petite and healthy woman looking much younger than her 37 years (*Sunday Territorian*, 27 October 1985).

While Lindy’s changed appearance is highly sentimentalised in this extract, it signifies an important step in media coverage of the case. For one, it reminds us that the views articulated in the media about the Chamberlains were not static, but constantly evolving, dynamic and mostly contradictory. Knowledge of the differing views attending Lindy’s image only exist because of the persistent and detailed cataloguing of her appearance in material now kept in newspaper and magazine archives and film databases across the country. It would seem that without descriptions of her “smiling” gait and “much younger” look, it might not be so clear at what point and, indeed, in which direction media views of Lindy changed over the course of the investigation. Certainly, the chronicling of celebrity physical development was nothing new, nor was it confined to women: the public act of witnessing the “bloating, slimming, wounding and general humiliation” of celebrity bodies has a variegated history in figures such as Elvis Presley, Elizabeth Taylor, Michael Jackson and Oprah Winfrey.⁶⁷ While celebrities are not all alike – for instance, Lindy was famous because of “unfavourable public recognition”⁶⁸ – their differences seem less notable than the experience of commodification they share as a feature of modern celebrity culture.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Michael Warner “The Mass Public and the Mass Subject”, in *The Phantom Public Sphere*, ed. Bruce Robbins, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 250.

⁶⁸ Chris Rojek, *Celebrity*, 18.

⁶⁹ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 25.

Whereas time, cultural distance and the discovery of the Chamberlain archive at the National Library of Australia have encouraged some feminists to reconsider the role of the public in the Chamberlain saga, the media remains a focus of criticism, ire and condemnation. In her first essay, “*Chamberlain Revisited: The Case against the Media*” (1989), Howe comments that media descriptions of Lindy’s body were tawdry. The verdict handed-down at the Supreme Court in 1982 was, she argued, a “media-contaminated conclusion,”⁷⁰ supported by “thousands of Australians who aided and abetted”⁷¹ the process. Even her own views about the Chamberlains are the result of her naivety and seduction by the press, as Howe claims she was swayed by the “media’s lust to kill a defendant’s right to be presumed innocent”⁷² and its “perception of Lindy Chamberlain as a dangerous woman”⁷³ Making amends for her own collusion with the guilty verdict, Howe proposes “that the media be put on trial for murder”.⁷⁴

But, by 1997, and then again in 2005, her arguments had markedly altered following consideration of the opinion evidence presented by experts at the trial and the content of the Chamberlain archive at the National Library of Australia. In the essay, “*Imagining Evidence, Fictioning Truth*” (1997), Howe blamed the Australian legal system for allowing an innocent woman to be condemned on circumstantial evidence. By this stage her focus had altered and, rather than looking at Lindy, Howe turned to the legal system for an explanation of why the Chamberlains were convicted of murder.⁷⁵

A subsequent essay published in 2005 contained results Howe obtained from her research into the NLA Chamberlain archive and was republished, this time to coincide with the case’s twenty-fifth anniversary. Again, the focus of her essay had shifted in line with new research on the role of the Australian public, whose letters to the Chamberlains represent a mass outpouring of emotion and dispute claims Lindy was persecuted by a popular majority (see Chapter Two).

⁷⁰ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 247.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, 249-50.

⁷² Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 223.

⁷³ *ibid.*, 226.

⁷⁴ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 223.

⁷⁵ Adrian Howe, “*Imagining Evidence, Fictioning Truth*”, 82-105.

In several returns to the case, Howe questioned commonly-held assumptions about the public's behaviour towards Michael and Lindy, the reliability of expert opinion evidence and the meaning of the legal term "beyond reasonable doubt", all this offering new historical interpretations of Azaria's disappearance and aftermath. And yet, despite her revision of the level of responsibility shared for the Chamberlain convictions by the Australian legal system and public, Howe remains steadfast in her criticism of the media. Such was the level of media scrutiny of the Chamberlains, she argues, that members of the public became easily convinced by, at best, indulgent and, at worst, false and misleading news reports. But Howe reminds the reader that the case's twenty-fifth anniversary is not an occasion for finger pointing; instead it should celebrate those in the community "who were not caught up in the wave of media-driven hysteria" and thereby complicit in Lindy's symbolic crucifixion.⁷⁶ Unlike the hostile correspondents whose "narrow, misogynous and media-contaminated viewpoints have been fully canvassed elsewhere, in the media itself, in dingo jokes and in various published analyses of the case", her research chronicles the emotions and opinions of those in the community sympathetic to the Chamberlains' plight.⁷⁷ After all, says Howe, they were immune from the hype and publicity generated by the outback disappearance.

However, what seems more likely is that sections of the public responded differently to the range of contradictory views expressed by the media. To some extent this idea is reflected in the Lindy correspondence Howe examines, in which letter writers attribute aspects of the news coverage to their own belief in Lindy's innocence, and their decision to write to express feelings of incomprehension, grief and outrage at the verdict (see Chapter Two). Moreover, it would seem too simplistic to suggest the aggregate of media narratives about Lindy Chamberlain was overwhelmingly sexist or that the entire media conspired to create a witch-hunt. Rather, it should be argued that within the process of mass circulation of news texts, attempts are made to organise, structure, comprehend and capitalise on the competing narratives and issues with which the public is presented.

⁷⁶ Howe describes Lindy as being "crucified in the media". Adrian Howe, *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 12, 10.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 14.

Just as Howe reconsidered her opinion on the role of the legal system and public in the Azaria saga, so too is it time to question the widespread assumption that “the media” was to blame for the condemnation of Lindy and Michael Chamberlain. Analysing the work of John Hartley and Catharine Lumby on the function and appearance of the contemporary public sphere, it is appropriate to see the media as an expanding site of contestation and debate, as a place where contradictory discourses collide. It is also time to read changes to the modern public sphere against the traditional binary in which men are positioned as dominant producers and women as passive consumers of popular culture.⁷⁸ This is because a gendered dialectic of consumption confines women to the role of object, whereas Lindy revealed how modern celebrities have the ability to self-manage and, to some extent, produce their own images. It follows that models denying women’s political autonomy in the production of self-images tend to stifle further any possibility of their active role in the public sphere.

The media’s construction of “Lindy” provided an opportunity for individuals to derive meaning and self-worth from a public figure whose experiences might tally with their own. In some sense, she was an object of public inquiry and a focus for private anxieties over physical appearance.⁷⁹ As Howe explains, no doubt the effects on the Chamberlain case of a largely male-constituted press would have been felt in the content and alternating bias of news reports. But instead of making universal assumptions about the media, perhaps we should reconsider the customary view that holds women as passive consumers instead of active citizens.

Historically, women have politicised the public sphere with their bodies, sexualities, tastes and dress in a way that has blurred any detachment between public and private life.⁸⁰ Questioning whether “frocks” and “politics” can be neatly separated in the realm of popular culture in *Ladies Who Lunge* (2002), Tara Brabazon finds in the distinctive green and purple attire of the nineteenth century suffragettes both a

⁷⁸ Lumby has referred to the gendered dialectic of consumption by stating: “The reality about the interaction between the mass media ... women and identity in late capitalist society is far more complex than this oppositional model in which men are patriarchs, buyers and producers and women are reduced to victims, commodities and consumers”, see Catharine Lumby, *bad girls*, 13.

⁷⁹ Lumby employs a similar argument in her examination of celebrity bodies and their cultural meanings and habitus. Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha*, 129.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 8.

form of resistance and an assertion of identity: “The corporeality of their protest offered an intervention in the exclusion of women from their modernist public sphere. Their clothes were disruptive and provocative”.⁸¹ Given that “fashion makes bodies speak” and that “fabrics are woven with meanings that allow space for play and difference”,⁸² the female body and its attendant issues do not so much offer an alternative to the masculine public sphere, as reject the cultural binaries which separate it from a feminine equivalent.⁸³ While there are myriad examples of the media’s commodification of Lindy’s body (a number alluded to in this chapter), it is naïve to suggest Lindy was the unwitting subject in “the mass media’s annihilation of the possibility of a fair trial”⁸⁴ and to do so would be to assign both the consumer and media subject alike passive roles in relation to popular culture. Of course, there is an element of objectification in the media’s coverage of the Chamberlain case but in spite of this, Lindy was able to reinvent and re-fashion her image.

While arguments to this point have concerned feminist analyses of the case, there is no explicit evidence to suggest feminism had been a contributing factor in the framing of Lindy’s image. Nonetheless, it is clear that considerations about her “affect”, the public experience of Lindy’s image, would have permeated public debate alongside the social movements taking place in the latter half of the twentieth century.⁸⁵ By the early 1980s, Lindy’s image was, no doubt, read in relation to anxieties over feminism’s social and political gains, with Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* (1970), and Anne Summers’ *Damned Whores and God’s Police* (1975) highly influential texts in the Australian feminist movement. The “femocrat”, also emerged in this era and was a term applied to “a woman, feminist by personal conviction, who works within a government bureaucracy at a senior level to advance the status of women in society”.⁸⁶ The femocrat’s emergence coincided with the foundation of the Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL) in 1972 and Australia’s first

⁸¹ Tara Brabazon, *Ladies Who Lunge*, 35, 36.

⁸² *ibid.*, 34-5.

⁸³ Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha*, p.175.

⁸⁴ Adrian Howe, *Lindy Chamberlain revisited*, 252-3.

⁸⁵ For Marshall a celebrity’s “affect” is central to understanding his or her place in contemporary culture. It is defined in behavioural psychology as “the middle ground between cognition and behaviour: the affective realm is connected to this chain of causality between something experienced and the formulation of a reaction to that experience”, see Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 73.

⁸⁶ See Hester Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators: Australian Femocrats and the State*, (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1996).

federal anti-discrimination law, the *Sex Discrimination Act* (1984). The act outlawed “discrimination in employment, education and the provision of services on the grounds of sex, marital status or pregnancy”.⁸⁷ Other advancements in this era included Australia’s ratification in 1983 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), and the passing of the Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986, which established the Affirmative Action Agency to adequately administer the provisions set out in the Act.

In the midst of this political transformation, Lindy became a screen, absorbing and reflecting popular anxieties about the position of women ten years after the advent of second wave feminism in Australia. Howe’s criticism of the media’s ongoing patriarchal definitions of Lindy as a wife and mother was founded in her overtly sexualised portrayal. While there is little doubt Lindy’s media coverage was gendered, feminist contributors to the debate appear to overlook the rise and packaging of feminism as a social movement within popular discourse. Feminist ideology was, in fact, being democratised and distributed through popular forms, somewhat controversially gaining a wide public audience. It even pervaded a range of popular women’s magazines in the 1970s, with *Cleo* unashamedly declaring itself a feminist periodical. Within popular arenas then, there were attempts to highlight gender inequalities in the media’s representation of women, and in the practice and dispensation of the law. The media was not the only site of image production, and so feminism is also implicated in the framing devices used in representations of the case and its principal subject. Hence, it is necessary to view Lindy’s portrayal within a complex discursive system, in which anxieties about her performance of gender were projected.

The commodification phase then, applies to the way in which Lindy’s image was appropriated within a number of discourses, marking wider changes in the structure and function of the public sphere, as well as the celebrity’s place within it. But in the context of feminist critiques of news coverage embellishing Lindy’s appearance, it is possible to read her objectification as an opportunity for subversion; her reinvention a form of resistance to female stereotypes.

⁸⁷ For a comprehensive timeline of achievements by and for Australian women 1788-2001, see Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God’s Police*, 547-563.

“Controversial Women”: Chamberlain, Lees and Hanson

She was described as the “outback heroine” and “beautiful, raven-haired girlfriend” of missing Hertfordshire tourist, Peter Falconio.⁸⁸ Like Lindy, her style of dress was the subject of critical comment, as one reporter duly noted at a press conference, her “light-coloured top bearing the slogan ‘Cheeky Monkey’ fail[ed] to go unnoticed by waiting journalists”.⁸⁹ Three years later, and with a suspect on trial for her boyfriend’s murder, Lees’ monochrome suiting marked a change from her earlier appearances and was catalogued in media coverage in which she was “Dressed in a white shirt and black skirt with her hair in a single ponytail”.⁹⁰ Recalling the way Lindy’s own appearance had altered by the time of her release from prison, Lees had shed a significant amount of weight and adopted a more conservative wardrobe. Her story was similar to Lindy Chamberlain’s, in that both involved outback disappearances, bodies never recovered and accusations against women who were the last to see their loved ones alive (*The Guardian*, 28 July 2001). It was because of these coincidences that *Bulletin* writer, Paul Toohey, described her experience as the “Lindyfication of Joanne Lees”.⁹¹

On the night of 14 July 2001, whilst driving in a Kombi Van along the Stuart Highway 300km north of Alice Springs, Lees and her boyfriend, Peter Falconio, were signalled by a passing motorist to pull over to the side of the road. According to testimony Lees would later give police, after steering the vehicle to the kerbside, Falconio exited the vehicle to meet with the other motorist who, in his green-canopied utility, had also turned off the highway. Within minutes, Lees heard a gunshot and was set upon by the motorist, now wielding a gun. He tied her wrists and ankles with makeshift manacles and then forced the British tourist into his vehicle. Through a space in the utility’s internal cab-tray access, Lees managed to escape and run into the bush. She lay hidden in the scrubland for eight hours while the attacker searched

⁸⁸ Richard Shears, *Bloodstain: the vanishing of Peter Falconio*, (Sydney: New Holland, 2005), 27.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 66.

⁹⁰ Anne Barker, *PM Program*, ABC Radio National, 18 May 2004.

⁹¹ Toohey was one of four authors, including *Daily Mail* correspondent and Chamberlain writer, Richard Shears, journalist and columnist Sue Williams and crime writer Robin Bowles, who observed the similarities between Lindy and Joanne in their relationships with the press. For some of them, linking the experiences of these two women acknowledged the all-too common practice of media predation on victims of crime, particularly when their circumstances involve mysterious outcomes. For others, it merely proved how women continue to flout their moral and legal obligations to society and to their “victims”.

vainly in the darkness for her, the only living witness. It was alleged that after searches for Lees failed, the attacker then removed Falconio's body and fled the scene. Only a bloodstain by the side of the road is a testament to the tragedy which befell the vacationing couple.

As with the dingo abduction, it was only a matter of weeks before questions were raised about the story of Lees' escape and her boyfriend's probable death. In fact, during the committal hearing of 45 year-old Bradley John Murdoch, who was being held as a suspect over Falconio's disappearance, revelations emerged that tested Lees' credibility as a witness. Murdoch's defence Counsel, Grant Algie QC, submitted evidence to the court concerning the use by the British couple of marijuana on the night of the abduction, and Lees' affair with Sydney resident, Nick Reilly, during her stay. In the Northern Territory, news of her infidelity and drug use occupied the bulk of headlines, omitting details about either the suspect at the centre of police investigations or the Crown's case against him. Instead, one headline read: "We Smoked Dope Before Killing" with the byline, "Joanne Tells Court".⁹² Commenting on the headline and the accompanying photograph of Lees entering court, BBC television correspondent, Mike Peschardt, proffered an explanation for the media's fascination with her:

To be honest, the entire interest really, from our point of view, is Joanne Lees, her evidence, her testimony, what she says, what she says under cross-examination, how she looks, how she behaves. And this is one of the bizarre side-effects of this case, is [sic] although this is all about the murder of Peter Falconio, the truth of the matter is there's enormous interest in Joanne Lees herself as a person.⁹³

In his view, media interest in Lees' story had a lot to do with her appearance. At the Darwin courthouse where Murdoch was being tried (coincidentally the same court where Lindy appeared two decades earlier), one journalist remarked how Lees was dressed in "the same outfit" she wore the last time she gave evidence at court. No

⁹² Mike Peschardt with Mick O'Regan, "Media Access and Victim's Rights", *The Media Report, ABC Radio National*, 27 May 2004.

⁹³ *ibid.*

mention was made anywhere of the clothing worn by either the man on trial for Falconio's murder, Bradley John Murdoch, his Defence Counsel, Grant Algie, or the Prosecutor, Rex Wild QC.⁹⁴ In the same way members of the community judged Lindy according to her dress and behaviour, images of Lees filtered through newspapers and television screens also impacted upon her wider public perception. Analysing the media's tendency to sexualise images of "controversial women" in her article "Why do the media judge Joanne Lees?" associate editor of *The Age* newspaper, Pamela Bone, argues that, "any woman at the centre of any mystery or controversy, unless she is obviously old, fat or ugly, is given an element of dangerous sexual seduction".⁹⁵ That type of sexual seduction appeared to be encoded in descriptions of Lees' "dazzling looks" and "head-turning appearance" and the observations of one journalist, who was surprised to find her more attractive in person than in press photographs:

She is even prettier, in the flesh, than in all those snatched photographs. She gleams with lustrous good health: great teeth, a shiny swing of fashionably jagged long black hair and a radiant bright-blue gaze. She has a lovely figure and is wearing a wraparound dress that shows off all her curves and a hint of décolletage.⁹⁶

But these were not the machinations of a patriarchal media or the idle musings of a male journalist courting a sexual response from his reader, they were those of a female British journalist, Ginny Dougary, a self-proclaimed "mother" who felt "a surge of maternal empathy" for her interviewee.⁹⁷ The reason for her empathy was the way Lees appeared "terribly alone and unprotected like a motherless child", confirmation for Dougary that she was "by no means a media aficionado". Media descriptions of Joanne Lees' physical appearance (as with those of Lindy) were not produced by male journalists alone, implying that not all female journalists were feminists and not all male newswriters misogynist. Even though there were limitations on the amount of control exercised by Lees in media reporting of her, she eluded journalists looking for a scoop, on one occasion at the Bojangles restaurant in

⁹⁴ Pamela Bone, "Why do the media judge Joanne Lees", *The Age*, 29 May 2004.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Ginny Dougary, "Brave Heart", *Sunday Magazine: Sunday Telegraph*, 1 October 2006, 17.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

Alice Springs, with her escort, Helen Jones, by slipping past the press contingent even before her presence was registered. On other occasions, Lees would read her own publicity so as to anticipate the reaction her public appearances might attract: “Joanne was monitoring the media to death, reading everything that had been written about her”.⁹⁸ Perhaps this eventually led her to break her silence on Falconio’s disappearance to the regional, low circulation newspaper, *Centralian Advocate*, instead of a mass market daily: “... [she] had chosen the tiny local paper as a means of delivering a slap in the face to the big British papers who’d been offering her what she considered ‘blood money’, and the aggressive Australian journalists who’d been hounding her”.⁹⁹ While her experiment did little to assuage the curiosities of international news conglomerates – in fact, it might even be said to have fed their appetite – early on in the investigation she showed an ability to manage media interest.

As well as selecting the appropriate news medium in which to publicise her story, Lees also shaped media responses to her choice of dress. Referring to the coverage surrounding Murdoch’s trial, she stated:

I was right about the media commenting on my clothes. Over the years I have become more experienced in how the media report and what their focus is. I feel that people shouldn’t be judged on their dress but the reality is they often are, especially women.¹⁰⁰

Lees had learnt her lesson, as it were, and went shopping for a “court uniform” that consisted of “plain black and navy skirts and white shirts”. Some weeks later she was pleased to discover that in his coverage of the trial for the *Bulletin* magazine, Toohey stated her dress was “two tone and lacked personality”. Recalling her reaction, Lees said: “I smiled, feeling satisfied. Even though I thought it was ridiculous that there was any comment at all about what I was wearing, I’d achieved what I’d set out to do. I had not given the media anything to ‘interpret’”.¹⁰¹ Lees was right. The media often

⁹⁸ Sue Williams, *And then the darkness: The disappearance of Peter Falconio and the trials of Joanne Lees*, (Sydney: ABC Books, 2006), 147-8.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 149.

¹⁰⁰ Joanne Lees, *No Turning Back*, (Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2006), 192.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, 192, 193.

indulges in reporting unnecessary details about women's physical appearance and, for this reason, the 1970s tendency to ascribe to the media monolithic and impenetrable views about women still persists, as does the view that women are defenceless against the media. But Lees revealed in her various exploits how her media image could be shaped, if not directly manipulated. This was apparent in her dealings with the press on the steps of the Supreme Court following Chief Justice Brian Martin's sentencing of Murdoch to twenty-eight years' gaol:

Questions were being thrown at me from all directions, but I ignored them and continued towards the car. Just as I was getting in the car I heard one cameraman shout out 'Smile, Joanne' and I did, not because I was asked, but because I felt like smiling.¹⁰²

Whether her evasion of the media or refusal to comply with its requests led to her positive publicity or not, the very fact that Lees, like Lindy Chamberlain, had staged her public appearances suggests that she was less the "victim" of a predatory media and more the "strong", "sceptical" and "guarded" individual she claimed to be.¹⁰³ Compare this to *New Idea* magazine's claim that Lindy "[will] never be a victim", since, she had stated "adamantly" that "Being a victim is a choice and you aren't a victim unless you choose to be" (*New Idea*, 27 November 2004). In Joanne Lees' defiance of the gendered stereotypes of behaviour and dress, she articulated a category of modern celebrity of which Lindy had been an example two decades earlier.

That the female body may be a site of political expression, rather than simply passive victimisation, is an argument advanced in contemporary media and cultural studies. According to John Hartley, bodies and frocks are "spatial practices" performed in what he terms the "semiosphere" of popular reality.¹⁰⁴ It is through fashion, he says, that attentions are narrowed on the "politics of the body" introducing a "new space for the body politic" and allowing women "a site from which to

¹⁰² Joanne Lees, *No Turning Back*, 309.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 308.

¹⁰⁴ John Hartley, *Popular Reality*, 185

speak”.¹⁰⁵ In a literal sense, this was confirmed in the results of DNA tests on Lees’ French Connection green tee shirt, the one she wore the night of the disappearance, which authenticated her story of an outback assailant (not unlike the infamous black dress owned by Monica Lewinski, the focus of the Starr Report, which served to vindicate the White House intern). Even though the presence of alien DNA in both cases was a stroke of luck, the significance of women’s clothes and bodies in shaping identities should not be underestimated, since “the popular aesthetic spatial practice of wearing clothes in public is also political”.¹⁰⁶

Another “controversial woman” whose self-adornment was a political strategy was Pauline Hanson. Despite her role in public life, Hanson was a media novice. She has been described as “naïve”, “inexperienced” and “uncomfortable” with the press¹⁰⁷ and an interview in which she asked a journalist to “please explain” the meaning of the term “xenophobia” has often been cited as an example of this. Unlike her political contemporaries, though, Hanson’s honest, hard working and anti-establishment image, combined with her vibrant choice of dress, contributed to her popular appeal. She was, as Julia Baird notes, the “Woman Who Defied the System” and one of the ways in which she did this was by emphasising her sexuality:

Hanson flaunts her sexual difference and in the process of fashioning her as a celebrity, journalists have come to the party, their gaze gravitating to the signs of sex on her body: the red hair, the green eyes, the painted mouth, her sexual persona signified by her class, as well as her gender.¹⁰⁸

While much comment was made of her “bright yellow jackets” and “knee-length skirts” in the media, Hanson’s sexuality was something she flaunted, perhaps as a way of winning voters and distinguishing herself from female parliamentary colleagues who tried to “downplay their sexuality”.¹⁰⁹ She remained “one of the people”, even after being convicted on a technicality under the Electoral Act and spending eleven weeks in the Brisbane Women’s prison. Aside from the experience of being popularly

¹⁰⁵ John Hartley, *Popular Reality*, 185.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Julia Baird, *Media Tarts: How the Australian press frames female politicians*, (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2004), 257.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 257, 262.

¹⁰⁹ Julia Baird, *Media Tarts*, 262-3.

judged and having a criminal conviction against them overturned, both Lindy Chamberlain and Pauline Hanson have a lot in common,¹¹⁰ in that they were both modern celebrities whose media images were, at some level, commodified: “In marketing terms, Hanson is that highly sought-after commodity: the product people buy when they want to show their disgust with buying products”.¹¹¹ While, at different times, both women have been despised by sections of the media, similarly, they have shown the capacity of public individuals to circumvent the process of commodification to suit their own ends. For instance, after her release from prison, the former politician made several appearances in a series of popular women’s magazines when, by modelling frocks and relaxing with her family, she revealed a softer, feminine side. Such images eroded connotations of a “tough” and steely personality that had been borne out of her dealings within a primarily male political arena. Even though Hanson fulfilled a stereotyped image of femininity, by using the culture of mass-market women’s magazines to her advantage, she “defied the media, and subverted the conventions by playing to them”.¹¹²

The “Rescue Plan”: Magazines and the Reclamation Process

The *AWW* interview with Lindy Chamberlain in March 1986 marked an important milestone in her reintegration into the Australian community. Of course, it didn’t change the opinions of those who believed she was guilty, but in descriptions of Lindy having now “let down her guard [in] an about-face that goes far beyond the dramatic change in her appearance”, the *AWW* gave a more intimate perspective on the events of the last six years (*AWW*, March 1986). For Adrian Howe, the interview returns Lindy “to the fold of normalcy”,¹¹³ endorsing another female stereotype by replacing “the witch” with “the mother” in a “suburban family” ideal.¹¹⁴ Now, says Howe, Lindy “shows emotion and even cries appropriately”, since, after all: “The

¹¹⁰ In terms of their similarity, One Nation co-founder David Ettridge reiterated a link previously made between his and Hanson’s experience and the Chamberlain case in comments to Radio 4BC in Brisbane that “In the same way that Lindy Chamberlain was judged by the public and the media before she ever got to court, we were” (*SMH*, 7 November 2003). In yet another similarity, Hanson’s Gold Coast lawyer argued that in the same way Lindy Chamberlain was granted bail release during the hearing of her appeal, so too should his client (*SMH*, 29 August 2003).

¹¹¹ Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha*, 234.

¹¹² For Baird, Hanson subverted the conventions partly because her supporters viewed criticism of the Mt Isa politician as a sign that the elites were out to get her. Julia Baird, *Media Tarts*, 265.

¹¹³ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 255-6.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, 256.

fault lay with her, apparently”.¹¹⁵ It could be suggested, as Howe does, that within the *AWW*'s post penal coverage of the case, Lindy's emotional response realigns her image with a more acceptable version of femininity. Yet in 1986, at a time when sections of the media devoted lengthy columns to Lindy's trim figure, enhanced wardrobe and pixie haircut, the magazine also provided details about her new attitude in the “feelings she hid behind a frozen mask”, the “turmoil” she suffered and “the feelings and emotions she has bottled up for so long” (*AWW*, March 1986). By giving emotional substance to her story, the magazine fostered a greater identification between subject and audience, a feature common in “a world where the intensity of media coverage is fuelling a public fascination with the ‘real’ people who lurk behind the images which saturate our screens and front pages”.¹¹⁶

By recording her emotions, the magazine gives Lindy the opportunity to refute claims that she exhibited a cold and unemotional demeanour during the trial, arguing her response was “... heavily orchestrated by her lawyers [in] directions to give nothing away to the cameras outside the courtroom” (*AWW*, March, 1986). Less emphatic than its print news contemporaries on the sexual potential of Lindy's image, the *AWW* appeals to its audience through pathos, constituting one of the two “interpretive repertoires” or “vehicles for the production of meaning” guiding readings of popular women's magazines.¹¹⁷ On the one hand, magazines contain “practical knowledge”, including household tips, recipes, and shopping pages; on the other, they contain “connected knowledge” or “emotional learning”, including human-interest stories to foster greater reader identification with subjects.¹¹⁸ Offering narratives of “connected knowledge”, the *AWW*'s “Lindy Chamberlain Story” showed how the format and content of women's magazines, with its stipulated conventions, might be predicted and collectively understood by readers. At one stage addressing the reader the magazine states:

Jail had been Lindy's life for long enough for her to talk of it as the average housewife might talk about an extended enforced holiday in a place she would never want to go back to (*AWW*, March, 1986).

¹¹⁵ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 256.

¹¹⁶ Catharine Lumby, “Media Culpa”, 113.

¹¹⁷ Joke Hermes, *Reading Women's Magazines: An Analysis of Everyday Media Use*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 36.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, 36.

The “average housewife” would, no doubt, identify with Lindy in comments like these, which resonate on a wider scale in the *AWW* than perhaps in a less populist news medium. Also, the magazine gives practical advice based on Lindy about how the “average housewife” might achieve similar results by following a “compromise vegetarian diet” consisting of “... egg salad and eggs and a few vegetables, and eggs, or eggs” and a strict physical regime which, for Lindy, included “jogging around the compound and doing exercises” (*AWW*, March 1986). These physical observances, the magazine argued, made her look “feminine and attractive” and, as the accompanying smiling photographs of her and husband Michael attest, she was now a better wife and mother for it. Perhaps the *AWW* reader would relate to Lindy’s desire to lose a few extra pounds after giving birth, looking more “feminine” and “attractive” as a result. Similar to the reality TV contestant, Lindy appeared in the *AWW* to be “defined for us by her ordinariness”, the format constituting for readers “a more democratic phenomenon than a celebrity based on social, economic, religious or cultural hierarchies”.¹¹⁹ In this way, Lindy could appeal to the common denominator, her everyday life spectacularised as a source of entertainment and, critically, as an example of the way other women might improve their self-image.

In conjunction with before and after images which give a pictorial representation of her changing appearance, the magazine also contains practical tips advertising to readers how they, too, can renovate their image. Lindy’s “dour, some say sour, and expressionless features” at the trial, were contrasted with the emergence of “a stranger: tiny, bird-like, sharp-featured, with a modified punk brushed-back hair style, trim waist, shapely legs with fashionable black and gold sandals, and a beaming smile”(AWW, March, 1986). In an early example of the celebrity beauty pages in mass-market women’s magazines of the late 1990s, details of Lindy’s prison diet gave readers the possibility of their own self-improvement.¹²⁰ Appealing to a largely female demographic through conventions established in women’s periodicals, the *AWW* challenges the view articulated by Senator Bob Collins that: “the greatest obstacle in changing public perceptions about Lindy was the women of Australia”.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity*, 85.

¹²⁰ Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha*, 109.

¹²¹ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 8.

Instead, it directly addresses the experiences of women in Australia, with the magazine calling upon them to connect with Lindy's raw and emotional story.

The decision of *AWW* to market Lindy to readers in a way that teased out their common values, ie their experiences as mothers and housewives, was a formula successful across a range of women's periodicals, seen today in articles on Pauline Hanson, Schapelle Corby and Joanne Lees. A contemporary example is found in the *Woman's Day (WD)* cover story, "My prison hell", where revelations about Pauline Hanson's "72 lonely days behind bars", "bleak despair" and reunion with family and friends, prove yet again how the content of women's magazines fulfils an emotional quotient (*WD*, 24 November 2003). The interpretative repertoire is contained in details about her daily acts of humiliation, attempt at starvation and friendship with hardened criminals, following the same structure as that of the *AWW* interview with Lindy two and a half decades earlier.

Indeed, the human face of wrongful persecution is reconstructed in Hanson, as it is in Joanne Lees, whose own outback circumstance, we are told by *New Idea (NI)*, has "Echoes of Azaria" (*NI*, 29 June 2002). Strengthening the link between the latter two cases, the article begins: "A cry in the dark, a woman under suspicion and a loved one dead in the desert" (*NI*, 29 June 2002). Immediately there is a complementarity between the "outback attacks", which is substantiated in Lindy's offer of advice to Joanne: "People who love her and care for her are going to take her for what she is" (*NI*, 29 June 2002). And again, considering her reticence to speak with the media, Lindy remarks: "Joanne did the right thing. I wish I'd had that advice ... I say good on her" (*NI*, 29 June 2002). In these examples, Lindy is positioned as the spokesperson for women's persecution and, like *Herald* journalist Malcolm Brown, is the figure to whom other journalists now defer, suggesting in particular, her sense of control over mediated productions of self and generally, her evolution as a media elder stateswoman.

Lindy's status as a celebrity commentator was also confirmed in *NI*'s coverage of the Schapelle Corby case. In "Lindy's rescue plan for Schapelle: My heart bleeds for you", the magazine recalls "harrowing images of media scrums and the outpouring of emotion" that typified Australians' response to Lindy Chamberlain's "ordeal" now

surrounding another woman similarly accused of a crime she did not commit (*NI*, 11 June 2005). The magazine's article on Corby, the basis of which is an interview with Lindy held "exclusively for *New Idea*", shows a similarly accused woman speculating on "the agony Schapelle will be enduring and offers her advice to Schapelle, shares her fears for Schapelle's safety and tells us how we can help get Schapelle home" (*NI*, 11 June 2005). The same conventional format of before and after images is used, only this time comparing photographs of Lindy's "courtroom drama" in 1981 with Schapelle's media scrum in Bali after the verdict was announced. In a subsequent photo, comparisons were made between supporters "standing in protest" in 1984, with those protesting the Corby verdict at Canberra's Indonesian embassy on 27 May 2005. In what can be seen as a formal recognition of the precedent set by Lindy Chamberlain in carving out her status as a modern celebrity and "controversial woman", there is an implicit understanding between the magazine and its reader that the same "frenzied scenes" of which Lindy found herself the focus, are being revisited twenty-five years later in the case of Schapelle Corby.

For the magazine, Lindy is the benchmark of injustice, one of the few who can "really understand the crippling emotion and overwhelming feeling of injustice Schapelle must deal with", and whose "letter to Schapelle" occupies the entire contents of the article. Not only does the story about Schapelle indicate (albeit belatedly) a change in the media's view of Lindy, now positioned as a figure of authority, but also the importance of intimacy and personality-inflected news coverage in fostering reader-identification and public sympathy. This type of reporting contrasted with a special feature aired on the Nine Network just a week after the *NI* story. In *Schapelle's Nightmare: The Untold Story*, Mike Munro put Corby "on trial" for drug trafficking with a live studio audience hearing the evidence for and against her conviction and judging its credibility using a statistical "worm".¹²²

While media responses to "controversial women" suggest the commodification of their images within climates of national obsession, women's magazines offer another perspective on the celebrity body as a vehicle for, and site of, self-improvement and identification. Women's magazines, more than any other print

¹²² Mike Munro, "Schapelle's Nightmare: The Untold Story", *Nine Network*, 18 May 2005.

medium, actively encouraged Lindy's social reintegration and, later, her authenticity as a storyteller for others suffering a similar fate. Thus, their role in promoting ordinary individuals to celebrity status should not be overlooked, nor should the diversity of views they represent within the new media age. For Pauline Hanson, Joanne Lees and Schapelle Corby, women's periodicals were an avenue for countering official discourses of deviance and, as the Chamberlain case highlighted, in their shifting content, signalled the expansion of the public sphere and the re-writing of existing bodies of knowledge in alternate representational frameworks.

A "Womb with a View": The Textual Body

Even at the start of the Chamberlain investigation, a range of bodies was commodified. Aside from Lindy, sexed identities proliferated among female court attendants, one of whom inspired Malcolm Brown to comment: "It seems odd that ... a female court orderly who may be professional and efficient could wear a dress split most of the way up her thighs" (*Sun-Herald*, 19 September 1982). The depth and range of scientific evidence on the case was also frequently referred to as a "body", the result of unending speculation about the cause of Azaria's death either by dingo, mother or human intervention. In this context, observations made by Chamberlain Defence Counsel, John Winneke, included at the outset of this chapter, appear relevant because the case and its primary suspect so often resembled a chameleon – an evolving media subject (*Time*, 15 June 1987). So, too, did they resemble a highly changeable text. John Hartley has said that the media play an important role in "writing the truths of our time on the bodies of those [who are] image-saturated".¹²³ Applying this to the Chamberlain case illustrates the way Lindy's body became a text, one to which the media, and now critics turn, to resolve the case's increasingly complex legal, forensic, cultural and moral aspects. While she had little control over the writings produced by journalists, Lindy gave women an example of how they might use the media as an ally and for self-promotion, as demonstrated in her many self-managed public appearances, the employment of public relations agent, Harry M. Miller, and the publication of her autobiography, *Through My Eyes* (1990).

¹²³ John Hartley, *Popular Reality*, 156.

The idea that the case represented a commodified text was apparent as early as 1981 when, during the first inquest, the *SMH* reported that: “Bids [were] in for Azaria story” and that amidst “rumours of big cheques being signed at Alice Springs, Brisbane and Sydney, the frontrunner was thought to be the *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney” (*SMH*, 21 February 1981). A highly sought-after narrative, the Chamberlain story was such that at the Supreme Court trial “journalists and members of the public scrambled to get inside for the verdict after the six-hour wait [as] scores of people were locked outside” (*DT*, 30 October 1982). Then, of course, the narrative was the subject of an “Azaria Industry” with tea towels, the “Dingo is Innocent” tee shirts and badges sold outside the Darwin courthouse and books, lines of clothing and other related merchandise readily available (*The Age*, 3 February 1982).¹²⁴ Once the trial verdict was announced, the competition among Chamberlain authors to achieve first release of their manuscripts was heralded as the “Sprint into Print” (*Sun-Herald*, 31 October 1982). Other commercial ventures included “A three-part television series and at least four books” (*Advertiser*, 2 November 1982). Marketing of the Chamberlain narrative was not confined to the media, as one support group in Victoria – albeit for a different purpose – advertised car bumper stickers for 50 cents each, printed with the words “Support Justice, Support Lindy”, while the *Azaria Newsletter* sold tee shirts for \$7.00 printed with the slogan “I believe the Eye-Witnesses”.¹²⁵ According to one journalist writing for the *National Times*, it is little wonder this industry developed, given the media’s gross investment in the story was conservatively estimated at \$1 million (*National Times*, 23-29 March 1984). The case’s evident commodification in the sale of souvenirs and mementoes was even something Michael Chamberlain described in his autobiography:

In quick time, people started to talk about the ‘Azaria Industry’ which was a huge worry for us because then came a commercial roundabout with people getting on and off – T-shirt manufacturers, badge-makers, but particularly the press. ‘Oh-oh, the Chamberlain case has just pushed Diana’s visit to Australia off the front-page ...’. There was that sort of ‘public impact measurement’.

¹²⁴ See Bryson for a description of the “Dingo is Innocent” tee shirts. John Bryson, *Evil Angels*, 351.

¹²⁵ *The Azaria Newsletter*, (Cooranbong, New South Wales: Chamberlain Information Service) 1 August 1985 and 31 October 1985.

Now that's pretty macabre stuff when you're dealing with the loss of someone's daughter!¹²⁶

As the extract above implies, *R v Chamberlain* resembled more a textual body than a criminal case, whose existence was sustained in the media through the growth of an entire commercial industry around Azaria's disappearance. On both sides, items were bought and sold, capitalising on a circumstance that was readily exploitable.

Twenty-four years after Azaria's disappearance, a similar commercial enterprise surrounded yet another Australian woman, Schapelle Corby. During her overseas trial for drug importation, many Australians proclaimed their support for the 27 year-old, including Gold Coast millionaire businessman, Ron Bakir, who funded Corby's defence. Described in news reports as the "white knight" or "mad Ron" – a direct reference to Bakir's main business competitor, "Crazy John's" – Bakir became the first to register the name "Schapelle Corby" with the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC). According to Schapelle's mother, Rosleigh Rose, Bakir and Corby's Gold Coast lawyer, Robin Tampoe, stood to profit from her daughter's case:

They were always pestering Schapelle into writing a book... We said, 'No we just want Schapelle home'. They were trying to sign us up for everything. This is Tampoe and Bakir. They'd be ringing. Tampoe said, 'We have to get a book out, then it will go into a movie'. I said, 'I just want my daughter home'. He said, 'I've already been to publishers saying, how much?'. It was terrible. I'd just hang up on him (*The Bulletin*, 31 January 2006).

Since then, others have capitalised on the name with the "Free Schapelle" label appearing on various merchandise including tee shirts, caps and stubbie coolers, G-strings and dog coats (Figure 3.4). At the time of writing, these items have been made available on the internet via a US website, with the proceeds from each sale used to fund Corby's appeal. In addition to the "Free Schapelle" label, a Melbourne man released a CD single called "Song for Schapelle", while another has applied to

¹²⁶ Michael Chamberlain and Lowell Tarling, *Beyond Azaria*, 191.

Figure 3.4



Examples of Schapelle Corby merchandise available to purchase via the websites of her many support groups (Courtesy of Steve Pennells).

<http://www.usp.com.au/fpss/img-news2/schapelle105b.jpg>

register Corby's name as a luggage brand under the moniker, "The Corby Case". So intense is the competition over her name, that the Queensland Department of Fair Trading and the Australian Taxation Office are in the process of regulating the newly established industry. In the view of Perth-based QC, Mark Trowell: "...[Corby's] really been a piece of merchandise that everyone wanted to take apart and have for themselves".¹²⁷ The Corby product was bought and sold in descriptions of her "quite beautiful" appearance and "girl from the Gold Coast" charm (*The Bulletin*, 7 June 2005). Images of Corby were circulated across the Timor Sea in the *Jakarta Post* and in a stable of imported Australian newspapers such as the *West Australian*, Sydney *DT* and Hobart *Mercury*. On the streets of Bali, the *Adelaide Advertiser* was even being sold for "six-times-the-cover-price" and marketed to the "Schapellites [who] were in town – a white-skinned juggernaut of media, diplomats, lawyers, advisers, family, camp followers and rubbernecks – ... all primed for plundering, as Bali does particularly skilfully of foreign visitors" (*The Bulletin*, 7 June 2005).

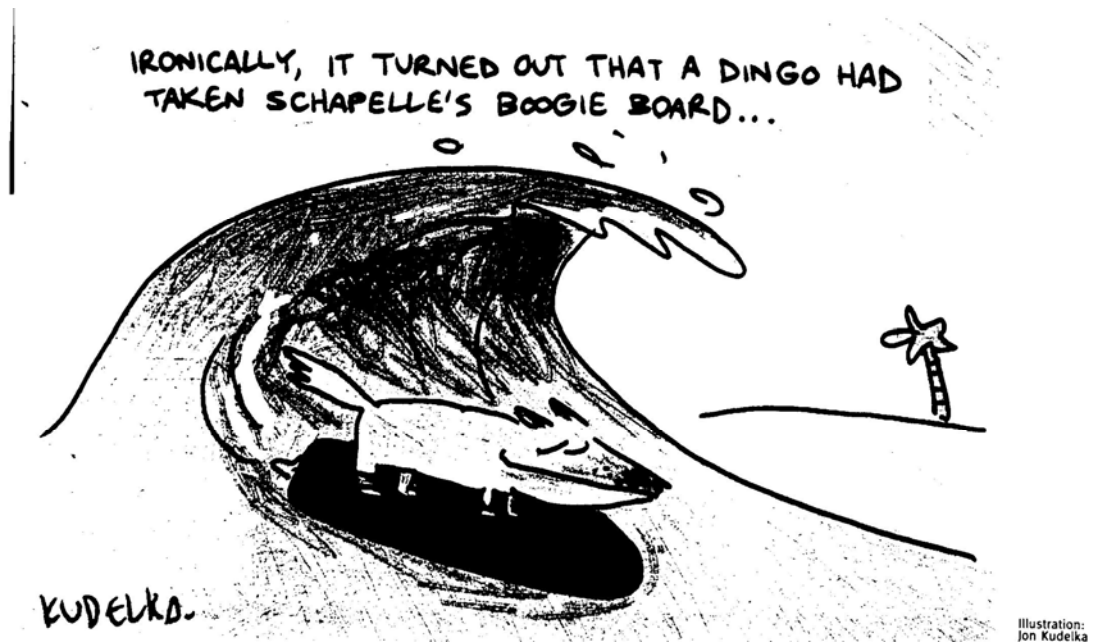
While some have argued the connection between Lindy and Schapelle is overstated,¹²⁸ there is a strong argument to be made for their resemblance, especially in a cartoon published by Jon Kudelka in the *Weekend Australian*, which depicts a dingo riding a surfboard with the caption: "Ironically, it turned out that a dingo had taken Schapelle's boogie board" (Figure 3.5). As well as alluding to Lin Onus' print "Michael and I are just slipping down to the pub for a minute", the cartoon reflects altered media perspectives on Corby's innocence. So too does the cartoon's accompanying article, "Depths and the Maiden" by Imre Salusinszky, revealing the cultural "truth" that, Hartley argues, is contained in the bodies of those caught in the national spotlight. The article describes Schapelle, in those words often used to portray Lindy while incarcerated, as an "attractive, young Australian woman", possessing a "face [that] now looks despairingly from behind bars".¹²⁹ Theirs were

¹²⁷ Mark Trowell, "Corby sacks Indonesian lawyers", *AM Program*, ABC Radio National, <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2005/s1400413.html>

¹²⁸ Howe argued that the Corby case has neither the longevity, nor the cultural pull of the Chamberlain saga. Adrian Howe, *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 3. These comments were also articulated in her response to Paul Wilson's speech "High Profile Female Criminal Trials: Theatre or Justice?" at "Lindy Chamberlain: Nation, Law, Memory, A Chamberlain Case Symposium", 14 August 2005.

¹²⁹ Imre Salusinszky, "Depths and the Maiden", *Weekend Australian*, 18-19 June 2005, 40; a similar description of Corby also appears in *SMH*, 27 May 2005. The final reference is drawn from *SMH*, 17 June 2005.

Figure 3.5



Cartoonist, Kudeka citing the similarities between the Corby and Chamberlain cases for the *Weekend-Australian*, 18-19 June 2005.

bodies of knowledge continually re-written by the media to accommodate emerging facts, scientific discoveries, court verdicts and changing physical appearances.

They were not, however, the hapless victims of an oppressive or patriarchal media; Chamberlain, Lees, Corby, and Hanson showed, in various subtle and overt ways, a capacity to manipulate media images in modern celebrity culture. As John Bryson observes: “Mrs Chamberlain was an extremely pretty young woman and that made for good TV pictures, but she kept the performance of emotion to a minimum. I think Miss Corby has perhaps been advised that it’s not a bad thing to be emotional” (*SMH*, 27 May 2005). Evidently, Australians have learnt a lot from the Chamberlain saga, and it is for this reason that I use the term “womb with a view” to describe, using anatomical language, both the commodification of women’s bodies and the potential for the politicisation of their voices in a modern and diversified, public sphere.¹³⁰

Conclusion

Primarily concerned with the commodification of bodies and individual experiences through the production of the image, I have shown how news outlets across Australia bought and sold the Chamberlain “legacy” (*The Australian*, 11-12 August 1990) and “never-ending story” in the hope of capitalising on a case and a woman who had touched the “Australian psyche” (*Time*, 15 June 1987). Lindy’s celebrity status was consistently verified in the language of television, newspaper and magazine print and in the copious descriptions of her appearance contained therein. Since 1980, her encounters with the Australian press have served to articulate the experiences of other “controversial women”, not just because Lindy was an object of commodification, but because she fashioned her own form of resistance, in part, assisted by the media, especially women’s magazines. However fleetingly or considerately, she showed a capacity to resist, shape, alter and contest images of herself at a time in Australia when the cultural implications of celebrity were changing: newspapers transformed into mass circulation commodities, media technologies proliferated, the public sphere expanded into the domestic realm and a

¹³⁰ The term “womb with a view” is borrowed from a chapter title in Tara Brabazon, *Ladies Who Lunge*.

system of public relations developed to meet with the challenges brought about by an intense exposure of celebrity bodies. Read in relation to these changes, the Chamberlain case marks, therefore, a turning point in modern consumer culture and typifies the experience of more contemporary women, whose literal and figurative textual “bodies” have been caught in the media’s glare, including Schapelle Corby, Joanne Lees and Pauline Hanson.

It is problematic to consider Lindy, as much earlier feminist commentary on the case has done, as merely a minor player in her own corporeal representations. In an age of image saturation, at certain times she showed that women could re-write the episteme of knowledge about their bodies by modifying aspects of their dress, behaviour and public performance, and by selecting the most appropriate medium to publicise and market their story. Can we safely say that Lindy Chamberlain was a “victim”? Yes, certainly of the legal system, perhaps of a nation’s prejudice, but not necessarily of a “patriarchal” or homogenous media. More likely, she was positioned at the centre of a range of competing professional discourses, each employing her image to explain, justify, comprehend and order the chaos of representations generated by Azaria’s disappearance and its aftermath. This, and the mythologisation of the Chamberlain case within a process of nation building in twentieth century Australia will concern the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: MYTHOLOGISATION 1986-1988

Australia was uneasy. The mysticism of Ayers Rock, long recognised by Aboriginal people, was only slowly starting to filter through to other Australians. Somehow, especially to urban people, this symbol of the continent's fundamentals seemed related to Azaria's disappearance ... Ayers Rock and the dingo, had to join thongs, barbecues, the Sydney Opera House and Vegemite as national icons

(*Advertiser*, 16 September 1988).

Between 1986 and 1988 in media reports as well as in academic, cultural and filmic discourses, questions about the Chamberlain legacy intensified as a nation considered the emotional fall-out from “the most famous, complex and strange criminal case in Australia” (*Advertiser*, 16 September 1988). Lindy’s unexpected release from Darwin prison in February 1986 and her official exoneration with husband Michael for their daughter’s murder in September 1988 coincided with the inclusion of an Azaria collection at the National Museum of Australia in 1988, the international release of the first feature-length film about the infant’s disappearance, *Evil Angels* (1988), as well as debates surrounding the 1985 handover to Aboriginal custodians of “Ayers Rock” and the 1988 Bicentenary. Each event raised important questions about nation, sovereignty and identity as non-Indigenous Australians negotiated the darker and more shameful aspects of their cultural history through a series of traumatic incidents. The Chamberlain case, magnified by its historical relation to larger events, occurred at a tipping point in the renegotiation of Australian national identity as symbolic characters of earlier media coverage – the dingo, “the Rock”, the victim, the mother and religion – emerged in the mid to late 1980s as mythical objects.

News reports about the Chamberlains in the latter part of the decade differed from those published in previous years mostly because alongside debates about the likelihood of the couple’s innocence and the case’s prolonged publicity (which had dominated media coverage up to this point), further questions were raised about Australia’s international reputation, Michael and Lindy’s regard for the nation and its people and the sanctity of the legal system in the face of investigative, forensic and judicial error. Of course, the lasting effect of the Chamberlain saga had been a topic

of national conversation before 1986, as Malcolm Brown observed in 1982: “It is rather difficult for anyone who has been with the Chamberlain case from the start to imagine a post-Azaria world – without the mystery, the Rock, the church, the dingoes”.¹ He pointed out, within two weeks of the commencement of the Chamberlain trial in Darwin, the impossibility of imagining a world untouched by the Azaria case and its cast of characters. Brown’s comments also serve as a reminder that the five chronological phases outlined in this thesis are permeable and frame the intensification, rather than the literal origin, of the ideological events they depict. It follows that the myths surrounding the Chamberlain case did not originate in 1986 or cease to exist in 1988, but evolved through ever-changing patterns of repetition, renewal and reinvigoration.

National discourse converging in the Chamberlain case in the late 1980s is examined and compared with that surrounding the attempted abduction of British tourist Joanne Lees. Popular responses to the deprivation of Lees’ liberty and the disappearance of her boyfriend Peter Falconio, illustrate how the kinds of debates erupting in 2001 repeated patterns that were earlier established in media coverage of the Azaria Chamberlain “mystery”. The return of mythologies in the Lees/Falconio case shows the evolution of modern media events and the status of the Chamberlain case as a benchmark in Australian cultural history.

Media Discourse: Chamberlains, “Ayers Rock” and the Bicentenary

The discovery of Azaria’s matinee jacket on 2 February 1986 was an occasion to consider the structuring effects of the Chamberlain case as a landmark event in Australia’s late modern history. For the Adelaide *Advertiser*, the garment was the “key to the case which has always been regarded as a classic ‘who-dunit’ [sic] – a murder trial without a body” and its location was described by many of the nation’s newspapers as being at “the Rock”, “the base of Ayers Rock”, “near Ayers Rock” or simply at “the site” with no further explanation needed (*Advertiser*, 2-7 February 1986, *DT*, 7 February 1986 and *CM*, 2-7 February 1986). Forensic examination of a “small area of scrub” at the base of “the Rock” where police unearthed the garment

¹ Malcolm Brown, “Azaria casts a long shadow”, *Sun-Herald*, 26 September 1982, 42.

was described in one newspaper article, in sentiments expressing the hostile and foreign surrounds, as having been postponed because of “extreme heat” and treacherous conditions:

The maximum air temperature in the shade was 41C here yesterday. The red earth baked. The heat penetrated relentlessly through the coolest, and the sturdiest, footwear. Tar in the asphalt road which circles the Rock melted. And the heat radiating from the spectacular monolith was remarkable. As one approached the restricted area, 33 metres from the Rock, the temperature increased noticeably. An immediate reaction was to turn around and walk back towards the sticky road (*Advertiser*, 7 February 1986).

High temperatures hampered the search for trace material at “Ayers Rock” and, in the frustrated attempts by forensic examiners to press on with the investigation despite the “extreme heat”, there was a sense that the site was repelling unwanted guests who, faced with the “unsatisfactory” prospect of a night dig, were wielding “brooms, sieves and lots of patience” (*Advertiser*, 7 February 1986). The majesty and imposing presence of “Ayers Rock” permeated media coverage of the finding of Azaria’s matinee jacket as did the confusion and reluctance among settler Australians to duly acknowledge or settle the name of the area, which was frequently referred to by its former name even after the transfer of title of the Uluru National Park on 26 October 1985. Media coverage of the discovery by police of the matinee jacket at “Ayers Rock” and the legal implications this had for Lindy’s bid for freedom – she was released from prison on licence within five days of the find – again drew attention to a monument that had been the subject of debate only months before.

In an article for *SMH*, Tony Horwitz alluded to this connection in his discussion of the “commercialisation of Uluru” and the worrying shift which had lately seen “Ayers Rock” attract attention from self-interested groups seeking to package the landmark as a commodity. He described a recent proposal put to the Uluru Board for the Northern Territory landmark to stage: “... a precision dwarf-hurling contest from the top of Ayers Rock. The target? A matinee jacket pinned to the ground at the base of The Rock” (*SMH*, 19 April 1986). Although the proposal was part of a “satirical revue” aimed at the Northern Territory Government, it was

typical of the “twisted” requests received from members of the public keen to “cash in on The Rock”:

One film crew wanted to cash in by crashing an aeroplane into the Olgas. Another asked to roll boulders down The Rock as part of a spaghetti western. And the painter Pro Hart once proposed paint-bombing The Rock from the air with water-soluble colours ... Other ideas are less ambitious but equally bizarre. Say, setting the world record for a karate kick atop The Rock. Or crushing a piece of the megalith, and selling chips inside plastic cases marked ‘This is a piece of The Rock’. The entrepreneur in this case even offered the traditional owners \$2 for each chip he sold (*SMH*, 19 April 1986).

Debates about the ownership and appropriate use of “the Rock” as indicated in this article were contemporaneous with national conversations surrounding Azaria’s disappearance. Even though the case was not the subject of Horwitz’s article – only implied in references to Azaria’s matinee jacket – ideas about how the land should be named, managed and distributed both before and after the Federal Government’s recognition of traditional Aboriginal ownership collided with discussions of an event that occurred in the shadow of “the Rock”. Myths associated with the Azaria saga paralleled those constructed around the ceremonial handover of the site and, as indicated later in this chapter, in the 1988 Bicentenary.

According to Claude Levi-Strauss, myths possess a “double structure” in their relation to time. By this he means that they are “altogether historical and ahistorical” existing both inside and outside history.² This theory has relevance for the Azaria event, which in its mythologisation revealed a struggle to overcome the contradictions of the past and present. In fact, these contradictions were played out in the moment of Azaria’s disappearance, when every conceivable relation was founded. By this I mean that, added to the original event (if there ever was one, since, as I have sought to demonstrate throughout this thesis, the lines separating an event from its reproduction are often indiscernible) was a potentially endless array of culturally contingent myths, meanings and interpretations surrounding questions of origin, legitimacy and identity.

² Claude Levi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth”, in *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 209-10.

Resurrected from the past, these myths pointed to the unique circumstances surrounding Azaria's disappearance as a founding event in modern memory.

A note on usage: if at times in this chapter and for that matter in the thesis overall, I seem to struggle in naming the site, it is mostly because Uluru does not convey, in the same way as "Ayers Rock", the controversial and colourful debates which served as a background to the Chamberlain case and were sparked by the handover of "the Rock" to its traditional owners. Similar terminological problems are encountered in both media texts and in readings of the Chamberlain literature after October 1985. For instance, on the day of the handover ceremony the *SMH* headlined: "Settlement day at The Rock" describing, in language that conveyed the denial and failure to fully recognise and compensate Aboriginal people for the injustices of the past, a white desire to "settle" the land rights dispute (*SMH*, 26 October 1985). The *Advertiser* described the event as being held in "the desert" and listed the afternoon activities of visiting Federal ministers, who were accompanied by their wives and the traditional owners of "the Rock" on "a bush-tucker hunt [which included] munching barbecued witchety grubs" (*Advertiser*, 26 October 1985). As well as avoiding the traditional name of the site, the article represented the ministerial encounter with Aboriginal elders as a tourist expedition rather than an historic occasion marking a significant milestone in the history of the Aboriginal struggle for land rights. For the *CM*, the day was observed in the transfer of title of an "age-old Rock" which seemed to underrate its significance for Aboriginal people, while in an editorial in the *SMH*, journalist John Stone represented a cross-section of the population that opposed the Government decree handing "Ayers Rock" to one group of Australians "at the expense of fellow citizens" (*SMH*, 18 December 1985).

Similar problems concerning the renaming of the area were also apparent in academic discourse. In May 1987, Jennifer Craik described Azaria's disappearance from "a campsite near Ayers Rock",³ while Susan Anthony in an article for *Ms. Magazine* in December 1988, situated the event at "Ayers Rock, a national monument, in central Australia".⁴ This was also the case for Julie Marcus who, despite being the first to contextualise the event within a white Australian settler

³ Jennifer Craik, "The Azaria Chamberlain Case and Questions of Infanticide", 124.

⁴ Susan Anthony, "Unlucky Lindy", *Ms.*, 17, no.6., (Arlington: December 1988): 73.

framework and to discuss, in any great detail, aspects of nationalistic discourse in the 1980s, foregoes an analysis of the colonial implications of the event in favour of a feminist outline. In “Prisoner of Discourse: The dingo, the dog and the baby” (1989), she uses the terms “Ayers Rock” and “the Rock” interchangeably with no mention of the handover ceremony which occurred there four years earlier.⁵ Only on two occasions does she refer to Uluru to emphasise the “other”, that is, the mystical, the supernatural, the unfamiliar, the interior and the hidden, in references to the “evil [dingo] spirit” believed to have lurked there and those “Aquarian pilgrims [who visited] the ancient sacred site”.

Marcus’ analysis of Aboriginal creationist stories of Dingo Dreaming also relies on settler perspectives, with extracts from the written accounts of the first park rangers Charles P. Mountford and W.H. (Bill) Harney – who she describes as “two successful transmitters of Aboriginal tales about Ayers Rock” – quoted in her essay.⁶ Similar to Marcus in her naming of the site, Briar Wood in “The trials of motherhood: The case of Azaria and Lindy Chamberlain” (1993) refers to a place called “Uluru, also known as Ayers Rock” which acknowledges a change of name and ownership not upheld in the remainder of the essay as, inexplicably, Wood places equal emphasis on both its traditional and non-traditional names.⁷ Problems encountered in the Chamberlain literature over the renaming of the site illustrate the way Azaria’s disappearance was bound up with debates over “Ayers Rock”.

Today the continued use of “Ayers Rock” highlights a wider reluctance to acknowledge transfer of the site to its traditional landowners. In my own visit to the Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park in August 2005, arranged to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of Azaria Chamberlain’s disappearance, I found non-Indigenous tourist operators using the site’s former name alongside its traditional appellation. This was again confirmed for me in a series of television advertisements aired on the commercial networks between 14 and 15 March 2007 for the travel agency Flight Centre, promoting holiday packages to “Ayers Rock” with no mention of Uluru. Difficulties for non-Indigenous Australians in settling the name of the site bear out the

⁵ Julie Marcus, “The Dingo, the Dog and the Baby”, 201, 203

⁶ *ibid.*, 212, 211.

⁷ Briar Wood, “The trials of motherhood: The case of Azaria and Lindy Chamberlain” in *Moving Targets: Women, Murder and Representation*, ed. Helen Birch, (London: Virago Press, 1993), 62.

ideological contradictions about belonging expressed in their responses to the central Australian desert, a critical factor in the mythologisation of the Chamberlain case. As stated in my introduction, I have chosen to use inverted commas around “Ayers Rock” to indicate the contestability of the term, while still retaining the former name as a symbol of the debates surrounding the dingo baby story which pre-dated the transfer of ownership of the site.

The September 1988 editorial published by the *Advertiser* following the quashing of the Chamberlain convictions quoted at the beginning of this chapter, examines the “uneasy” response of white Australians to “Ayers Rock”. It suggested that the recent appropriation of the landmark in Australian settler mythology and its symbolisation of the “continent’s fundamentals” – the interior, the heart, the centre of existence – in this writer’s view “seemed related to Azaria’s disappearance” (*Advertiser*, 16 September 1988). Even though the writer failed to acknowledge debates surrounding the handover of “Ayers Rock”, the link between the event and its outback location was strengthened because of the controversies plaguing the site and beliefs about the “mystical” quality it held for “all of us, not just the Aborigines”, as Ian Cameron, leader of the National Party in Queensland (Qld) told Federal Parliament (*SMH*, 21 May 1985). To this end, the case articulated aspects of settler-colonial culture which are implicated in, and haunted by, their role in the dispossession of Aboriginal people. The event, as was increasingly apparent between 1986 and 1988, articulated non-Indigenous relations to the continent and hegemonic notions of Australian identity, as lingering debate about the handover of “Ayers Rock” and the contested vision of a progressive multicultural nation projected in the 1988 Bicentenary, shaped media representations of the Azaria story.

Discussion about the symbolic place “the Rock” held in the national consciousness occupied reports on the handover of the monument to its traditional owners:

Yet it is only in relatively recent times that this haunting presence in the heart of our continent has begun to occupy a unique place in the national consciousness of white Australians. Less than 50 years ago the few who wanted to see it were being cautioned that the only safe way to get there was by camel. Nowadays, of course, tourists fly in by the plane load. But we are

latecomers on the scene. Today, in a ceremony charged with symbolism, the Federal Government will hand over the ownership of Ayers Rock to the Aboriginal people, whose ancestors may have held it sacred thousands of years before the rise of Babylon or Carthage (*Advertiser*, 26 October 1985).

Although settler Australians had only recently bestowed the area with cultural significance, the handover of “Ayers Rock” did not fail to attract the reproach of critics such as Paul Everingham, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory during the Chamberlain case and then Opposition spokesman on the territory’s affairs, who was paraphrased in an article saying: “Ayers Rock did not belong to the Labor Government to give away – it belonged as much to all Australians as did the Blue Mountains, the Great Barrier Reef and Sydney Harbour ... Non-Aboriginal Australians were being treated only as tourists” (*SMH*, 21 May 1985). The term “tourist” applied, as it did to Michael and Lindy on 17 August 1980, to non-Indigenous Australians seemingly “out-of-place” and alienated from their outback surrounds – a confronting and unsettling notion since, as the *CM* opined in relation to comments made at the ceremony by the Governor-General Sir Ninian Stephen: “ ... the traditional Aboriginal owners were now the custodians of the heartland of Australia” (*CM*, 28 October 1985). Given the significance to non-Indigenous Australians of this and other famous tourist sites such as the Great Barrier Reef and Sydney Harbour, Everingham’s comments played into fears that the passing of land rights legislation would make other attractions vulnerable to spurious claims, restricting, if not forbidding altogether, public access to them. A cartoon by Leahy for the *CM* satirises this view in suggestions that “settled” Australia magnanimously *gave* “Ayers Rock” to the Aboriginal people (see Figure 4.1).

Regarding media concerns, also impacting upon news coverage of the Chamberlain case, about the transfer of Australia’s national symbol to a minority group, one journalist added:

I have never been to Ayers Rock, yet even for me it has become a symbol of Australia – like our present national flag, the Melbourne Cricket Ground or some of our marvellous native birds and animals. I object most strongly to the Government’s posturing in handing it over to people who have no better claim to it than 1 or 15 million other Australians (*SMH*, 18 December 1985).

Figure 4.1



Cartoon by Leahy satirising beliefs the handover of “Ayers Rock” was a gift from “settled” Australia to Aboriginal people, *Courier-Mail*, 28 October 1985.

Settler anxiety over the loss of a national monument was not confined to “Ayers Rock” or even to the country’s historical landmarks, as this writer compares the site (and by implication its loss) to the preservation of native Australian fauna and bird-life. Continued use of the name “Ayers Rock” after 1985 was symptomatic of the reluctance and failure amongst non-Indigenous Australians to acknowledge its transfer of ownership, also found in coverage of the Chamberlains’ speaking tour across the US in 1989, in which the *Northern Territory News (NTN)* consistently referred to the event at “Ayers Rock” (*NTN*, 25 November 1989).

Responses by sections of the media to the symbolism of “the Rock” reflect the post world war two transfer of iconic national terrain from the bush to the outback. In this era, the outback became marketed as Australia’s own distinctive brand and moved from the “dead centre” to the “red centre” of the imagined continent. As David Carter argues, the bush as a site of national identification has weakened in favour of “unpopulated landscapes: above all, [the] wilderness and desert. The pastoral bush is still ubiquitous but it is now the ‘red centre’ or ‘wide brown’ landscapes” that instil in the television and cinematic viewer a mixture of awe and apprehension.⁸ The Chamberlain case coincided with this shift in national mythologising of the Australian landscape, which was conveyed through the saturation of outback images via visual culture, on film and through colour photography in the media. Not to be confused with the ‘bush’ in settler-colonial imaginings, the “desert” is regarded as an inverted universe and often interpreted, as Brigid Rooney argues, in contrast to the rational dimensions of modern urban life: “[The Australian desert] has given play to those things that are liminal inversions of rational, secular, modern sociality: things of enigma, privacy, the body, inversion, primitive asociality, secrecy and death”.⁹ Since Azaria’s disappearance occurred in this highly contested ideological terrain – outside of the “civility” of urban locales and other cityscapes – it is not surprising the infant’s parents, a pastor and his wife from the regional mining town of Mt Isa, were out-of-place in their crossing of this region.

⁸ David Carter, “The Wide Brown Land on the Small Grey Screen: The Nature of Landscape on Australian Television”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, (September 1998), 2. Thomson Gale Network <<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.library.usyd.edu.au/itx/>>

⁹ Brigid Rooney, “Desert Hauntings and Public interiors in *Walkabout* and *Japanese Story*”, 27 June 2006, (forthcoming *Southerly*), 5.

Apart from being symbolically linked, in some cases a literal connection was established on the newspaper page between the dingo baby story and the “Ayers Rock” title handover. The day after the ceremony, the *Sunday Territorian* (*ST*), pasted together a front-cover spread of the headlines “‘I want truth’: Lindy calls for Inquiry” and “Chief Jeered at Rock”, an article about the public reception given to Northern Territory Chief Minister Ian Tuxworth at the handover ceremony. He reappears in the opening paragraph of the Chamberlain article cementing further the association between these news narratives: “‘The truth! ... that’s all I want’. This more than anything is what Lindy Chamberlain wants from the Chief Minister, Mr Ian Tuxworth” (*ST*, 27 October 1985). Readers were encouraged to link the similar content of both articles with the underlying message that Tuxworth is an unpopular and questionable character. In addition, the article reports that Lindy has made her “strongest public statement to date” about the “vested Territory interests [of those] who wanted to protect the Yulara investment and tourism at the Rock” (*ST*, 27 October 1985). Her comments recall Tuxworth’s predecessor Paul Everingham, who, after the 1983 announcement by the Government to recognise Aboriginal ownership of “Ayers Rock”, expressed his concerns to the *SMH*: “He feared the Commonwealth’s decision would jeopardise the future of a \$150 million development planned for Ayers Rock”, and that development was the Yulara tourist village (*SMH*, 12 November 1983). Ultimately, development applications and plans to attract further tourists to the Northern Territory monument were put at risk by widespread publicity given to the controversies surrounding both the dingo baby saga and the transfer of ownership of “Ayers Rock”.

As was typical in media coverage of the Chamberlain case, however, the conflict over Aboriginal land rights in the 1980s and non-Indigenous alienation from the land was a story with contradictory angles of representation. The *CM* was one of the only newspapers to attempt to appreciate the relations of Indigenous people to “the Rock”, informing readers that – “The Aboriginals did not see the occasion as something being returned to them. The massive monolith has always owned them and their ancestors” (*CM*, 28 October 1985) – and to this end, even recorded lengthy excerpts from the handover ceremony, such as the following “Pitjantjatjara anthem”:

We are many going
 With strength,
 Our brave spirit,
 Others are unable to manage, look after.
 We the holder of many stories,
 Forever watch over great country,
 Our road today grasped bravely
 Is a different story we are learning,
 Ears open, understanding.
 We speak with happiness,
 The country is ours.

October 26, 1985


Of course, comments quoted in newspaper articles or on television broadcasts have a mediated texture, which means that they are often taken out of context, summarised or redeployed by journalists to meet with individual needs, industry demands or news worker requirements. Nonetheless, in this instance, an attempt to appreciate the significance of the site to Aboriginal people illustrates the kind of debate surrounding the handover of “the Rock” which was contemporaneous with the Chamberlain case.

Others wrote in to newspapers to express their views about the long-awaited implementation of land rights legislation. In the section of the *SMH* titled: “Letters to the Editor”, a group describing themselves as “friends of the Redfern Community” responded with disgust to a full-page advertisement published a month earlier by the Northern Territory (see Figure 4.2) which had declared: “The Rock belongs to ALL Australians (and always has)”:

We say: [Prime Minister Bob] Hawke is contributing to the restoration of land to the original owners. Just because white men have divided this country recklessly and sold it to foreign ownership, etc, for 200 years, does not make it morally right ... Hawke has not given Australian land away. He has returned Australian land to the rightful owners. Congratulations, Mr Hawke, we support you (*SMH*, 5 November 1985).

Figure 4.2

THE ROCK BELONGS TO ALL AUSTRALIANS



(AND ALWAYS HAS)

On October 26 without consultation or mandate, the Federal Labor Government will hand over Ayers Rock and the whole of the Uluru National Park to fewer than 100 Australians. They will then pay these special Australians \$75,000 a year to lease it back from them. All Australians visiting Ayers Rock will pay to see it, and the new owners will get 20% of that fee as well.

The Northern Territory Government is adamantly opposed to this action:


- It is contrary to accepted procedures under which land claims have been made — until now.
- It shows an arrogant disregard by the Hawke Labor Government of the interests of the Northern Territory and of all Australians.
- It is another misuse of Commonwealth power in an area which has always been regarded as a State responsibility.
- It places in the hands of just a few that which belongs to all Australians: Ayers Rock, the heart of this country.

The Northern Territory Government seeks support from the Australian community to prevent this act of gross irresponsibility! The Hawke Labor Government must be reminded that it is elected to respect the wishes of the majority of Australians, not to serve the narrow factional interest of its own left wing.

Will Katherine Gorge (already under claim) be next? Perhaps the Great Barrier Reef will follow.

Australians did not give the Hawke Government a mandate to divide this country.

They were given custody of our heritage, not the right to give it away.



NORTHERN TERRITORY

Advertisement posted in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, by the Northern Territory Government on 8 October 1985, in the wake of the controversy surrounding the handover of “Ayers Rock”.

Another letter writer, in response to Ian Tuxworth's "hysterical ranting and raving" on the day of the "Ayers Rock" handover ceremony, issued a warning to his party colleagues:

To all Liberal politicians attempting to dance to the tune orchestrated by the National Party, and who promise to return Ayers Rock to 'all Australians', I would hereby like to bestow on you the Royal Order of the Ugly Australian. Hang your heads in shame (*SMH*, 5 November 1985).

Parodying the British system of ennoblement, this writer shames those in the Coalition promising to revoke, if elected to power, the Government's land rights legislation. The attempt to place multiple ethnic groups under the homogenising and largely Anglocentric banner of "all Australians" was not a matter of universal consent – and was regarded by some as the return of the "Ugly Australian".

Gesturing towards what is at stake in the settler-colonial issue, media coverage of the debates surrounding ownership of "the Rock" also summoned a cast of characters hitherto elevated in Chamberlain news stories. Some of them were referred to in Graham Seal's analysis of the event:

The Azaria Chamberlain affair was and is, of course, heavy with symbols of Australian-ness – Ayers Rock, dingoes, Aborigines, the camping holiday in the outback, the child lost in the wilderness. These symbols combine to give the case its bizarre quality and its widespread appeal.¹⁰

Increased discussion about, for instance, the transfer of ownership of "Ayers Rock", the rights of Aboriginal citizens and the ambivalent, iconic status of the dingo, recalled an event in which these characters and symbols had been previously hurled into the national spotlight. Drawn from early media coverage of the case, these symbols were identified in Chapter One as comprising, the dingo, "the Rock", the victim, the mother and Adventist religion. By 1988, they each functioned as a mythological symbol of Australianness, that is, with the exception of Adventist religion which continued to attract scepticism, parody and incomprehension, as media reports of the Chamberlains' exoneration in September 1988 noted the religious

¹⁰ Graham Seal, "Azaria Chamberlain and the Media Charivari", 76.

dimension of their celebrations: "... the couple toasted the Court's decision with a glass of Mrs Chamberlain's favorite [sic] drink – ginger wine", and referred to them in separate articles as the "tee-totalling Seventh-day Adventist couple" (*DT*, 16 September 1988; *Advertiser*, 16 September 1988). The *CM* also playfully reported on the couple's newly acquired status in terms of their religious beliefs: "Two people, devoted churchgoers, who, while members of quite a different denomination have become born again citizens" (*CM*, September 16, 1988).

One group not among the five mythological symbols I identify in media coverage of the case is the Pitjantjatjara people of Central Australia who, in news reports of the Azaria event, were frequently represented by their location at "Ayers Rock" or in the context of their knowledge of the land and its inhabitants such as the dingo. In an article published by the *Centralian Advocate* (*CA*) in 1986, "the Rock", the dingo and the Aboriginal people of central Australia converge in reports of statements made by Nipper Winmatti, "a senior custodian of Ayers Rock", that Azaria was snatched by the devil dingo "Korpang". Their connection was implied in the headline: "Elder Blames 'Devil Dingo'" and in the accompanying photograph of a dingo's head pasted at the summit of "the Rock" with the caption "DOES an evil dingo spirit haunt Ayers Rock?" (*CA*, 12 February 1986).

As with national conversations provoked by the handover of "Ayers Rock" in which characters from early media coverage of the Chamberlain case were summoned, in 1987 these same symbols were marshalled in news reports of other significant events, historical milestones and commemorations:

Remember the day: Political Commentator Laurie Oakes made a small claim to journalistic immortality by revealing the contents of John Howard's third budget two days early; the 50th anniversary of the linking of the Harbour Bridge span had Sydney's press in nostalgic mood; Ian Sinclair was preparing to be reinstated to the Fraser ministry after being found not guilty four days before of nine charges including forging and uttering; a 10-ounce middy of beer cost 52c; and at Ayers Rock in Central Australia, nine-week-old Azaria Chamberlain disappeared from her family's holiday tent.¹¹

¹¹ Thomas Keneally in A.N. Malden, "Witch-Hunt: Lindy and the Australian Psyche", *Time Australia*, no.24, (15 June 1987), 33.

The extract from *Time* magazine in June 1987, locates the infant's disappearance "at Ayers Rock in Central Australia", while the event is compared with other memorable markers in the nation's past if not to suggest an historical reference point, then to reflect on its widespread significance. The mention of "Ayers Rock" contextualises the Chamberlain case, as does a seemingly unrelated chain of political, social and cultural events.

The transfer of ownership of "Ayers Rock" was not only bound up with Bicentennial discourse (Figure 4.3), but with Azaria's disappearance, providing sections of the media another occasion on which to consider the case's lasting effects on the nation. Celebrations for the Bicentenary, a year-long event marking the 1788 arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney Harbour and the establishment of a British penal colony, sought to assert continuities rather than draw attention to conflict between Aboriginal people and white "settlers". To this end, some media reports emphasised the voluntary contributions made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Bicentennial events:

Aborigines have generally been highly critical of the Bicentenary and the various events, including Expo, held as part of the 1988 celebrations. Expo's opening by the Queen on April 30 was accorded a large Aboriginal demonstration visible enough to make a considerable impact on visitors and representatives of the 34 exhibiting islands and nations. But not all Aborigines see Expo in that light; for some, it is the perfect forum for educating visitors – Australians and foreigners alike (*SMH*, 18 June 1988).

With their "considerable impact on visitors" to Bicentenary events, Aboriginal protestors were seen to undermine projections of a racially tolerant and multicultural nation, making it necessary therefore to illustrate their willing participation in these events, as the headline of the article implies: "Blacks use Expo to get the other message across" (*SMH*, 18 June 1988). However, not until the end of the article does the reader find out that poet and writer Oodgeroo Noonuccal – one member of the creative team behind the Aboriginal performances which were the subject of this news report – refused to endorse 200th anniversary celebrations of the arrival of the First Fleet: "Oodgeroo is one Aboriginal who does not consider Expo a part of the Bicentenary, but 'more coincidental'" (*SMH*, 18 June 1988). Even though the article

Figure 4.3



Cartoon by Paul Zanetti parodying sentiments that "Ayers Rock" should be "reclaimed" in the spirit of forthcoming Bicentennial celebrations, *Daily Telegraph*, 28 October 1985.

acknowledges Oodgeroo's stance on the Bicentenary, including her decision with son Kabul to renounce their "white names in protest at the Bicentennial celebrations", it is exemplary of the kind of multicultural views of Australia projected in the 1980s that attempted to overcome or avoid the tensions inherent in a nation still in the grip of colonising processes.

The national myth, perpetuated during Bicentennial commemorations, of a racially tolerant society – a myth that was arguably necessary to the nation's ongoing project of colonization – was also evident in news reports about the number of tourists attending exhibitions featuring Aboriginal dancers and performers. According to *SMH*, "two million" had already viewed the range of events on offer, demonstrating a "keen interest in the very essence of the first Australians' spiritual way of life" (*SMH*, 18 June 1988). The tendency in news reports to portray for visitors a continuing story of existence was implied in comments that the Aboriginal productions to be held at the Rainbow Serpent theatre in Brisbane would be modernised as a way of bringing their stories to life: "Our oldest story is told through a mix of live theatre and clever mystical effects created by modern technical and lighting genius" (*SMH*, 18 June 1988). By constructing an imaginary link between Aboriginal and "settler" culture, this article conflates their cultural differences and fails to acknowledge the wrongs suffered by Indigenous people at the hands of British colonisers, as well as the significance of rallies against the Bicentenary which, on 26 January 1988, formed: "the biggest protest march that Sydney had seen since the height of the anti-Vietnam demonstrations twenty years previously".¹²

Also providing a background to the Chamberlain case and expressing a similar desire to weave a continuing thread of Australian culture through the experiences of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Bicentennial celebrations was the 1988 television special "Australia Live". In the program, modern Australia was described as "the oldest earth on earth", emphasising less the country's "timeless past" and more its "modernity", in the fusion of past and present civilisations through a single historical moment.¹³ Rather than a rupture effected by the "arrival" of the First Fleet,

¹² Geoffrey Bolton, "Towards the Bicentenary", in *The Oxford History of Australia: The Middle Way 1942-1995*, vol.5, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), 286.

¹³ David Carter, "The Wide Brown Land on the Small Grey Screen: The Nature of Landscape on Australian Television", *Journal of Australian Studies*, (September 1998), 2.
<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.library.usyd.edu.au/itx/>

the slogan asserted a continuing line of existence between Aboriginal and European cultures. This fiction of continuity, however, was a convenient narrative of nation that allowed for conflict and dissent about Aboriginal dispossession to be overlooked.

Anxieties about a global response to those racial tensions underlined in the 1988 Bicentenary mirrored concerns about how the international community would react to news that the Chamberlain case had culminated in a miscarriage of justice, as one magazine asked: “But what will ordinary citizens learn from the [Azaria] affair, about themselves as a people, as a nation?”¹⁴ Echoing these comments, the *CM* stated that “an injustice had been done and that all of us in society must bear some responsibility” (*CM*, 16 September 1988). It was commonly believed that the controversies surrounding the case had been witnessed by “the world” and the decision in September 1988 to exonerate the couple was another event taking place under the scrutinizing gaze of international audiences:

For the Chamberlains, that decision ... meant the culmination of an eight-year battle to make the law, and the world that watched, believe that they did not have anything to do with their daughter’s death. Everything that has meant, and the enormous trauma it has entailed, is history. It is now part of a unique and prolonged episode in Australia’s system of justice (*DM*, 16 September 1988).

As Michael Chamberlain told Alan Jones of Radio 2UE in Sydney, there was an element of “social guilt” behind the nation’s reaction to Azaria’s disappearance (*DM*, 16 September 1988) that was, it seems, compounded by a disavowed collective guilt over the past and present treatment of Australia’s Indigenous population – a struggle which continues over both settler-colonial legitimacy and Aboriginal land rights. Certainly, there were concerns that international condemnation would follow news of the couple’s exoneration as it did in response to the injustices committed against Australia’s Indigenous people, as the *Advertiser* recalled:

Nowadays, [Aboriginal] grievances are known, though imperfectly understood, in many countries beside our own. The presidents of France and

¹⁴ *Time* magazine, “Witchhunt”, 33.

of South Africa have seized on them lately, implying for their own rather disreputable purposes that Australia is in the process of solving its racial problems by wiping out the Aborigines. The transfer of Ayers Rock may help to offset this slur (*Advertiser*, 26 October 1985).

In addition to the condemnation by the presidents of France and South Africa, the Bicentennial year was also an occasion for the United Nations to formally condemn the abject poverty under which Australia's Aboriginal people were living:

THE UNITED Nations report declaring that Australian Aborigines are living in 'poverty, misery and extreme frustration' has prompted a knee-jerk response from the Federal Government ... Let us be reminded that this is the Bicentenary year. It is the 200th birthday of white European settlement and, therefore, an historic opportunity to reach a civilised (and civilising) compact with the original inhabitants (*Sun-Herald*, 7 August 1988).

The response by the Hawke administration to the United Nations report was to allocate further funds to Aboriginal welfare. As this article describes, it was an attempt by the Labor Government to manage and address the problems besetting Aboriginal people highlighted in the Bicentenary year. According to Deborah Staines, the pattern of injustice marking the "post-settlement" history of Aboriginal people affected the way in which the nation responded to Azaria's disappearance. The case highlighted a nation refusing to accept, confront and recognise a history of government policies which led to the removal of Aboriginal children and the dispossession of their people and culture:

[The case] articulated an agenda of coming to terms with the past, re-imagining identity, and repositioning Australian values ... We need to reconsider the articulation and reception of the Chamberlain case with reference to this historical context, reading it alongside a nation denying its past.¹⁵

¹⁵ Deborah Staines, "A Legal Trauma, A Public Trauma", 168.

In the context of the pain and trauma arising from readings of the Chamberlain case in the late 1980s, it is not surprising that as judicial matters drew to a close in September of the Bicentennial year, relief greeted the resolution of a case that began “on a cold night in August 1980 [and ever since has] ... baffled and divided Australia, been through eight different courts in as many years and cost tens of millions of dollars” (*DT*, 16 September 1988). As Bill Hitchings commented:

But, while as one who has watched, listed and recorded virtually every nuance, every mood and every shift in direction in this amazing affair, I find it impossible to resist the temptation to say – thank God it’s virtually almost over ... But there is something else in the relief that this whole sorry affair has been done with. Perhaps it is the fact that at last you no longer have to witness the indelible wrongs. Perhaps it’s the fact that you no longer have to be the onlooker of the wrenching of two lives from their mundane but enduring naivety and the remarkable transformation it has wreaked on them ... It is, with all the drama and with all the tragedy, a relief for it all to be over (*CM*, 16 September 1988).

Published in the same year that had seen Aboriginal people and their supporters engage in a massive boycott of Bicentennial celebrations, the language of this report highlights how the Chamberlain case was potentially disruptive, unsettling and irreconcilable to the building of national memory. In this context, its resolution was a “relief” and a nationally cathartic experience. Staines’ argument about the cultural trauma aroused by Azaria’s disappearance informs this kind of analysis in her statement that the Chamberlain event problematised non-Indigenous relations to the land and the right of white Australia to exercise control over the “frontier”:

This strange event interrupted a self-serving rhetoric of Australian identity based around notions of settler control of the land, and the dominant white culture’s claims to knowledge of that land. The Chamberlain’s statements undermined the myth of settler control.¹⁶

¹⁶ Deborah Staines, “A Legal Trauma, A Public Trauma”, 155.

Noel Sanders made a similar point much earlier, by suggesting that the historical background to the Chamberlain case saw the issue of land ownership culminate in the “displacement of urban white male society”,¹⁷ not unlike Christine Higgins who argued that the “cultural opposition” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians was highlighted in the aftermath of Azaria’s disappearance.¹⁸ Indeed, the location of the event provided a battleground for the appropriation of a distinctly “white” national space, as one Catholic clergymen underlined in his response to Coalition plans to revoke the Aboriginal land rights bill: “In this Bicentennial year, the year of reconciliation with Aborigines, this racist policy will further the dispossession begun 200 years ago when we first took their land” (*SMH*, 15 March 1988).

The argument that Azaria’s disappearance channelled the volatile issue of land ownership in 1980s Australia was also articulated in Moya Henderson’s opera, *Lindy* (2002) where, in the second act, one Aboriginal elder says to another, “Little bit their country now”.¹⁹ The ascription of this view to an Aboriginal elder is an idealised notion, since it inscribes a “white” Australian story on the landscape to achieve belonging. Of course Henderson is showing sympathy for Aboriginal relationships to the land, however, she articulates a middle-class “white” desire of belonging through Azaria’s disappearance. The conflicting nature of what appears on stage to be a fictional exchange between Aboriginal elders implies there are colonising desires attached to the Chamberlain case that have been incorporated in its representation.

National discourse surrounding the Chamberlain case – an event often read in relation to the 1985 handover of “Ayers Rock” and the 1988 Bicentenary – was continuous with, but not identical to that which surfaced in the Lees/Falconio case. The attack on Peter Falconio and attempted abduction of Joanne Lees, was identified in British media reports through its location, in one instance as the “terror in the desert” (*Daily Mirror*, 8 June 2002), while Joanne Lees was often referred to as the “Outback Girl” (*Daily Mail*, 30 July 2001), “Backpacker Jo” (*Daily Mail*, 29 July 2001) and the woman at the centre of an “Outback mystery” (*Daily Mail*, 1 September

¹⁷ Noel Sanders, “Azaria Chamberlain and Popular Culture”, 94.

¹⁸ Christine Higgins, “Naturalising ‘Horror’ Stories”, 139-140.

¹⁹ Quoted in Moya Henderson, “Composer Profile”, *ABC Radio* tapes, no.80, Side B., State Library of New South Wales.

2002). Reporting on the trial of the since-convicted Bradley John Murdoch, London's *Daily Mail* described the location of the crime as, "a dark and lonely spot on the Stuart Highway in Australia's red centre" (*Daily Mail*, 17 October 2005). Elsewhere it was referred to as: "The lonely stretch of outback highway between Alice Springs and Darwin ... at once beautiful and terrifying. This is where our deepest fears come to life".²⁰ Given the significance of the location in which Falconio disappeared in the "alien red heart of the country", it is not surprising that parallels were drawn between Joanne Lees and Lindy Chamberlain within weeks of the 2001 attack.²¹

It was the view of sections of the British print media that the likely recovery of Falconio's body in such an isolated region would be facilitated by the actions of local Aboriginals, whose tracking expertise and extensive knowledge of the land would, they believed, out-manoeuvre the suspect. Soon a contest was staged between, on the one hand, Aboriginals and investigating police and, on the other, the outback assailant. Regional police commander, Bob Fields, told a British newspaper: "It is his [the suspect's] desert skills against our manpower and the skills of the Aborigine trackers who will be helping us ... It is going to be a battle of wits and survival. But let me say this. [sic] We will never give up the hunt" (*Daily Mail*, 17 July 2001).

The capabilities of Aboriginal trackers were similarly reported in the *Sunday Press Magazine* when Aboriginal elders searched for Azaria's remains in the days following her disappearance. In "Nipper knows all the tricks", journalist Denis Williams describes "Nipper Winamartti [sic]" – the "70-year-old ... grizzly tribal elder of the Pitjantjatjara people" – who "still" believes that a dingo killed Azaria Chamberlain in August 1980 (*Sunday Press*, 21 August 1983). Williams tests the Aboriginal elder's tracking expertise by concocting an elaborate scheme to clamber over rocks, sand dunes and scrubland surrounding the "Ayers Rock" campsite from where Azaria disappeared. Changing his shoes several times (even alternating left and right pairs), concealing his shirt in a hole at the rock face, kneeling and dragging himself along the ground and, at one stage wiping away his own tracks, Williams was later surprised to discover that Nipper could show him the scuff marks and tracks he had made across the sand and even locate the writer's hidden shirt. It was

²⁰ Tony Collins, "Media Access and Victims' Rights", *The Media Report*, *ABC Radio National*, 27 May 2004.

²¹ Belinda Morrissey and Kristen Davis, "Utilities and Utilitarianism", *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 17, no.4 (2003): 391.

confirmation for Williams that Nipper was a “key figure in the [Chamberlain] drama” and “one of the last masters of the age-old bush craft” (*Sunday Press*, 21 August 1983) whose story about the dingo was to be believed.

Even though the article was published in 1983, it exemplified Australian beliefs about “Ayers Rock”, the Central Australian landscape and Aboriginal trackers which circulated throughout the 1980s and were highlighted in debates about the handover of the national monument and the Bicentenary. While Falconio’s disappearance did not occur at “Ayers Rock”, similar mythologies concerning non-Indigenous relations to the Australian “outback” and “desert” returned in 2001. For many British journalists, the crime scene on the Stuart Highway near Barrow Creek was in an area inspiring fascination and phobia, with frontier clashes between the Kaytej warriors and workers at the Barrow Creek telegraph station on 22 February 1874, situating Falconio’s disappearance in a landscape characterised by frontier conflict and violence.²² While not directly mentioned in British media coverage of the Falconio case, the events at Barrow Creek played into colonial concerns about the expulsion or worse, obliteration, of vacationing British tourists:

Lees and Falconio ... were initially represented as the quintessential English innocents abroad. Their ‘exploration’ of Australia is oddly reminiscent of that of those first white ‘settlers’ from the same land, who came to the ‘colony’ only to be overwhelmed by its harshness and savagery.²³

The “depth and strength of this colonialist impulse” as related to media coverage of the Falconio case is contentious, since the British media did not necessarily respond in a parallel way to the experience of colonial guilt. The question is, do contemporary Britons feel a sense of responsibility for or guilt over the dispossession of Aboriginal people? Moreover, are non-Indigenous Australians more progressive than the British in their attitudes towards the colonial question? While any answer would be long and complex, what we can say for certain is that the historically conditioned phobia of the Australian outback permeated British media coverage of the backpackers’ disappearance and attacks involving other British tourists travelling to Australia’s

²² For a history of the Barrow Creek conflict see D.J. Mulvaney’s chapter “Barrow Creek, northern Australia, 1874”, in *Frontier conflict: the Australian experience*, ed. Bain Attwood and S.G. Foster, (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2003), 44-51.

²³ Belinda Morrissey and Kristen Davis, “Utilities and Utilitarianism”, 392.

remote parts. For instance, in one article Peter is compared to 18 year-old Caroline Stuttle from York, who, in a bungled robbery attempt in the “quiet Australian town” of Bundaberg, was thrown off the Burnett River Traffic Bridge on 10 April 2002 (*Daily Mail*, 14 November 2003). Reference was also made to the death of seven backpackers, including two Britons, in the arson attack on the Palace Backpackers hostel at Childers, a “small farming town north of Brisbane” in June 2000 (*Daily Mail*, 14 November 2003). The relative isolation of these communities contributed to what was a discourse of danger in the British media fuelled, no doubt, by international publicity given to the Ivan Milat backpacker murders. As the *Daily Mail* reported in the article “Backpackers’ journeys which ended in tragedy”:

.... grand plans can be fraught with confusion and danger for those who have rarely spent much time away from home, let alone thousands of miles away amid strange and unfamiliar cultures. For travellers like Joanne Lees, that dream trip can turn to a nightmare and Australia has seen some of the highest-profile tragedies recently (*Daily Mail*, 13 December 2005).

Warnings issued to young travellers about the possible threats to their safety in the Australian outback signal the latent fears of a territory that continues to be a source of fascination for in-bound tourists and locals alike. As Richard Shears, the Australian and South-East Asian correspondent to London’s *Daily Mail* argued, readers of the Falconio mystery were “fascinated by Australia’s wide outback and the dangers many perceived it to hold”.²⁴ Sue Williams made a similar point when she argued that the outback conjures images of a lawless landscape:

The Northern Territory was being portrayed as a strange, dangerous place, home to deranged souls on the run from the rest of civilisation, and as a vast, desolate stretch of nothingness where people came to hide out, and were rarely found.²⁵

Perceptions of Australia as dangerous were unsettling for non-Indigenous Australians as well as tourists and, while there are instances in Australian news reports about the Falconio case of the anxiety associated with “out there”, elements of the British press

²⁴ Richard Shears, *Bloodstain*, 30.

²⁵ Sue Williams, *And then the Darkness*, 138.

were overwhelmingly inclined to treat the outback landscape with suspicion. While I have offered some analysis of the representation of the Falconio case in the British and Australian media, further research would highlight this distinction, which is otherwise beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, the anxieties fuelling representations of the Chamberlain saga resurfaced in the Falconio case, repeating the theme of outback disappearance.

That Australia, and to some extent Britain, was still haunted by its role in the dispossession of Aboriginal people emerged in the Chamberlain affair and again in the Lees/Falconio event. Analysing settler anxieties about belonging in two different time frames unveils the mythic production behind the dingo baby saga and the effect of nationalistic discourses in the construction of a modern media event.

Feminist Discourse: Lindy v Michael

The period from 1986 to 1988 was also a time of proliferating and intensifying reflection on the Chamberlain story in media, academic, museological and filmic discourse. Among the academics writing on the case, a group of feminists now emerged to examine the plight of Lindy Chamberlain and express their views in a chorus of support. According to Adrian Howe, that initial tardiness in feminist responses to the Chamberlain case had its origins in the fact that "... the saga so overwhelmed the national psyche that it defied feminists and other intellectuals working inside and outside the academy, left-wing activists and most trained thinkers of any ilk to make sense of it".²⁶ This, Howe argued, manifested in an "ideological blindness to the persecution of a middle-class Christian woman who was thereby triply disqualified from a part in any Marxist morality play and, evidently, not of much interest to feminists either".²⁷ The problem was that Lindy's behaviour did not align with attitudes espoused by the conservative left, nor those articulated by the Australian right, leaving her supporters without political justification or sympathy. Other reasons for Lindy's persecution have been attributed to her failure to admit to the crime of infanticide, exhibit feelings of remorse, state her own neglect for not keeping the infant from harm, display the appropriate face of bereavement by presenting "normal" feminine behaviours and agree to suggestions she had been

²⁶ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 113

²⁷ *ibid.*, 252.

careless in taking a nine and a half week-old baby on an outback camping trip. It is clear that after her exoneration for murder in 1986, Lindy became, from a feminist perspective, both a more acceptable figure and a more desirable object for study. This is no coincidence, however, since the 1980s saw a peak of interdisciplinary scholarship in the nation's universities (especially in humanities departments), as female academics produced work in the newly cross-fertilised disciplines of feminist, cultural, media and Australian studies.

Dianne Johnson, in her essay "From Fairy to Witch: Imagery and Myth in the Azaria Case" (1984), was the first feminist to consider Lindy's mythologisation in the media as a "witch-like killer". Her resemblance to a witch was suggested in comments Lindy herself made to *WD* magazine four years earlier, exclaiming: "It's a nightmare. I feel that I am the victim of a mediaeval [sic] witchhunt" (*WD*, 1 October 1980). In the mid-80s, these self-observations were taken up by feminists who, when writing about the case, commented upon media representations of Lindy as a "killer mother"²⁸, "beastly breast"²⁹, "wicked witch"³⁰ and figure of Eve.³¹

While feminist analyses of the case remained within academic circles, there were instances of academic-media crossover in representations of Lindy's image after 1986. For instance, on 15 February 1986, Kerryn Goldsworthy's ABC radio broadcast on the case was published in *The Age* newspaper under the heading "Martyr to Her Sex" (1986) and re-printed in the *Sun-Herald*. Then, in June 1987, Dianne Johnson's remarks on the "obsessive quest to ascribe blame" to a woman who resembled the medieval witch were taken up by Thomas Keneally in *Time* magazine.³² Aside from Goldsworthy's essay, which was the only feminist analysis to appear in the mainstream media, an article by Catharine Munro published in *Ms. Magazine* and a few isolated instances of the media-academic cross-over, it seems that feminist ideologies were not directly influencing news presentations about the Chamberlains. Nonetheless, by deconstructing and problematising the masculinist legend of the bush,

²⁸ Christine Higgins, "Naturalising 'Horror' Stories", 140.

²⁹ Kristen Davis and Belinda Morrissey, "Utilities and Utilitarianism", *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 17, no.4, (2003): 387.

³⁰ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 226.

³¹ Catherine Rogers, "The Nature of Evidence", 169

³² Thomas Keneally is quoted in *Time* magazine as saying: "Consciously or subconsciously, we look for the mark of Cain. It's what village people used to do when a witch or a criminal was paraded through the square" (*Time*, 15 June, 1987); Dianne Johnson, "From Fairy to Witch", 137.

academic feminists radically critiqued narratives of nation promulgated in the 1980s and argued the vitality of the witch myth in popular discourse. Perhaps the critique of a very male dominated legend is one reason why 1980s feminist writing on the Chamberlain case was blinded to media coverage of Michael and Aboriginal people on the whole. Still, their literature provided a counterpoint to the writings of a largely male contingent of journalists who had published books about the case, including Richard Shears (1982), Steve Brien (1982), Richard Simmonds (1982), John Bryson (1985) and also Malcolm Brown, who until 2005, continued to report on the Chamberlain case for the *SMH*.

In some instances, rather than agreeing with popularised assumptions about Lindy in the media, feminists openly criticised them. For example, the conclusion Howe draws in 2005 from her research into the Chamberlain archive of letters held at the NLA, which reveals the overwhelming support Lindy received from Australian women (around 90 per cent), is used to dispute claims made by *AWW* that Lindy aroused the “antagonism of a lot of women”.³³ Opposing the question the *AWW* asks its readers: “Why did she [Lindy] think women in general seemed to have been against her, pointing the finger of guilt? Why had men seemed more supportive?” the historical record shows that it was primarily women who challenged the official verdict (see Chapter Two).

Examining contributions made by feminist academics to the Chamberlain case illustrates how gender issues were being brought to an analysis of the event as Australian national mythology. Their interrogation of the Australian media, culture and society corresponds with a wider phase of reflection in which it was asked how and by what means the Chamberlain case articulated aspects of Australian identity. Feminist academics, however, took the matter further by asking in what sense was Lindy the subject of a gendered nationalistic discourse? Certainly, Goldsworthy’s essay “Martyr to Her Sex” (1986) changed the terms of the debate, by arguing that Lindy and “the Rock” appeared as contradictory mythological symbols in whom national conversations converged.³⁴ The argument was controversial, given that “the Rock” is an Aboriginal ancestral site and, for non-Indigenous Australians, a national tourist icon and symbol. Lindy (at the time the essay was published) was a convicted

³³ Adrian Howe, *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 36.

³⁴ Kerry Goldsworthy, “Martyr to Her Sex”, 157, 164.

murderer, and to suggest a mythological equivalence between the two was to imply that Lindy, like “the Rock” was an indelible part of Australia’s identity. Yet, as I outlined in Chapter Two, the rising number of voices in support of the Chamberlains had grown in number and influence by 1984, implying that Goldsworthy’s argument had tapped into shifting public sentiments about Lindy and, given the date of publication of this essay, perhaps even the post-handover debates surrounding “Ayers Rock”.

Feminist essays published by Adrian Howe, Kay Schaffer and Julie Marcus between 1988 and 1989, elaborated further on Goldsworthy’s argument concerning the national myths aroused in the Chamberlain case and indicated a shift in Lindy’s national status. In the first instance, Howe linked the “missing, and subsequently mythologised bodies” of Jesus Christ and the infant Azaria through two events: the announcement by the Roman Catholic Church on 13 October 1988 that the Shroud of Turin was inauthentic, and the Chamberlains’ exoneration by the Northern Territory Court of Criminal Appeal a month earlier.³⁵ For Howe, renewed debate about the burial cloth believed by Christians to have encased Christ’s body, paralleled the mythic production behind Azaria’s absent body in 1988. If the nation is a series of collectively held values and assumptions, or an “imagined community”,³⁶ following Benedict Anderson, then Howe’s comparison between Christ and Azaria is less bizarre than it first appears. Indeed, it might be argued that, in lieu of a sacred body (Christ) or a religious tradition, certain “victims” within the “white” colonial imagination were venerated. A similar argument is advanced by Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra in *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian literature and the postcolonial mind* (1991): “Non Aboriginal Australians try to build their foundation myth around the sufferings and achievements of the pioneers and early settlers” as a way of compensating for the dispossession of Indigenous people.³⁷ In their view heroic symbols of the nation are imaginatively constructed as male, and positioned as victims of institutional authority, exemplified in the deaths of bushranger Ned Kelly and the soldiers at Gallipoli.

³⁵ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 221.

³⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991) 6, 101.

³⁷ Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian literature and the postcolonial mind*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 26.

For the majority of feminists writing on the case, myth and gender provided avenues for the exploration of Lindy's image. Kay Schaffer conducted an influential feminist analysis of ambivalent Australian attitudes towards the bush, at one stage referring to Lindy. Women, she says, are represented through the metaphors of landscape, yet are absent from a nationalistic bush tradition that is essentially male.³⁸ From an imperial perspective, the end result is the landscape's portrayal as a site of discovery and conquest and, in its historically symbolic connection with woman, as one of fear and loathing:

Landscape looms large in the Australian imaginary, although its infinite variety has been reduced to a rather singular vision – the Interior, the outback, the red centre, the dead heart, the desert, a wasteland. It is against this land that the Australian character measures his identity. It can be a place of vision and inspiration but most often it is represented as a hostile, barren environment.³⁹

For Schaffer, Lindy's claims that a dingo had taken her baby resurrected fears about the "archetypally evil mother" personified in the Australian bush and the danger such a figure poses to society and, by extension, masculinity:

The infant victim stood in the place of all the repressed and irrational fears about national identity – that the native son might succumb to the cruel mother; that the mother might ruthlessly harm her innocent children; that mother nature can victimize her sons; that identity, potency, authority of the self over the other is never secure.⁴⁰

Schaffer described the infant's symbolisation of the anxieties aroused in remote and, potentially, alienating landscapes, an argument which implicates settler-colonial fears about belonging and is part of the discursive formation of feminist writing about the case in the late 1980s.

Echoing Schaffer's work, Julie Marcus explored the causal relationship between the cultural suspicion surrounding Lindy and the "characteristic gender

³⁸ Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush*, xii.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 23, 22.

⁴⁰ Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush*, 65.

structure of Australian nationalism". Unlike her contemporary, however, she drew attention to the iconic status of the dingo in Australian nationalist discourse as a factor in media coverage of the infant's disappearance. In "Prisoner of Discourse: The dingo, the dog and the baby" (1989), Marcus argues that Lindy was punished, not because she committed infanticide, but because she held the dingo accountable for what was perceived as her own "wickedness".⁴¹ The dingo's symbolic association with the outback space Lindy transgressed was suggested in Australian settler mythologies contrasting the "bad woman" and the "wild dog".⁴² By analysing the symbolic framework through which Azaria's disappearance was interpreted, Marcus comprehends the range of popular responses to Lindy's behaviour posed in questions such as "Why did Mrs Chamberlain take her young and vulnerable daughter out into the heart of the dangerous Australian bush?".⁴³ By blaming the dingo, "one of the markers of the outback, the wild", an animal which exists "outside of civilization" and whose identity is a sign of "Australian authenticity", Lindy challenged the gendered category to which structures of power are attached in Australian frontier nationalism.⁴⁴ Thus, by having "entered the wild", exposed her daughter to the perils of the Australian outback and, finally, accused the native wild dog of the crime, Lindy confronted aspects of Australian society, the bush and Australian masculinity.

Marcus' argument endorses a reading of the Australian bush as a peculiarly male space filled by totems of masculinity, such as the dingo. Women "have no place at all" in a "male domain" that, symbolised under the banner of Australian frontier nationalism, led her to conclude it was the "nation" and not the "populace" which condemned Lindy Chamberlain for murder.⁴⁵ Whereas Marcus' arguments on gendered spaces in the white Australian imagination might explain early resistance to Lindy's claims of innocence, the way in which her husband was depicted in these discourses is left undetermined. There is no equivalent frame of reference for Michael, who remains on the periphery of academic re-evaluations of the event, referred to only once in Marcus' comments on the dingo as totem:

⁴¹ Julie Marcus, "The Dingo, the Dog and the Baby", 203.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ Julie Marcus, "The Dingo, the Dog and the Baby", 205.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 206, 209.

⁴⁵ Julie Marcus, "The Dingo, the Dog and the Baby", 215, 202. Marcus distinguishes between the "nation" and the "populace" on the basis that it was the nation, rather than the people, which demanded Lindy's incarceration.

Woman's evil as the bad mother and her out-of-placeness turned the totem round so that it showed its masculine face as man's best friend, the friend and companion of Mr Chamberlain, who was doubtless behaving impeccably and covering up for his wife. Such a man could not be punished and was not.⁴⁶

Michael escaped punishment because in the "gendered world of Australian frontier nationalism" his presence in the outback (like that of the dingo) was left unquestioned. Lindy, on the other hand, highlighted her "out-of-placeness" by blaming a "male icon that represented both the wild and the male conquest of it".⁴⁷ Marcus' argument is supported by the fact that the accusation of being a failed protector was not levelled at Michael, in the same way it was at Lindy, and that gendered structures shaped public perceptions of Lindy Chamberlain as a mother and "murderess". Yet these arguments fail to explain why Michael's behaviour was depicted in feminised terms. What can we make of his representation as an emotional effete?

Descriptions of Michael, overcome by emotion, seem to point to his counter-stereotypical behaviour and excessive reaction to Azaria's disappearance. When the findings of the first inquest were handed down he "sobbed" (*Weekend Australian*, 21 February 1981) and "seemed to show the strain more than his wife" (*Sun-Herald*, 22 February 1981). When graphic evidence was presented to the court: "[he] slumped forward on his seat, bending over his knees" (*SMH*, 25 September 1982). Upon his arrival in Darwin to learn the outcome of applications to have his conviction overturned, he was described as wearing: "a casual white linen suit and sporting a new short hairstyle" (*DT*, 14 September 1988), then, two days later, at the announcement the convictions had been quashed, Michael "looked his old boyish self as he smiled through his tears and put his arm out for his wife who was near to collapse", prompting one newspaper to recall his early dealings with the media: "[In the beginning] ... Michael, though serious and almost dour, had a pleasing dullness about him" (*CM*, 16 September 1988). And finally, when Lindy revealed in a recent article for *NI* magazine "My marriage was worse than prison", writer Patrice Fidgeon observed: "It was Michael's behaviour on the night of Azaria's disappearance and afterwards that contributed greatly to the Chamberlains being branded as 'weird'" (*NI*,

⁴⁶ Julie Marcus, "The Dingo, the Dog and the Baby", 216.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 215.

27 November 2004). In suggestions that Michael's behaviour was unusual and/or overly emotional, these and other articles add weight to claims that the "Chamberlains", and not just Lindy, were regarded as out-of-place in the central Australian landscape. It appeared Michael, too, confronted the "male domain" of the outback, signifying less the rugged, wordless, taciturn bushman of Australian settler folklore, and more the disdained figure of institutional authority, the intellectual, or man of religion. Ultimately, confined Australian models of masculinity made Pastor Chamberlain too, a victim of the national ideology and, symbolically neutered for his transgression, the mantle of "manliness" transferred from Michael to the dingo.

Concerning the role of masculinity in the national imaginary, Russel Ward contributed to debates about the concept of a national "type" in the 1950s in an attempt to define who or what typified Australia. In *The Australian Legend* (1958) he argued character traits seen as typically Australian were forged in "outback employees, the semi-nomadic drovers, shepherds, shearers, bullock-drivers, stockmen, boundary-riders, station-hands and others of the pastoral industry", nineteenth century figures who were overwhelmingly male.⁴⁸ Their characteristics included "adaptability, mateship, hatred of affectation" and they were admired not because "most Australians ever possessed these traits but because the minority of bush-dwellers that did differed most graphically from the average Briton and so were seen as identifiably Australian".⁴⁹ Of the habits and sentiments considered Australian were those anti-authoritarian attitudes to organised religion. As Ward states, the bushman exhibited an "anti-clerical bias" which, by the late nineteenth century, manifested itself in the concept of "mateship" as a "consciously-held substitute for religion".⁵⁰

If, according to Ward's definition, the "typical" Australian is sceptical of religion, exhibits certain "masculine" traits and possesses a European convict heritage, then the national figure is an icon Michael did not resemble. Born in New Zealand, he was a minister of religion whose "sanctimonious" attitude many Australians found "insufferable".⁵¹ News reports of his emotional frailty during the Supreme Court trial and his ambassadorship of an "exceptional faith" suggest he

⁴⁸ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978), 17.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁰ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 219, 221.

⁵¹ Ken Crispin, *The Crown versus Chamberlain*, 62.

transgressed the frontier mythology in which the “typical” Australian resided (*Sun-Herald*, 22 February 1981). For this reason he, too, might be considered the victim of a gendered nationalistic discourse and, like Lindy, scrutinised because he did not fulfil stereotyped representations of his gender. While it would be reckless to equate their experiences, surely if gender stereotypes were being promulgated within 1980s Australian nationalist discourse as Marcus and Howe have stated, then, because of his perceived “lack”, Michael was also implicated.

Indigenous issues were mostly overlooked by 1980s academic feminists writing on the Chamberlain case in an unconscious reinstatement of white belonging through deconstruction of the bush legend. In “‘Naming Whiteness’: An Inquiry into Lindy Chamberlain’s *Through My Eyes* and Australian Nationalist Discourse” (1997), Phillipa Saywer attempts to address this gap in academic feminist literature by “extend[ing] gender-based interpretations of the ‘Chamberlain affair’ [and] ... incorporating the issue of race”.⁵² Of primary focus in her essay is the culturally dominant speaking position Lindy adopts in her autobiography which invokes the myth of the “Aussie battler” and addresses the reader as an everyday or “ordinary” Australian.⁵³ This racially inscribed subject position, Saywer argues, contradicts Lindy’s claims of religious persecution, represents “Anglo-Celtic ethnicity” as the norm and embraces “whiteness” along with the “conventional stereotypes” that inform the concept of a racially “pure” Australia. While Saywer’s arguments might be construed as unfair – and reading her critique I felt compelled to spring to Lindy’s defence – they indicate the extent to which white anxiety contributed to the mythologisation of Lindy Chamberlain as national figure, since there are complex factors at work in any one individual performance.

While Aboriginal people, along with Michael Chamberlain, have mostly failed to gain the attention of critics, the concern of feminists about the character of media coverage of women in the public spotlight has filtered into popular debate about the Chamberlains. Feminist arguments were important as, amongst other things, they analysed the mythologies underlying public responses to Lindy Chamberlain’s image. In addition, they gave form and shape to the theories presented in this thesis and, read

⁵² Phillipa Saywer, “‘Naming Whiteness’: An Inquiry into Lindy Chamberlain’s *Through My Eyes* and Australian Nationalist Discourses”, *Law, Text, Culture* 3, (1997): 111.

⁵³ *ibid.*, 107-123 (esp. 111).

as an emerging body of work around 1986, assisted in the production of the Azaria Chamberlain case as national myth.

Museological Discourse: Objects and Identity

Other discourses contributing to the Azaria Chamberlain case as national myth derived from museums and archive collections. In 1988 the National Museum in Canberra purchased a series of Azaria artefacts for the “Eternity” exhibition, comprising Azaria’s black dress, the white coffin used as a prop in Michael’s anti-smoking classes and the dashboard taken from the Holden Torana vehicle the family took on their outback camping trip. The same year the travelling Australian Bicentennial Exhibition compiled a motley collection of objects, including “Captain Cook’s telescope, armour from the Kelly gang, Dame Nellie Melba’s tiara, an Aboriginal breastplate, a stump-jump plough and a dingo trap”.⁵⁴ While they marked different occasions and were acquired for different purposes, the Chamberlain and Bicentennial exhibitions were linked by time and a desire to project a progressive Australian identity, one that had moved on from its past. Each contained artefacts that highlighted the evolution of mainstream Australian sentiment towards marginalised groups, such as Aboriginals and Seventh-day Adventists, and were assembled for educational purposes.

In her study of material culture, Susan M. Pearce writes that objects are “message-bearing entit[ies]” which encase the attitudes of varying time frames and cultural contexts: “[Objects] have the power, in some sense, to carry the past into the present by virtue of their ‘real’ relationship to past events ... [for they] bear their own ‘real’ relationship to the impulse which created them, and have their own place in the history of perception and taste”.⁵⁵ Her view is that museum objects have a transcending quality for being able to revive in the present their originating social and cultural contexts. Pearce’s argument aligns with comments made by Levi-Strauss in relation to myth: that despite being situated in the past, mythologies are evoked in the present as a way of reflecting and shaping a nation’s existing values and outlook. The Azaria artefacts, like the Bicentennial travelling exhibition, evoked memories of the

⁵⁴ Tony Bennett ed., *Celebrating the Nation*, 184.

⁵⁵ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*, (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 26, 24.

past in an effort to define and contour the current social framework and, exhibited in the same year, relayed an overwhelming desire to represent injustices of the past in order to package the vision of a tolerant and multicultural, present and future. Just as certain media reports of Indigenous contributions to the Bicentenary promoted a cross-cultural celebration of “settled” Australia’s 200 year history, so too did the arbitrary association of objects, such as an opera singer’s tiara and an Aboriginal breastplate, represent an idealised vision of multicultural co-operation in the building of an Australian identity. The exhibition of Azaria artefacts was a further attempt to promote a progressive nation that had moved on from its past.

The assemblage of objects of national significance illustrated the way in which cultural identities were being reconstituted and produced towards the end of the decade. As Staines argues, the Azaria artefacts and the NLA Chamberlain Papers (acquired in 1992 and analysed in Chapter Two of this thesis) constitute “acts of recognition and acts of inscription, locating the case within institutions of the nation and public”.⁵⁶ They write the values of the time on material and tangible objects which serve as monuments to the past and reminders for the future. Preserved in the late-1980s such artefacts suggest the way national identities were being discursively produced through landmark events and enhanced by their location in the context of the Bicentenary.

The “Eternity” exhibition followed widespread media and public reflection on the place the Chamberlain story occupied in the national consciousness, and there was a sense that an inevitable process of mythologisation was taking place; why else would the items be housed in the museum’s permanent exhibition if not for their inherent cultural value? Significance was endowed by the timing of their purchase in the Bicentenary year, and by the location of their public display in the nation’s capital city, Canberra. According to Roland Barthes, objects like these constitute the mythological process, in which meaning is conveyed through “the decoration, consumption and imagining of certain objects”.⁵⁷ When material objects become symbolised, says Barthes, they lose their everyday functional existence and become part of a socially constructed mythology.

⁵⁶ Deborah Staines, “A Legal Trauma, A Public Trauma”, 160.

⁵⁷ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 109.

Barthes' theory about the symbolisation of objects can be applied to the Chamberlain artefacts and the popular views and beliefs they fuelled at the time, now presumably superseded by a more rational public knowledge. Prior to 1988, Azaria's black dress stood as proof of Lindy's "unnatural" mothering instincts, the white coffin as an indication of the family's preparation for Azaria's "sacrifice in the wilderness" and the dashboard of the Holden Torana vehicle was believed to be a shelter under which Lindy slit her baby's throat on 17 August 1980. By 1988, however, these views had mostly shifted, and the objects became a testament to the way the nation had behaved towards the now exonerated couple. In placing them on display, the museum anticipated high levels of public interest and an attitudinal shift enabling their preservation. This was confirmed in the comments of museum curator Sophie Jensen, that the Torana dashboard competes with the Wiggles "as one of the most popular exhibits".⁵⁸ On the subject of Azaria's black dress, she reported:

Everyone was an expert during the Chamberlain trial, everyone had a theory, and this dress is a great object for talking about the kind of judgments that people make based on small things. What kind of a mother dresses a child in black?"⁵⁹

Anxieties about a minority religion were projected on to a "small thing", such as Azaria's black dress, to substantiate claims that Lindy was an "unnatural" mother who "performed gender inadequately"⁶⁰ as were theories that Lindy had suffered postnatal depression and mourned the birth of her daughter by dressing her in black (Figure 4.4). While some objects had the power to condemn the Chamberlains and stifle their claims of innocence, others, like Azaria's matinee jacket had vindicated them. It was not until February 1986, almost six years after the disappearance, that the matinee jacket was discovered by accident during a police search for the body of British tourist, David James Brett, who had recently fallen from "the Rock" to his death. The matinee jacket had been found close to where Brett's body was recovered, and just 153 metres from where Wally Goodwin and his family had unearthed the bloody jumpsuit. Because of this discovery, and her earlier testimony that Azaria had worn

⁵⁸ Sophie Jensen, "Women Who Transgress", Background Briefing, *ABC Radio National*, 24 July 2005.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 116-7.

Figure 4.4



Photograph of Azaria Chamberlain's black dress, panties and booties, 1980.

Photo: Dragi Markovic

Courtesy of National Museum of Australia nma.img-ci20051423-026

the matinee jacket on the night she disappeared, Lindy was released from Berrimah prison. It was yet another object of significance in debate surrounding the Chamberlains' innocence, a fact not lost on *AWW*, which questioned: "Had ... the discovery of a weatherbeaten matinee jacket, made a new world for the Chamberlains? And will it help them in their crusade to clear their names?" (*AWW*, March 1986). At this time, the objects had acquired a new symbolic status in their "transference from the closed, literal world into the infinite and figurative".⁶¹

In recent years, attempts by state governments to ascribe a figurative value to material culture, including the Chamberlain artefacts, suggest the impact of museological discourse in shaping national identities. On the front page of "Good Weekend" magazine, a photograph of Azaria's black dress appears with the caption, "Shall we say \$500,000? How the bean-counters forced us to price our priceless treasures – from the Azaria collection to a flea from Darwin's Beagle" (*SMH*, 7 September 2002).⁶² The article refers to the decisions of both State and Federal Governments to quantify their "heritage assets" based on a method of "accrual accounting" known as Australian Accounting Standard 29 (AAS29). According to this valuation system, the Chamberlain collection (including Azaria's black dress), is estimated to be worth \$500,000, a figure calculated as the ceiling price if two interested parties with limitless funds were to bid for the item. Within this system, considerations are also made for the element of fashion – whether an item will increase in value through its public exposure, and the element of re-collection – whether the item is so rare that a scientist could not obtain an exact replica. Even though the Chamberlain collection was assigned a price tag, its symbolic value was suggested in the items it was housed alongside, including, Phar Lap's heart, a splinter from the Southern Cross aeroplane flown by Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith and a Tasmanian tiger carcass. As this argument implies, the museological discourse about the Azaria case that developed significantly between 1986 and 1988, was integral to the production of an Australian mythology.

This national mythology was anchored in the historical context of the objects' purchase during the development of a Bicentennial industry comprising posters,

⁶¹ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 110.

⁶² Jennifer Byrne, "The sum of us", *Good Weekend Magazine*, *SMH*, 7 September 2002, 16-19.

mugs, tea towels, commemorative coins, clothing and merchandise bearing the slogan “Celebration of a nation”. Images of the “Tall Ships” on Bicentenary memorabilia, the regal stamp of Queen Elizabeth II and Aboriginal cultural symbols characterised some of the visual iconography of this period. Notwithstanding their greater number and lesser value when compared with the Azaria artefacts, the Bicentenary memorabilia transformed the everyday existence of objects into marketable symbols of the nation and its people. Ultimately, the meanings applied to these objects registered the presence of a developing national identity, in a mould which cast Australia, in the Bicentenary, as an advanced and tolerant society, as both different from and enhanced by its colourful past history.

Filmic Discourse: Evil Angels and Australian Identity

In the midst of news of the couple’s exoneration in 1988, which was hoped to bring resolution to a case that for almost a decade had dominated Australian news headlines, the *Advertiser* stated that: “The chapter may not be the last ... [as] the story moves into wider realms of mythology with the film *A Cry in the Dark*” (*Advertiser*, 16 September 1988).⁶³ Released to Australian audiences under the name *Evil Angels* (1988), the Hollywood film about the disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain was an opportunity for promoters to showcase the nation. However, the subject matter undermined this task as there were concerns about the cost of filming on location at “the Rock”:

The fee for the movie about the Lindy Chamberlain saga has been the subject of intense speculation ... In the NT Legislative Assembly last week, Member for Araluen Eric Poole said he had been informed by a ‘reliable source’ that the fees being sought by the Mutitjulu community were about a million dollars (CA, 2 October 1981).

Even though this article was published in 1981 – before the Hawke Labor Government’s announcement of the transfer of title of the Uluru National Park to the Mutitjulu community on 11 November 1983 – it articulates the resentment held by

⁶³ American film distributors feared audiences might confuse the film with the gang of motorcycle riders dubbed “Hell’s Angels”. Therefore, for its international release the alternative title *A Cry in the Dark* (1988) was used, see Briar Wood, “The Trials of Motherhood: The case of Azaria and Lindy Chamberlain”, in *Moving Targets: Women, Murder and Representation*, ed. Helen Birch, (London: Virago Press, 1993), 75.

many settler Australians about the cost of entry to a national park, as one journalist noted: “These [Aboriginal] people have then magnanimously leased it [“Ayers Rock”] back to us for a fee currently estimated at around \$100,000 a year” (*SMH*, 18 December 1985). The fee, as his argument implies, is too high a price for non-Indigenous Australians to pay, especially since their rights were revoked to benefit a minority group and, while not stated, the assumption is that park entry is free for Aboriginal Australians.

Endeavouring to contextualise the figure sought by the Indigenous community which, as the article states is a “mystery” that “may never be revealed”, writer Dave Richards compares the costs of filming other big-budget Australian films in domestic and international areas either privately owned or managed by a trust:

An article in Sydney’s Sun-Herald claimed that the makers of *Crocodile Dundee* had paid the Plaza Hotel \$2000 an hour to film in the hotel ... They also reportedly paid \$60,000 to use an abandoned Brooklyn subway for the film’s final scene ... Producers of *Crocodile Dundee Two* were angry at having to pay \$200,000 location fee to the owners of Kakadu National Park (*CA*, 2 October 1981).⁶⁴

A reluctance to pay for what was largely seen as an area belonging to the Commonwealth and not any one group or individual framed the reception of the film and the discourses surrounding its release in 1988. As a docu-drama *Evil Angels* emerged in this period as part of the social realist genre of Australian filmmaking. The feature was, according to Scott Murray, a “cross between home movies and cinema-verite”, and placed emphasis, not on the couple’s guilt or innocence (for director Fred Schepisi endorses their story from the start), but on “the difference between the public perception and the private reality”.⁶⁵ Unlike reality, however, audience sympathy is with the Chamberlains from the film’s outset.⁶⁶ Yet the era in which this story was being told was significant, for it was released at the end of a critical stage in Australian cinema in the 1970s and 1980s.

⁶⁴ Note that the figures quoted in this article do not identify or distinguish between \$US and \$AUD.

⁶⁵ Scott Murray, ed., *Australian Cinema*, (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994), 139.

⁶⁶ Brian McFarlane, ed., et.al., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Film*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1999), 136.

Films like *Evil Angels* were part of the new phase of cinematic nationalism in which the Australian government implemented a range of initiatives to promote the arts. The then Prime Minister and patron, Gough Whitlam, stated his objective was to “...develop a national identity through artistic expression and to project Australia’s image in other countries by means of the arts”.⁶⁷ There are a number of scenes within the film which project Australia’s image, particularly in the promotion of, what Graeme Turner et.al. describe as an “authentic” landscape in the “outback” – a territorial location that, historically, has symbolised the national character, its values and sentiments.⁶⁸ Certainly, Schepisi draws on pioneer mythologies to depict images of the landscape as vast, unknown and mysterious. As with the earlier feature *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), it is never clear who is doing the watching, whether it be the audience, the characters or some supernatural force represented in the landscape itself. Indeed, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) was a milestone Australian film for its projection of non-Indigenous Australia’s artful relation to the bush in new and sophisticated ways, signalling a turning point in the style and tastes of local cinema. Thus, *Evil Angels* was released at the end of this new wave of Australian cinema, which saw the recurrence, in visual culture, of preoccupations with the Australian landscape.

Producers of *Evil Angels*, perhaps inspired by the success of the blockbuster *Crocodile Dundee* (1986) which re-played the Australian legend in ways that were self-referential and pitched at American audiences, cast American actor Meryl Streep in the lead role of Lindy Chamberlain. This appointment was not surprising given the pressures of film financing and an increase in local production costs in the 1980s which caused filmmakers to rely on the billing of well-known actors to gain international publicity and promotion.⁶⁹ Meryl Streep’s nationality was a topic of concern amongst critics (perhaps questioning her ability to portray an Australian middle-class Christian woman), as *Time* magazine asked: “Can Meryl Streep simulate a truly convincing nasal Strine whine? Is Robert Redford really handsome enough?

⁶⁷ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 169.

⁶⁸ Graeme Turner, ed., *Nation, Culture, Text: Australian cultural and media studies*, (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁶⁹ Scott Murray, ed., *Australian Cinema*, 95-6.

Why not Paul Hogan?”(15 June 1987).⁷⁰ Fortunately for Streep, the *New York Times* called her Australian accent “remarkable” and it was, presumably to the satisfaction of all concerned, that a handsome leading male actor, Sam Neill, was chosen to play the role of Michael Chamberlain (*New York Times*, 11 November 1988). Despite being a New Zealander, Neill acquired honorary Australian status following on from his role in a number of national Australian films such as *My Brilliant Career* (1979).

In spite of its ambition to lure international audiences, *Evil Angels* presented a dark vision of Australia’s social milieu in the 1980s, and particularly those public institutions which condemned the Chamberlains, a group Albert Moran and Errol Vieth describe as Lindy’s “tormentors” in the judicial, police, forensic and prison systems.⁷¹ Added to this number were the small-town gossips, radio talkback callers and joke tellers, who, they argue, comprised the “other agent of torture” in the film.⁷² In these scenes, says US film critic Roger Ebert, the representation of “public opinion as a sort of Greek chorus in the background” underlines the film’s mythological framework and the dramatic character of collective responses to Azaria’s disappearance (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 11 November 1988). For Felicity Collins, a similar process of “myth-making” was evident in the moment the film, acting on the Chamberlains’ behalf, “begins to function as some kind of avenging angel, swooping into pubs, press rooms and dinner parties across Australia, singling out bad taste and media hype for judgement and censure”.⁷³ In making belated amends for the trauma Lindy and Michael suffered, the film constructs a discourse of blame around the Australian public which it represents as gossipy, larrikin and preoccupied by the dingo baby case. Not unlike the Bicentenary which projected a multicultural vision of Australia and coincided with the film’s release, *Evil Angels* presents a narrative of nation that is about re-dressing the injustices of the past in order to assert the cultural and social progress of nation by the late 1980s.

⁷⁰ Robert Redford was originally touted to play the lead role of Michael Chamberlain in the film; a part which was later given to actor Sam Neill (*New York Times*, 11 November 1988).

⁷¹ Albert Moran and Errol Vieth, *Film in Australia: An Introduction*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 197.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ Felicity Collins, “Evil Angels”, in *Australian Film 1978-1994*, ed. Scott Murray, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995), 250.

Regardless of the criticism meted out to local institutions by Australian films of the new nationalism period, Richard White argues such projects were “applauded for their Australianness”.⁷⁴ Their self-critical approach appeared not to deter promoters or compromise revenues from international ticket sales. In fact, *Evil Angels* grossed \$6.908 million⁷⁵ at the US box office and had a delayed release across Europe and Scandinavia with an honorary screening in 1991 at the Centre George Pompidou in Paris.⁷⁶ All this points to the fact that *Evil Angels*, as its producer, director and actors have described, “was an 80s ‘project’”⁷⁷ which, as might be inferred from the projected aim of Bicentennial events staged in the same year as the film’s release, sought to redress mistakes made in the Chamberlain case by recognising past injustice through the marketing of Australia as a progressive nation. Not unlike the motivations behind an assemblage of Azaria artefacts at the National Museum, the film relayed to Australian audiences the degree to which the nation had matured in the wake of the Chamberlain media event.

Conclusion

In media coverage of the case between 1986 and 1988, a link was forged between Azaria’s disappearance, the handover of “Ayers Rock” and the 1988 Bicentenary via a series of myths concerning the Central Australian desert, non-Indigenous belonging and Aboriginal identity. They again resurfaced in media reports of the attack on Peter Falconio and Joanne Lees in both the British and Australian press, illustrating how the debate surrounding the Chamberlain case in 1988 was revived in another outback disappearance.

This chapter has also examined feminist analysis produced by Adrian Howe, Kay Schaffer and Julie Marcus between 1988 and 1989 and their arguments that in travelling to the centre, Lindy contravened a masculine frontier-nationalism. They argued that Lindy was “out-of-place” in the outback and, consequently, the victim of a national ideology that was populated with white, male iconic figures, such as the

⁷⁴ Richard White, *Inventing Australia*, 170.

⁷⁵ Note that the figure quoted does not identify either \$US or \$AUD currency, see Valerie Beard, “Evil Angels”, review of *Evil Angels* (movie), School of Media Communication and Culture, Murdoch University, 2000, 6. <http://wwwmcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/film/dbase/2000/EvilAngels.html>

⁷⁶ Scott Murray, ed., *Australian Cinema*, 336.

⁷⁷ Valerie Beard, “Evil Angels”, 7.

Bushman. By contesting the erasure or marginalisation of women in outback landscapes, feminist writing on the Chamberlain case highlighted the gendered structure of nationalism in this country. This alternate view differed from feminist critiques of previous years, in which Lindy was positioned as a victim of public prejudice and institutional malevolence, with little mention being made of the character of Australian national identity. As indicated, however, an imbalance in the literature on the case has led to Michael Chamberlain's absence from any sustained critical analysis. To some extent, he was judged by those gender structures shaping representations of Lindy's own figure and considered "out-of-place" in the Australian wilderness. Given the prevailing discourse of the time, it would seem that celebrations of Australian nationality provoked shifts in academic interpretations of Lindy, as they should also have of Michael.

In national museums the Chamberlain case was being remembered through the 1988 purchase of a range of trial exhibits. Similar to the Bicentenary travelling exhibition that commemorated various aspects of Australian identity over the past 200 years, in a much narrower sense, the Chamberlain exhibits were displayed in an effort to redefine and reinscribe the nation's identity. Myths were conveyed in these objects of discourse, in the way that Azaria's black dress had become a symbol of Lindy's unnatural mothering instincts and the miniaturised white coffin Michael used as a prop in his anti-smoking classes which evoked the spectre of religious sacrifice. These items were showcased, however, in an effort to promote an image of Australia as a developing and forward-thinking nation. This highly constructed image of nation, similar to that portrayed in *Evil Angels*, was a product of changes within the country's social, technological and organisational environments which enabled the pervasive circulation of images to serve as part of a period of national remythologising in the 1980s.

Filmic discourse of the period also articulated aspects of Australian national identity in response to Bicentennial initiatives, as well as more pressing economic and institutional developments. *Evil Angels* was released within the newly nationalistic phase of Australian cinema, in which efforts were made to promote, on a global scale, the arts and projects of local provenance. The film projected nationalised images of the landscape, primarily "Ayers Rock", while criticising the Australian public,

government and legal institutions for their involvement in the miscarriage of justice. And yet, there was a sense that, through this social realist narrative, Australian institutions including the public were paying penance for the treatment the Chamberlains received (paralleling or even displacing a deeper collective guilt over the dispossession of Aboriginal people), implying a desire to promote a progressive and evolving view of nation. In the following chapter I will consider the effect of this period of national re-mythologising by analysing attempts to preserve and maintain the sanctity of the original event in the face of its compounding interpretations.

CHAPTER 5: SIMULATION 1988-2005

You're seeing Tony and Simone's view of the research they've done into this. And in 10 or 15 years, someone else will have a go and it will be a different way around.

Lindy Chamberlain's comments refer to producers of the mini-series *Through My Eyes*, Tony Cavanaugh and Simone North. (*SMH*, 23 November 2004).

On 13 December 1995 the findings of the third coronial inquest into Azaria's disappearance were handed down. Contrary to the outcome of the Morling Inquiry in 1986 and the Chamberlain Convictions Act 1988, both of which attributed Azaria's death to a dingo attack, the magistrate presiding over the inquest found that her fate was undetermined and the death certificate should state "cause of death: unknown". One journalist writing for *The Age* newspaper reflected on the latest decision, by offering the Chamberlain case as an example of "... our Jack the Ripper, our Lindbergh kidnapping. This is our greatest 20th-century mystery. And an open finding now gives us licence to speculate – probably forever".¹ Others have since expressed their disappointment with the latest finding, with John Bryson and Coroner Denis Barritt, in particular, arguing that the decision encourages all manner of speculation about the infant's disappearance. For Bryson, it guarantees that in "the back-rooms of this culture" there will always be individuals "hard at work picking over the evidence" in the hope of gaining notoriety for uncovering "what everyone else missed ... [that] pins the Chamberlains to murder".²

The question of whether speculation about the Chamberlains will persist is rhetorical, mostly because the event, which continues to pique public interest over two and a half decades after Azaria's disappearance, has become the cultural benchmark against which all acts of injustice in Australia are measured. The recurrent nature of the case was evidenced in the programs *Oh What a Year* and *Twenty to One* aired on the Nine Network in 2006 in which Azaria's disappearance was positioned as part of the cultural milieu of the 1980s. Even in the writing of this thesis I have shown that the Chamberlain event continues to be a source of fascination and conjecture, and my

¹ S. Carney, "Baffled Legal System Writes Last Chapter in Chamberlain Saga", *The Age*, 14 December 1995.

² John Bryson in *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, ed. Adrian Howe, 268.

prediction is that, as new objects are unearthed, embargoes on private collections lifted and diary entries revealed in the public domain, the event will acquire new meanings and interpretations. How multiple representations of the Chamberlain story have affected its mode of telling, and whether our continued investment in the case has led to a loss of “original meaning” are of consequence in this chapter if we are to understand the way media events transform, evolve and are shaped by discursive patterns in society and culture.

Can we be certain that an “authentic” moment exists, or that some measure of “truth” lies beneath the surface of the Azaria Chamberlain mystery? For Christine Higgins and Noel Sanders, authenticity is contained in the natal event, that is, Azaria’s disappearance which, through its persistent re-telling, has suffered an inevitable loss of meaning. It has compromised in some sense the way the Chamberlain story is nationally articulated. Others have argued that readings of the event were determined by the pleasurable consumption of images and a public appetite for scandal, a theory borne out in editorialised comments that the “ping-pong decisions in the eight judicial hearings concerning the Chamberlains only added to the soap-opera compulsion of the story” (*Advertiser*, 16 September 1988) and that “It’s been more than eight long, often emotional, occasionally dramatic and sensational – and sometimes even painfully tedious – years (*CM*, 16 September 1988).³ If indeed the authentic moment was lost, then at what point did the “soap opera” narrative take over? This aspect seems most problematic since, from the outset, the dramatic potential of the story rendered the boundaries between “reality” and its “representation” obscure.

The periodic return of the Chamberlain case in cultural representations of the past twenty-five years can be considered in light of Jean Baudrillard’s theory of simulation. His theory of the “precession of simulacra” explains how, in the late capitalist era, the cycle of image production has impacted upon original events and primary forms. The result is the substitution of “signs of the real for the real itself” and the triumph of a “repressive kind of sign which aims to smooth over and cover up its failure to be, or even to reproduce, the real”.⁴ Signs of the real are produced with

³ Jennifer Craik, “The Azaria Chamberlain Case and Questions of Infanticide”, 128.

⁴ Chris Rojek and Bryan S. Turner, eds., *Forget Baudrillard?* (London: Routledge, 1993), 132.

each new representation of the Chamberlain story adding another layer to the narrative, as members of the public question the growing remoteness of the event in the face of compounding interpretations. No doubt, the proliferation of books, articles, films, plays and even an opera reinforces questions about where the boundaries lie between the Azaria event and its representation. Applying, in a new analytic, Baudrillardian theories about the simulacrum to primary representations of the Chamberlain case including the Frank Moorhouse docu-drama, *The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain* (1985), the Hollywood production by Fred Schepisi, *Evil Angels* (1988), the Moya Henderson opera, *Lindy* (2002) and the television mini-series, *Through My Eyes* (2004), I will consider whether the process of multiplication must always lead to the erosion of meaning and experience. By examining the Chamberlain case in the context of a growth in virtual media technologies and visual culture in the late twentieth century, this chapter gives insight into the way modern media events constitute the contemporary spectacle.

Simulation: Goya and the Chamberlain Event

Was Lindy a witch, a latter-day Eve, a seductress, a martyr, a woman persecuted, a media spokeswoman, a heroine, or all of the above? Whether you agree with these representations or not, there is little doubt that a relentless number of images circulated around her figure. As I suggested in Chapter Three, her behaviour, mode of dress and shifting physical shape brought about by pregnancy, weight loss and, more recently a thyroid condition, were meticulously detailed in media reports. The volume of images centring on Lindy and the dingo baby saga has been the subject of critical comment in analyses attributing to this process a “loss” of meaning in Azaria’s disappearance. Rather, the sheer number of representations has made it difficult to monitor or even determine the boundaries between the fictional and the real. The need to locate (if only in name) the infant’s disappearance has produced a language of authenticity around the circumstance at “Ayers Rock” which is referred to as the “primary text”, “original event”⁵ and “natal scene”.⁶ As this language reveals, Azaria’s disappearance is positioned as the founding source of a spectacular media event which remains separate and distinct from the generation of all subsequent

⁵ Christine Higgins, “Naturalising ‘Horror’ Stories”, 137.

⁶ Noel Sanders, “Azaria Chamberlain and Popular Culture”, 86.

representations. Adrian Howe, Christine Higgins and Noel Sanders variously concur on this point, implying that in the plethora of mediated images, a shift from or instability of original meaning occurred. In her most recent return to the Chamberlain case in 2005, Howe asserted that the infant's tragic death was transformed by, "almost every media outlet, but especially the press, into a ridiculous and savage tale", leading her to chart the "fictions of fantasy" produced.⁷ She added, it is "a story which refuses closure" and an open finding on the cause of Azaria's death at the third coronial inquest held in 1995, only "ensured that speculations founded on nothing more than imagination would continue indefinitely".⁸ Indeed, speculation will continue about a case that has dominated news headlines and made it difficult to police the boundaries between truth and imagination. However, it seems paradoxical that the "ridiculous and savage tale" told by the press could be separate from the event, since the two are linked in the collective consciousness. The relentless circulation of media images of the case has muddied the distinction between the event and its representation, since interpretations of the Chamberlain case are at once, and already, mediated.

Like Howe, Higgins attributes "instability of meaning" to the construction of myth in the Chamberlain news discourse.⁹ She argues that the "primary text – the story of Azaria's disappearance" lacks "fixed, stable meaning", as the reproduction of news and magazine articles, films, books and critical reviews has revealed the "original text's polysemy" or textual ambiguity.¹⁰ Ultimately, she argues, meaning resides not in the event, but in the "culturally and historically situated reader", who brings to the story his or her own culturally inscribed values and judgements. Of course, societies apply to certain objects and events interpretations that are context relevant and make sense for that particular social or cultural group. And, as Higgins argues, meaning is not irrevocably lost, but contained in "textual shifters" – those secondary representations provoking "new and evolving meanings" in the Chamberlain event.¹¹

⁷ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain 'revisited'*, 2.

⁸ *ibid.*, 6, 5.

⁹ Christine Higgins, "Naturalising 'Horror' Stories", 142, 137.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 142.

¹¹ Christine Higgins, "Naturalising 'Horror' Stories", 142.

However, references both she and Sanders make to an “original event”, imply that there was once a time when Azaria’s disappearance was contained and unmediated, that is, distinct from media influences and effects. It might be asked then, at what point did the event become liminal and polysemous? Was there a single moment or series of episodes which predated the constitution of Azaria’s disappearance as media event? My argument here is that the concept of an “original event”, rather than any meaning we might draw from Azaria’s disappearance, is unstable, mostly because in western democratic societies of the late capitalist era, individual experience is interpreted and shaped through a deluge of media images. The Chamberlain case, coinciding with this global phenomenon, exemplifies the shifting role and function of the Australian mass media in the 1980s, as well as the transformed appetites of audiences seeking gratification through entertainment news and variety formats. Given the rise of mass mediated culture, it is difficult to separate events from their saturated news coverage since, as Higgins argues, the lines between “the fictional and the real” have already blurred.¹²

For Sanders, the system of signs constructed within the Chamberlain media coverage resulted in the substitution of the “natal scene” with an alternate, mediated reality, one that he interprets through Goya’s *Los Caprichos* series, in particular, the piece “How they pluck her” which depicts “an innocent, cherubic child torn apart by clerics or lawyers, and a raging semi-domestic beast which someone (who? – the people?) is trying to bring under control”.¹³ Both representations of the dingo baby story and the prints have in common a loss of perspective, an obscuration of narrative and a series of formless meanings.¹⁴ Goya’s images are “neither of a ‘genre’, nor do they ‘represent’ anything” and, as with Azaria’s disappearance, seem incapable of articulating meaning beyond their “contourless” background.¹⁵ In the nightly news bulletins and newspaper reports, the case was represented through a number of “dislocated episodes”¹⁶ which, combined with a deluge of images, caused the Azaria story to become an “incontinent and excessive discourse” comprised of “gossip, jokes

¹² Christine Higgins, “Naturalising ‘Horror’ Stories”, 142.

¹³ Noel Sanders, “Azaria Chamberlain and Popular Culture”, 86.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Noel Sanders, “Azaria Chamberlain and Popular Culture”, 86-7.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 86.

[and] laughter”.¹⁷ Whilst Sanders concedes that an “incontinent discourse” was necessary to fill in the gaps and silences within official discourse – implying the range of meanings attached to the event and therefore the interpretations we, as the public, might bring to the story – the analogy he employs in Goya’s paintings to describe the Chamberlain event suggests the destabilisation of meaning and form, a condition in which no meaning can exist.

The use of Goya’s artwork in a subsequent article on the Chamberlain case by Paul Reynolds emphasises the violence and, to a great extent, the senselessness generated by media images of the infant’s death. It also indicates how academics were turning to the world of art to explain, understand and derive meaning from an event they saw as enigmatic, unknowable and without contemporary parallel. In February 2007, a similar device was used in the *SMH* in an online blog reporting on the comparison made by Macquarie University academic Anthony Lambert, between Schapelle Corby and Picasso’s “Weeping Woman”. A photograph of the “blue-eyed boogie boarder” is positioned alongside the famous portrait to illustrate the way artistic images and controversial individuals and events can symbolise wider social anxieties and judgements, as: “Schapelle is essential to the patterns of self-definition of Australian-ness”.¹⁸ In the context of the Chamberlain case, Reynolds conjures Goya’s disturbing image of “Saturn devouring one of his children”, arguing that myths about infanticide contributed to public unease over Azaria’s disappearance.¹⁹ The use of gothic artwork to convey media representations of the case as unnatural, formless and discordant, gives the overall impression that, in the dizzy circulation of images of Azaria’s disappearance, meaning was not just eroded but lost, possibly forever.

It would be difficult to argue that the original event had not suffered some form of “loss” as a result of the proliferation of media images. Of course, that which took place on 17 August 1980, has been reinterpreted and represented countless times in the last two and a half decades. However, there is an intensification that occurs in the process of layering and repetition adding to the experience of the simulacrum in

¹⁷ Noel Sanders, “Azaria Chamberlain and Popular Culture”, 87-88.

¹⁸ “Symbols: Corby distils the essence of the times”, *SMH* online blogs, posted 20 February 2007. <<http://blogs.smh.com.au/sit>> accessed same day.

¹⁹ Paul Reynolds, “The Azaria Chamberlain Case”, 3.

the case of the Chamberlain event. Rather than subtracting from the “meaning” of that original event, representations of the Azaria saga have actually contributed to its significance.

Jennifer Craik comes closest to this line of argument when she states that news reports of the event facilitated “an ongoing serial of episodes and possibilities, entailing frequent shifts to new areas and aspects of the case, to new forms of evidence, and to new public and official interventions”.²⁰ She suggests that reproductions of the Azaria saga “ensure the articulation and reformulation of issues of national importance from the family to the legal: speeches that can be re-written and silences that can be filled”.²¹ Representations of the Azaria case inspired rigorous debate of national issues including the role of the family, Australian identity and the proper dispensation of justice and in doing so, gave voice to varying and contradictory interpretations of the event.

Within the Chamberlain literature, arguments about the ceaseless production of images and the desire cultivated in the media spectacle correspond to historical interpretations of theories of simulation. In his study of ontological forms in Book 7 of *The Republic*, Plato makes a distinction between the “original” and its “image” in the “allegory of the cave”.²² In a series of dialogues, he argues that men untutored in the Theory of Forms (knowledge) are like prisoners in a cave, who, fixed with a network of chains around their necks and legs at the time of birth, have been prevented from turning their heads to gauge the world around them.²³ The cave dwellers mistake appearance for reality, misconstruing the origins and sounds of a series of shadows in front of them produced by a band of puppeteers carrying statues and figurines at the rear of an unseen parapet. While Plato’s intention was to show the invisible truths concealed in everyday life, the difference between appearance and reality identified by him is an early example of simulation as concept.

²⁰ Jennifer Craik, “The Azaria Chamberlain Case and Questions of Infanticide”, 127.

²¹ *ibid.*, 147.

²² Stanley Rosen, “*Plato’s Republic: A Study*, (New Haven: Yale University, 2005), 259.

²³ For further discussion of the allegory of the cave, see *ibid.*, 268-275.

From Plato's allegory, modern theories of the simulacrum – the product of processes of simulation – have been derived.²⁴ In French and American philosophy and literary theory since the 1960s, the concept has been applied to the mass consumption of images in the work of Jean Baudrillard (1981), and Frederick Jameson (1991), and to the analysis of high cultural texts found in Gilles Deleuze (1968) and Guy Debord (1970). Baudrillard, in particular, paints a seductive picture of late capitalist society in which consumption replaces production, spectacle replaces reality and signifiers float in the ether of a world of mediated and virtual representations. He argues that mass society appears “a collapsible, involuted universe in which ‘images precede the real to the extent that they invert the causal and logical order of the real and its reproduction’” and in the “precession of simulacra” he describes the historical transformation of the sign under the evolution of capitalism.²⁵ Such theories about the image suggest a resonant framework for understanding, in a much narrower sense, the transformation of the Chamberlain case from real event to simulacrum. They offer a set of propositions for better understanding the way images transform across time and within a landmark event.

Positioning Baudrillard's vision of late capitalist society – a simulated world of illusions, masks and fantasies in which the “original” has, quite possibly, disappeared altogether – alongside analyses of the “loss” implied in persistent representations of Azaria's disappearance, reveals a number of striking similarities. For one, there is a sense of nostalgia associated with the “loss” of the original, as much as there is delight taken in the heady consumption of images to which it has contributed. This might explain how Azaria's disappearance could be conceived as a “sorry affair” (*CM*, 16 September 1988) – a grievous and traumatic event – yet also “A chapter ... in the history of Australian criminal law” that “revealed some of the nation's soul” (*Advertiser*, 16 September 1988). Rather than leading to a diminution of meaning, however, representations of the Chamberlain case can be reframed in positive and productive terms, since there are varying degrees of complexity attending a real event and its representation that make it difficult to determine at what point one

²⁴ Kenneth Dorter argues that “our most common way of holding something for true is through images of reality in words and other media ... and from that it follows that we can be influenced politically by the manipulation of these images (in accordance with the cave), see Kenneth Dorter, *The Transformation of Plato's Republic*, (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), 203.

²⁵ Jean Baudrillard in *Forget Baudrillard?*, eds. Chris Rojek and Bryan S. Turner, 115.

begins and the other ends. This leads us to the question, where do the perimeters governing a modern media event lie? More accurately, can an “original event” exist in a world of mediated representations?

In the last decade much has been written about the shifting contours of media events in relation to changes within the modern public sphere:

The contemporary media doesn't simply report on events – it helps produce them. The intensive nature of media coverage makes it difficult for anyone to claim that it's possible to clearly separate high-profile events from their representation in the media. It follows then that it's also impossible to judge media coverage solely by the veracity or objectivity with which it represents an event. It's not only that the distance between the media and real events has all but disappeared, but that the illusion of a unified viewing point has vanished with it.²⁶

In the western world unmediated realities seem non-existent, as humans are always interpreting and organising their experiences through a variety of information channels. Intensive media coverage of Azaria's disappearance made it difficult to define the exact moment when the original event ended and its representations began, which might be one reason why filmmakers and dramatists have continued in their search for a more “authentic” portrayal of the event. By alluding to an autobiography, influential literary work or by interpolating into the narrative a cameo performance from a character in the real-life narrative, producers claim to tell a more convincing story, as is the case for Chamberlain essayists and writers, whose interpretations are intended to shed new light on the disappearance.

Even if we concede that a “primary event” or “original” circumstance might exist, it could hardly withstand a self-generating barrage of media representations. Yet this circumstance does not necessarily signal the end of meaning altogether; instead, meaning can be invented or resurrected after an event or via myths about its “point of origin”, as Baudrillard comments: “Point of origin ... is not the only source that

²⁶ Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha*, 23-4.

confers meaning. Myth of origin can be invented post-factum”.²⁷ Considering that in a new media age, representations are indelibly tied to the events they depict, the relationship between the original and copy needs to be reconsidered. In light of the Chamberlain case, this reveals the interconnectedness of (for want of a better term) the “original event”, with the range and diversity of its media representations.

Virtual Comparisons: “The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain” (1985), “Evil Angels” (1988) and “Through My Eyes” (2004)²⁸

Over the past twenty-five years there have been markedly different responses to representations of the Chamberlain story, translating to a substantial redefinition of what constitutes an original event (even calling into question the use of the term) and the process of simulation in which it is situated. My own analysis of the three major film and television projects on Azaria’s disappearance suggests that, as time lapses, claims of authenticity increase, so that the greater the distance from an original event, the more legitimate its representations strive to be. This is often because contemporary adaptations of a story contain new evidence or promise audiences a different vantage point from which to consider a well-known person or event. A new archive, controversial piece of information or artefact that challenges popularly held assumptions about an event or famous individual has the potential to authorise the story being told and the medium in which it is represented. This was the case for *Through My Eyes*, an adaptation of Lindy Chamberlain’s memoir published in 1990.

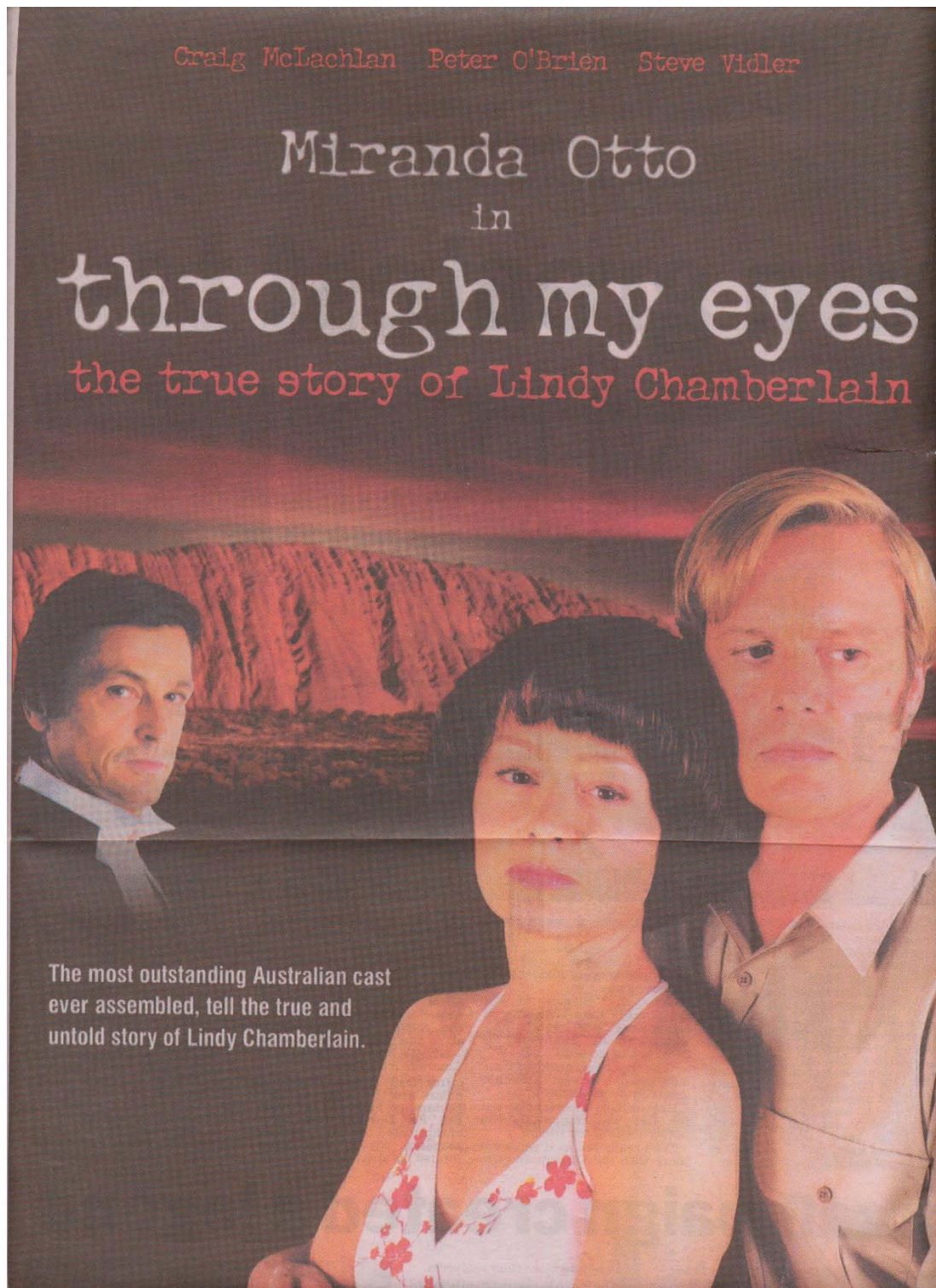
The mini-series was marketed as the definitive story, a spectacle to supersede all previous attempts and, in an advertisement in the *Sunday Telegraph*, was billed as the genuine Australian article: “The most outstanding Australian cast ever assembled, tell the true and untold story of Lindy Chamberlain” (Figure 5.1). In the Seven Network Ratings Report of its first screening, the mini-series peaked at 1.29 million viewers (achieving strong results in the 16-24 age bracket), while on the following night it duplicated these results with an audience of 1.06 million.²⁹ Distributors of the production claimed that: “It was one of the highest rating series on commercial

²⁷ Douglas Kellner, ed., *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 129.

²⁸ See Appendix C for a copy of the 2 x 2-hour mini-series on DVD, courtesy of Beyond Distribution.

²⁹ Seven Network Ratings Report, compiled 24 and 25 November 2004 (Courtesy of Beyond Distribution).

Figure 5.1



Channel Seven advertisement for *Through My Eyes* (2004), published in the *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 November 2004.

television for 2004, reaching over 1 million viewers per night”, a success reflected in the industry accolades the program received at the 2005 Australian Logie Awards, at which Miranda Otto was awarded a Silver Logie for the category “Most Outstanding Actress in a Drama Series” and the production nominated in the category “Most Outstanding Mini-Series/Telemovie”.³⁰ It was, as director Di Drew told *Inside Film*: “... probably one of the biggest mini-series we’ve done in this country. There are six hundred and ninety scenes and quite a lot of them have four parts because we have some split-screen work. The design and structure of the screenplay is very complex”.³¹ Given the scale and size of the project, the combination of authentic television news footage, content from talk back radio and original news headlines in an analeptic and non-linear narrative structure, audiences were provided with a story that in its re-telling captured a quality real-life had missed.

Some of these authentication devices were utilised more than a decade earlier by the producers of *Evil Angels* (1988), an adaptation of John Bryson’s book of the same name. Yet, as Scott Murray argues, this film was part of a documentary tradition that placed emphasis on the “true” rather than the “real”, resulting in a simple narrative (one that occurs in the present) “without flourish or inventive twists” displaying an “obsession for period accuracy” and “an acting style that is bogged down in a realist mode”.³² As to the mini-series, however, Jim Schembri reported in *The Age* that its “documentary authenticity” did not minimise the dramatic potential of characters and events on screen: “Thankfully, *Through My Eyes* is not a by-the-numbers-affair. The attention to detail may be exhaustive but the viewing experience is far from exhausting” (*The Age*, 18 November 2004). Conceptual differences between the “true” and the “real” separate the film from the mini-series (and, for that matter, earlier and later representations of the case) with *Through My Eyes* exhibiting a cinematic sense of proportion in a narrative “more real” than the event itself.

Apart from being categorised because of their resemblance to either the “true” or the “real”, filmic texts on the Chamberlain case are also governed by their timing within the evolution of the judicial case. For instance, the Frank Moorhouse docu-

³⁰ Beyond Distribution, “Fast Facts: *Through My Eyes*” (Courtesy of Beyond Distribution). <http://www.beyond.com.au/television/catalogue/drama_n_telemovies/7.html#through_my_eyes>

³¹ Di Drew, “Through My Eyes”, *Inside Film*, (September 2004): 15.

³² Scott Murray, *Australian Cinema*, 139.

drama was produced in the context of assumptions about Lindy Chamberlain's guilt; *Evil Angels* was released within two months of the Chamberlains' official exoneration by the Northern Territory Court of Criminal Appeal; while *Through My Eyes* was made in the wake of the indeterminate cause of death finding. This would suggest that representations of the case are situated and valued according to their particular historical horizon of judgement. As well as mirroring the social context of their production and therefore acquiring further critical acclaim, recent dramatisations of the Chamberlain story have at their disposal greater lens and reel technology and the enhanced visual and auditory performance of today's television and cinema screens. The utilisation of technology aside, changes in the way biopics have been narrated over the past two and a half decades show how the potential for meaning has actually increased in spite of the weakening of the original event.

The favourable response of critics to more recent representations of the Chamberlain story despite their capacity to replace and/or destabilise the original event is indicated in a range of critical reviews. *Through My Eyes* for instance was described as a "mammoth production" involving 156 speaking roles and, as the first motion picture to be shot on location in the national park since its hand-over to traditional owners in 1985, was deemed markedly authentic.³³ It received further praise for being an "intriguing" drama based on "actual events" and incorporating a cameo from the woman at the story's centre, Lindy Chamberlain.³⁴

At its full dress rehearsal Moya Henderson's opera *Lindy* (2002) was described as having: "earned a generous response from the audience of Opera Australia subscribers and friends".³⁵ The performance on opening night was judged an "uncomfortable triumph" for chronicling "the grotesque feeding frenzy which devoured Lindy Chamberlain after Azaria's death" and juxtaposing a "grieving mother" and an "obsessed" and "blinded" prosecution intent on proving her guilt.³⁶ The contemporary rendition of the character "Lindy" by Lithgow soprano Joanna Cole earned her praise for having a "commanding presence and beautiful voice

³³ Richard Clune, "Looking back at Lindy's tragedy", T.V. Guide, *Sunday Telegraph*, 21-27 November 2004, 4-5.

³⁴ Scott Ellis, "Looking back into darkness", Television Magazine, *Sun-Herald*, 21-27 November 2004, 5.

³⁵ Michael Bodey, "Dingoes don't sing and Lindy won't hug screws", *DT*, 24 October 2002, 25.

³⁶ Peter McCallum, "Grotesque power in cutting close to the bone", *SMH*, 26-27 October 2002, 2.

covering about 3 ½ octaves”.³⁷ Her “warm voiced and strong” performance was accompanied by instruments “enlivened by bird songs, primitive repeats and effective textual variety” and directed by a composer, who “embraced the monstrous injustice with music which was attractive, naïve, direct and telling”.³⁸

A comparative analysis respectively of the opera *Lindy* and the television mini-series *Through My Eyes* might, on the surface, appear unsustainable since each performance is drawn from a different medium and is a product of the conventions of high and mass culture. Traditionally, the concept of “opera” has been associated with the eighteenth century Italian style “opera seria” in which characters were drawn from Greek and Latin mythology and placed in a narrative that bore an artificial and predictable formula and structure:

These works as a rule presented a conflict of human passions in an action based on some story from an ancient Greek or Latin author; they made use of the conventional cast of two pairs of lovers and subordinate personages, and quite often brought in a favorite [sic] eighteenth-century character, the ‘magnanimous tyrant’.³⁹

For many unfamiliar with operatic repertoire or the history of its differing styles, “opera seria” has become shorthand for the entire art form which is commonly viewed as elitist, overly dramatic and detached from the real world. However, there were changes occurring in the performance of opera in the late nineteenth century that affected the way narratives were traditionally staged. The “verismo” or “verism” movement emerged at this time and involved the staging of realist narratives, events and historical figures. While initially short lived, the movement intensified in Australia in the 1990s which, undoubtedly, had an impact upon the performance of the Opera Australia production *Lindy*. The Italian ideological movement of “verismo” – literally “realism” – rejected as subject matter scenes drawn from classical mythology and popularised in the Enlightenment period and in nineteenth century Romanticism, to embrace the “... serious treatment of reality; the serious

³⁷ Malcolm Brown, “Lindy captures tragedy’s heart”, *SMH*, 26-27 October 2002, 2.

³⁸ Peter McCallum, “Grotesque power in cutting close to the bone”, 2.

³⁹ Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 4th ed., (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1988), 566.

representation of the socially inferior; all shown against the background, as part, of contemporary historical change”.⁴⁰ Sonorous or pleasant melodies were replaced by a real, sometimes violent, and fragmented musical score that mirrored the emotions of characters on stage, aspects of the story or background scenery.

As with the mini-series, the opera *Lindy* placed emphasis on the “real”, rather than the “true”, drawing as inspiration from the “verismo” style of performance. At times, the musical accompaniment was unpleasant particularly at the point the Chamberlains discovered Azaria was missing and the musical director conveyed through clanging brass instruments, Lindy’s raw and unfettered emotions. The “verismo” style of performance also pervaded a script that, particularly in legal jousts between characters playing Lindy and the Prosecuting Counsel, Ian Barker QC, was drawn from actual court transcripts. It is not unreasonable to compare the Chamberlain television mini-series with the Henderson opera since, as Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca argue in their discussion of “verism” in the authoritative text, *A History of Western Music* (1988): “The veristic opera is the innocent grandfather of the television and movie thriller”.⁴¹ *Lindy* resembled television in the way that characters on stage were cast as “ordinary” figures in everyday circumstances, with male performers huddled around a barbecue at twilight wearing stubbie shorts and tee shirts and grasping cans of beer and tongs, while the women on stage prepared salads to accompany the meal and organised the children for bed. The opera’s performance of a realist narrative echoes the recent surge in public interest for reality television with the publicity of privacy following the rise of the Australian mass media and the restructuring of the public sphere in the 1970s and 1980s. It is not surprising that *Lindy* was influenced by television, and that it intertextualised some of television’s conventions since, as Sanders and Higgins separately point out, the case was interpreted through the camera lens as it unfolded in nightly news broadcasts.⁴²

Verist opera intensified during the writing and production of *Lindy* (note that the opera was ten years in the making), as a number of the performances it was staged

⁴⁰ Martin Greenberg, “Giovanni Verga’s Verismo”, *New Criterion* 22.9 (May, 2004) Thomson Gale Network <<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.library.usyd.edu.au/itx/>>

⁴¹ Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 801-2.

⁴² Sanders described the Azaria case as “an unfolding TV spectacle”, see Noel Sanders, “Azaria Chamberlain and Popular Culture”, 88; while Higgins called it an “on-going media spectacular”, see Christine Higgins, “Naturalising ‘Horror’ Stories”, 143.

alongside in the 2002 Opera Australia season drew on this tradition. Apart from *Lindy*, the “Winter Calendar” included Pietro Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* (*Rustic Chivalry*, 1890) and Ruggiero Leoncavallo’s *I pagliacci* (*The Clowns* 1892), considered to be the “veristic operas *par excellence*”.⁴³ To an extent this style has continued in modern repertory as in March 2007, Opera Australia began casting for Jake Heggy’s rendition of the real-life story turned Hollywood feature film *Dead Man Walking*. In the last ten years opera has increasingly borrowed from film and has intertextualised some of its conventions including screen projected images. This is also seen in the revival of historical figures and the staging of scenes from “real life”.

While opera and television meet different occasions and serve different social functions, in comparing them it is important not to make rough and ready distinctions between “popular” and “quality” news literature or, as it applies here, “high” and “mass” culture. As I argued in Chapter One, such divisions obscure the cross-over that occurs in late capitalist society among different types of media. Analysing the *Lindy* opera alongside the mini-series *Through My Eyes*, gives insight into the production of images in late capitalist society and the impact of television on various art forms.

The praise the mini-series and opera attracted seems to undermine arguments expressing nostalgia for the “loss of the original” since, in these cultural representations, the “real” has been supplanted by the “true”, challenging any sense that an original ever existed. As *Lindy* and *Through My Eyes* are not constrained by the re-casting of the event in temporal sequence or the limited technology of earlier dramatic representations, they are free to explore the domains of the imaginative and virtual. Hence, characters, scenes and situations are reinterpreted, performed out of sequence and sometimes fictionalised yet, in the eyes of the film critics surveyed earlier, are part of greater twenty-first century contributions to the Chamberlain story.

In glaring contrast to these recent productions, the docu-drama *The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain* (1985), written by Frank Moorhouse and

⁴³ Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 802.

broadcast on 16 December 1985⁴⁴ was described as a “darkly numinous” film.⁴⁵ With the lead actress (Elaine Hudson), the portrayal of Lindy Chamberlain as a woman “in thrall of demonic obligation”,⁴⁶ was considered lacking in credibility and “yet another unconscionable representation”.⁴⁷ Its critical and academic appraisal, however, needs to be situated in relation to the exact judicial phase of the Chamberlain case, that is, when Lindy was serving her mandatory life sentence in Berrimah Prison. Acknowledging the historical context of the film’s release gives insight into Moorhouse’s decision to canvass various explanations for Azaria’s disappearance, including a scene in which he re-stages the prosecution explanation that it was murder by mother’s hand.

Similar in its reception, the Hollywood collaboration *Evil Angels* (1988) received a mixed response from local and international audiences, despite Meryl Streep receiving a Best Actress award at Cannes for her portrayal of Lindy Chamberlain. American cinema-goers were described as having “trouble with the film’s dark tone and Meryl’s strange accent”,⁴⁸ while director Fred Schepisi was alleged by Briar Wood, in her analysis of the case, to have reinforced the “mysterious and enigmatic” discourse surrounding Lindy Chamberlain by employing an American actor (Streep) in the lead role. It has been argued that the casting of Streep dislocated Chamberlain’s character “in terms of a personal, familial or social past”, highlighting Lindy’s “foreignness” as a woman who was marginalised because of her religion and who had failed to grieve in public.⁴⁹

As critical responses have shown, later representations of Azaria’s disappearance are deemed more credible than their earlier counterparts. *The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain* (1985) was a comparative failure, since it had neither the reach nor the appeal of subsequent films on the case. This was surprising, as it was the first commercial film production to represent the disappearance and was

⁴⁴ There are varying dates associated with the release of *The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain*. According to the *National Film and Sound Archive*, which holds the original two-inch tape the production date was recorded as 1984, while the broadcast date was 16 December 1985.

⁴⁵ Norman H. Young, *Innocence Regained*, 20.

⁴⁶ John Bryson, *Evil Angels*, 539.

⁴⁷ Adrian Howe, ed., *Lindy Chamberlain ‘revisited’*, 124-5.

⁴⁸ *The Australian Magazine*, 11-12 August 1990.

⁴⁹ Briar Wood, “The trials of motherhood”, 77.

likely to have been a highly anticipated project. Unlike *Evil Angels*, which boasted a Hollywood production team and an international audience, the Moorhouse documentary had none of the stylistic features of a big-budget film. The humble typewriter on which he (presumably) recorded the film's script appears several times in scenes showing the author positioned behind his study desk, narrating the story. The film begins with the graphic intertitle: "The following film may contain some scenes which could offend. Viewer discretion is advised" and following is a brief summary of the events leading to Azaria's disappearance.

In the first scene "Ayers Rock August 1980", Lindy (Elaine Hudson) is seen feeding baby "Azaria" in the family's Holden Torana car, with "Ayers Rock" glowing in the immediate background. The family is then shown preparing a barbecue as Lindy puts her infant to bed in the nearby tent. At this moment, the words "Mrs Chamberlain's testimony" appear on screen, and what follows is a re-enactment of Lindy, her face frozen in disbelief, shrieking in synthesised vocal distortion the line, "The dingo's got my baby". In the next scene, a cut-away technique replaces the nightmarish incident at "the Rock" with commentary from Moorhouse, who is stationed in a gazebo. Daytime gives the impression of a distance between the narrator and his story, as he remarks:

In my lifetime as an author, as a writer of stories, no other case has excited the public imagination more than the disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain. Even before it came to a coroner's court, the public imagination, or if you like, folk imagination had been inflamed by it and was weaving its own tales. The disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain was one I would call a psychic drama. It had all the elements: strange behaviour in the animal kingdom, strange names – "Azaria", the "Devil's Marbles", "Fertility Cave" – a little known religion and powerful mythologies. At the centre of all this the elemental bond between a mother and her child and our dread of infanticide. The story I will tell you rests on all that is safely known of the case. But we'll look at the folk theories which emerged, often non-rational; we'll look at how the rational

legal system struggled to explain it; and finally we'll look at how we reacted when faced by it.⁵⁰

Several times Moorhouse interrupts the dramatic flow of the story to narrate events and, as in the extract above, is filmed in a study, in scrubland and atop one of the many crevices at “Ayers Rock” describing the “powerful mythologies” attending the location of the dingo attack. The identification between film and audience is lost, however, since interruptions in the narrative afford little opportunity to engage with the story in any effective way. Most likely, the filmmaker assumed viewers were familiar with the case and already participants in the unfolding real-life drama. Thus, he selects a documentary format to narrate a largely sequential and detail-oriented narrative. At one interval, when Moorhouse is discussing the folktales surrounding Azaria’s disappearance, he gives an indication of the separateness of the event:

The disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain out there in the wilderness of the central Australian desert stirred deep communal memories. We have a rich folklore about babies being taken from their mothers, say, by gypsies or by animals, and raised in the animal kingdom. We have folktales about wicked mothers and wicked stepmothers. In the Bible we have the Old Testament stories of the sacrifice of children – blood sacrifices to appease God – and because this happened out at Ayers Rock, a sacred Aboriginal site, we had a fusion of European folklore and Aboriginal mythology ... (Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive).

Even though cultural beliefs had an enormous impact on the event, Moorhouse separates Azaria’s disappearance from the “deep communal memories” inspired by “European folklore” and “Aboriginal mythology”. Instead of incorporating these folktales into the dramatic narrative for instance, by allowing characters to articulate communal fears about infanticide, child sacrifice or animal abduction, Moorhouse appears as a social scientist or anthropologist diagnosing and analysing their impact on popular attitudes towards the Chamberlains. He emphasises the difference between the original event and the beliefs it inspired as a way of appraising Australia’s

⁵⁰ Frank Moorhouse, *The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain* dir. Judy Rymer, (Australian Film Commission, 1984). (Courtesy of the National Film and Sound Archive).

response to the tale of a missing infant and, by frequently intruding into the narrative, he preserves the original event (albeit a performance of it) in an off screen space, far removed from the dramatic tensions on screen.

In the \$8 million television drama *Through My Eyes* (2004), however, the original event seems to disappear altogether as we confront a simulacrum that feigns the historical existence of the real. Unlike Moorhouse's documentary, the original event grows ever more remote as reel and real elements are combined to produce a narrative with little regard for its point of origin. The disclaimer at the series' opening suggests this by upholding the accuracy of the film's content: "This is a drama based on true events. All court proceedings, police interviews and police telephone calls come from transcripts taken at the time".⁵¹ As well as original transcripts, the mini-series contains in its credits a list of archival sources, including ABC Television, Channel 7, and radio stations 2UE Sydney, ABC and 3DB in Melbourne, all of which were consulted in the making of the production. Framing and legitimising the narrative, directors Simone North and Tony Cavanaugh use the primary source material to recreate the mood and events spanning the Chamberlain case. While historically accurate, the use of actual court transcripts and newsreel within the dramatisation compromises the original event by obscuring the line between reality and representation. One might question the use of the term "reality" here, since the news footage is itself a mediated phenomenon.

In a scene tracing the televised delivery of Coroner Barritt's findings at the first inquest, there are a number of instances in which reality is subsumed by its representation. Unidentified "ordinary" Australians are depicted watching on television and listening on radio to the verdict being read by Barritt, as the scene moves from the courtroom to the nation's living rooms. Characters in the film are legitimised by their spatial proximity to real-life events, leading to the dissolution of time frames between the past (as represented on the television screen) and the present (as represented by the actors on screen), features of the simulacrum interpreted

⁵¹ *Through My Eyes*, dir. Tony Cavanaugh and Simone North, (Liberty and Beyond Productions, Channel Seven, 2004).

through Umberto Eco's "levelling of pasts".⁵² But the originality of the footage is not clear. In contrast to the rest of the film stock, the coroner's televised findings appear grainy and static, connoting the age and relative authenticity of the reel.⁵³ It matters little whether the material is authentic or not, because if it *appears* real, it *is* real. The same scene is similarly constructed in *Evil Angels* in which monochromatic footage adopts the appearance of the real, making it difficult to discern where "truth" begins and fabrication ends. This effect is described in postmodern theory as the "art language of the simulacrum", in which qualities of the real are adopted in representations of the real.⁵⁴

The collapse of reality and simulation visualised in the mini-series need not erode or destroy the potential for or existence of meaning. By offering audiences multiple viewing points and distilling the entire event into a concise four-hour spectacle, *Through My Eyes* affirmed Michael and Lindy's claims of innocence. The series also extended beyond the limits of other renditions of the Azaria story. Point of view is not just limited to the Chamberlains, as it was in *Evil Angels*, or to a narrator, as in the Moorhouse documentary, but extended to the thoughts of real-life characters including the prosecuting counsel, Ian Barker QC, the dissenting trial juror, Yvonne Cain and, to some extent, even the dingo responsible for Azaria's abduction. In fact, the second part of the series revolves around Cain's diary entries and notes kept during the trial and interviews she gave to the media after the verdict.⁵⁵ The following comments she made in an interview with Paul Jenkins for Channel Seven in Perth were re-enacted in the production and narrated from Cain's perspective:

We had the whole courtroom to walk around and look at, so we did a few little experiments. We held the baby doll that was the same size as Azaria and sort of dragged it along the floor to see how the dog would have dragged it. It

⁵² Umberto Eco, *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality*, trans. William Weaver, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1986), 9.

⁵³ Adapted from the technical modes of construction, in Keith Selby and Ron Cowdery, *How to Study Television*, (London: Macmillan, 1995).

⁵⁴ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, (London: Verso, 1991), 21.

⁵⁵ In September 2006, Yvonne Cain's diary entries were sold to the highest bidder on Australia's online auction site eBay.

didn't work like that, so, as we did those few experiments and looked at things closely, we all swayed towards the guilty.⁵⁶

As Cain's voice narrates the scene, members of the trial jury drag along the floor an effigy of Azaria, simulating the moment of her abduction. The reliance on Cain's media interviews to construct a unique narrative voice demonstrates how the original event and its representation are intimately linked. Her reflections on the event provide audiences with yet another perspective and, while they might contribute to the "loss of the original" – itself a nostalgic term – it is possible that by using news footage from the time to interpret the jury's deliberation, producers have actually enhanced the significance of the event. This is also the case within the closing moments of the film, when an imaginary relation is established by the use of a frontal camera angle to adopt the dingo's perspective. The audience becomes the eyes and ears of the snorting and sniffing animal carrying its prey to a brood of cubs. Even though the interaction represented between audience and subject is manufactured by producers to reflect their own attitudes and designs audiences can still refuse to accept the intended message.

As well as enriching the Azaria event by offering audiences multiple narrative perspectives, the mini-series extends beyond the temporal limits of the earlier documentary and motion picture. Where *The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain* concluded with Lindy's sentencing at the Supreme Court trial, and *Evil Angels* with her release from prison, *Through My Eyes* explores contemporary theories about the infant's disappearance: was she abducted by a dingo bitch to feed her young; buried by a local to conceal the evidence; or did she survive to live amongst Aborigines in the central Australian desert?⁵⁷ The second theory was raised by former Melbourne truck-wrecker, 78 year old Frank Cole, who, fearing he was on his deathbed, told police he had seen Azaria in the dingo's mouth on the night of 17 August 1980 and, with two or three accomplices, shot the animal responsible and buried the infant in a suburban backyard in the Melbourne suburb of Parkville (*SMH*, 10-11 July 2004).

⁵⁶ Norman H. Young, *Innocence Regained*, 26-7.

⁵⁷ This latter theory was current at the time of production and followed claims made by an Adventist Minister that on a visit to the Northern Territory he saw a woman of "light skin-colour" living amongst a tribe of Aborigines.

In a sequence of events that mirrored the discovery of Azaria's matinee jacket at "the Rock" during police investigations into the death of a British tourist who had fallen to his death in February 1986, Cole made his confession to police also after a serious fall in which he injured his hip and leg – coincidentally, two accidents had precipitated further investigations into Azaria's disappearance. While the matinee jacket's discovery has been well documented on film, Cole's confession, coinciding with pre-publicity for the mini-series, no doubt, shaped aspects of the plot and the context of its reception, despite Tony Cavanaugh's comments to the *Herald-Sun* newspaper that: "This [Cole's revelation] could not have come at a worse time for us because, while we don't believe it, if someone verifies it then we would have a major problem because our story would be wrong".⁵⁸ Regardless of whether his confession impacted upon the mini-series – it was speculated in the press that in the months before its broadcast Cole had colluded with producers to generate further publicity for the Channel Seven production – its timing made the event and its representation all the more relevant. Azaria's twenty four year-old disappearance had become topical once again. Thus, each time a layer is added to the narrative, new meaning is invested, with the event an example of the "accelerating" progress of postmodern life in which "finalities", ie definitive interpretations and endings are destroyed.⁵⁹

Differing representations of the Azaria story imply that the event is part of an ongoing process of simulation in which any authoritative version is destroyed. This is shown in the way productions incorporate original news footage, highlighting the relationship between a real event and its accumulation of representations. In the mini-series *Through My Eyes*, two fictional characters "Chris, the Government Advisor" and "Trevor, the Political Advisor" are filmed at a Darwin pub watching the Azaria event unfold on television in the scene "Petty Sessions Bar". Despite being a creation of the mini-series, their roles are authenticated by means of their close proximity to newsreel from the actual time. They are depicted watching "real" footage on the Chamberlains in a "live" context, thereby blurring the lines between past and present, original and copy.

⁵⁸ Tony Cavanaugh, "Through My Eyes", *Inside Film* (September 2004): 14.

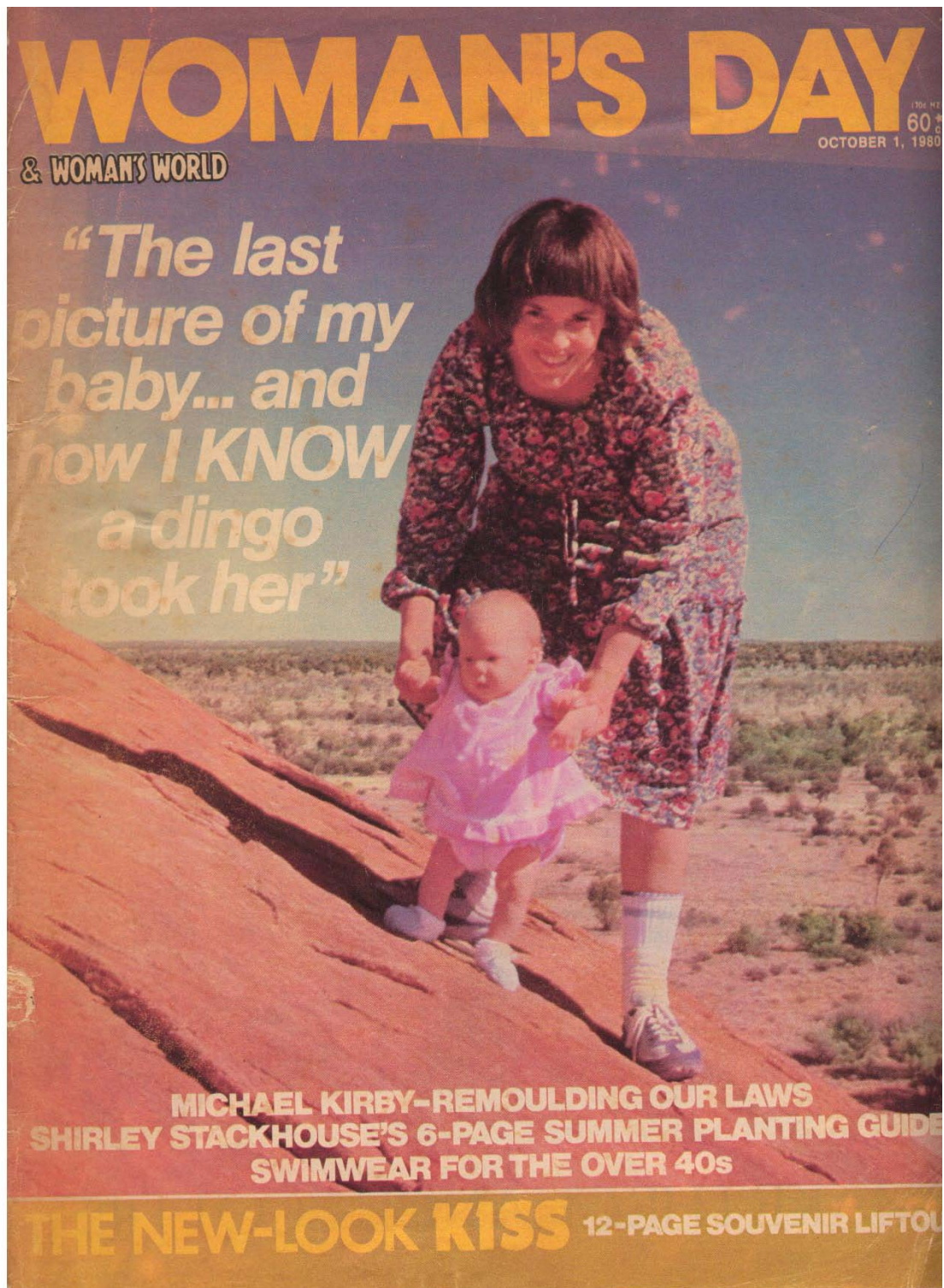
⁵⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 161.

Evil Angels, released to international audiences on 4 November 1988 under the title *A Cry in the Dark* (1988), used a different method of depicting the Chamberlain story. Whereas the Moorhouse production was overlaid with commentary and *Through My Eyes* told in an episodic and non-linear format, *Evil Angels* comprised a continuous, chronological narrative that preceded the original event. Beginning with Azaria's christening in Mt Isa, it follows the Chamberlains on their holiday to "Ayers Rock" and then, tracing the disappearance, the first two inquests, trial and the Chamberlains' appeal to the High Court, concludes with a welcome home service for Lindy at the Adventist College in Cooranbong held after her release from prison in 1986. A postscript at the film's end updates the story with news of Michael and Lindy's official exoneration by the Northern Territory Court of Criminal Appeal on 15 September 1988.

Two scenes in the film *Evil Angels* and mini-series *Through My Eyes* highlight across time the changing conventions of film texts and the varying ways in which they speak to each other and to the original event. A controversial photograph of Lindy and Azaria at the base of "Ayers Rock" taken just hours before the infant's disappearance, and later used as the front cover of *WD* magazine on 1 October 1980, demonstrates the authentication devices filmmakers use and the challenges inherent in representations of reality. The image, reproduced as it first appeared in the women's periodical, remains faithful to its original (albeit, mediated) context. Lindy Chamberlain is shown holding her daughter's hands in an upright position with the words "The last picture of my baby ... and how I KNOW a dingo took her" (*WD*, 1 October 1980 – see Figure 5.2). Yet, in *Through My Eyes*, the same photograph is changed slightly, with the face of the actress playing Lindy, Miranda Otto, superimposed onto the frame. Otherwise the magazine cover is unchanged – same title, same headline, same date, same photograph – but doctored to maintain an on-screen logic and reality.

By preserving the original photograph and an image of the "real" Lindy Chamberlain, *Evil Angels* creates a disjunction between reality and its representation, as Meryl Streep is shown to be merely performing the title role. In the mini-series, Miranda Otto is authenticated as Lindy Chamberlain in a photograph that replaces

Figure 5.2



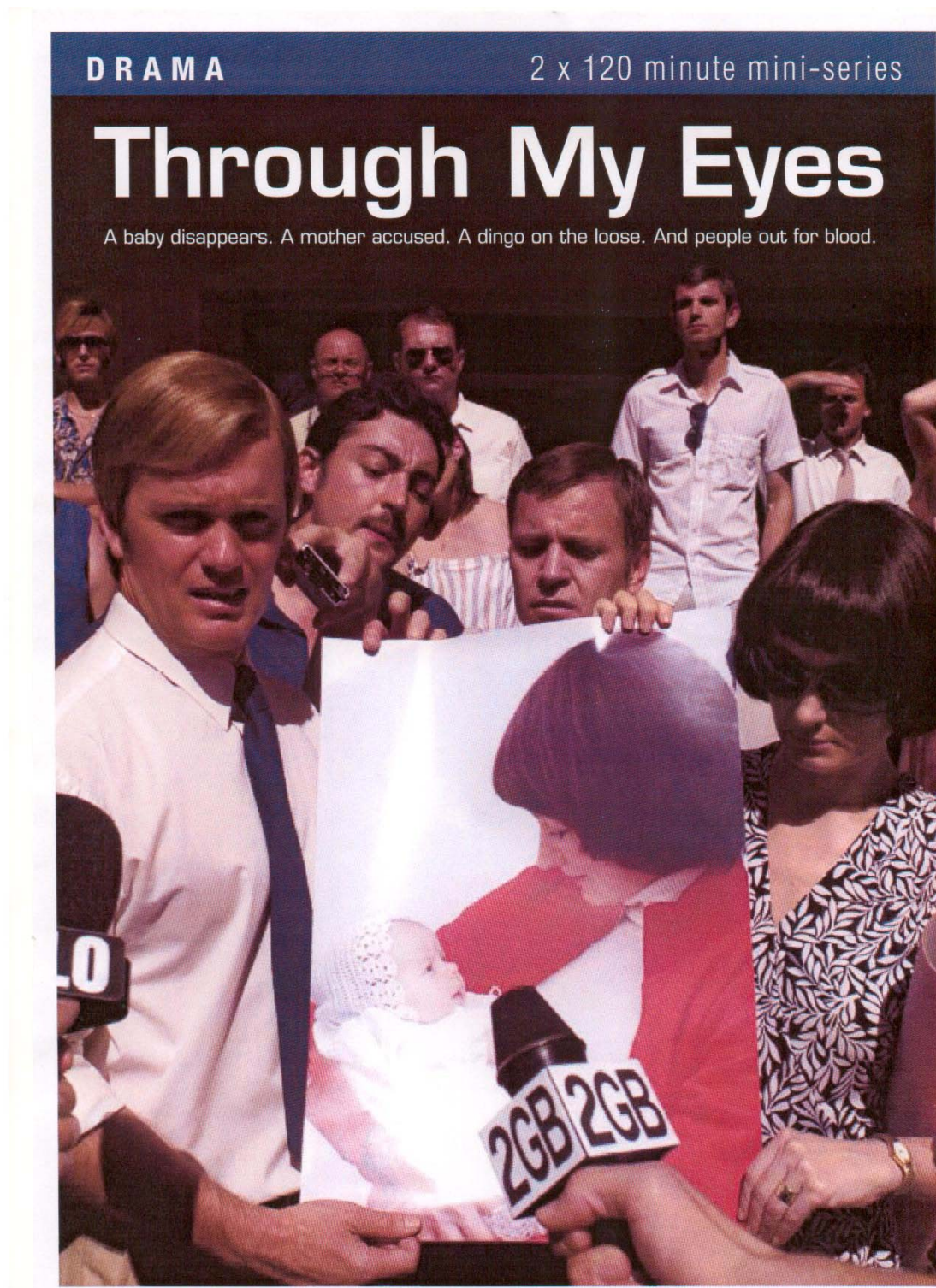
The front-cover of *Woman's Day* magazine's first issue on the Azaria Chamberlain disappearance, 1 October 1980. The photograph was originally taken by Michael Chamberlain atop "Ayers Rock" and was billed as the last one seen of the infant alive.

altogether the existence of a real persona. A similar effect is achieved in the scene depicting the Chamberlains on the steps of the Alice Springs courthouse following the handing down of Coroner Denis Barritt's findings at the first inquest (Figure 5.3a). News footage of this historical moment is simulated in *Through My Eyes*, as the poster the couple erect showing Lindy and her daughter is not the original at all, but Miranda Otto cradling an infant playing the role of baby Azaria. Applying Baudrillard's theory about the simulacrum to these contrasting scenes indicates how the mini-series dissimulates the logic of an original image (itself a representation of reality) replacing the actual with a virtual existence. All this would imply that in the mini-series *Through My Eyes* the distance between reality and its representation has narrowed, while the potential for meaning has increased. This is because the representation is no longer bound by the event, but by the industrial and commercial constraints of its own televisual medium.

Differences in the approach of filmmakers were also evident in the concluding sequences of each production. In *Evil Angels*, the camera, in a frontal angle that is used to adopt character perspective, frames the couple as they exit Avondale College's Adventist Church after Lindy's welcome home service. The audience, suddenly given the Chamberlains' perspective, sees a media contingent waiting below and hears a voice from the crowd uttering: "Now that Lindy's out of gaol, why are you still fighting?" The screen then cuts to black to signal finality, as actor Sam Neill in the role of Michael Chamberlain, replies: "I don't think a lot of people realize how important innocence is to innocent people". This comment dramatised in the *Evil Angels* script was adapted from a series of interviews with the Chamberlains conducted by Ray Martin for the *60 Minutes* program on 2 March 1986. Michael had been responding to Martin's query about the couple's refusal to accept their fate and allow the convictions to stand, if only on paper (see Appendix B).

Similar pictures of the Chamberlains leaving the church service had been recorded by the *60 Minutes* team and broadcast on national television two years earlier. The scene is compelling as the event is interpreted through a mediated lens, thereby authenticating the televisual moment as a part of the "original" circumstance. While attempts are made throughout the film to separate the event from its representation by keeping original footage intact, in this scene the two are

Figure 5.3 (a)



Media kit for *Through My Eyes* (2004) incorporating a still from the mini-series that feigns the existence of the real (Courtesy of Fiona Crago at Beyond Distribution).

indissoluble. And yet, despite the challenge this poses for audiences trying to sort the real from the imagined, the filmic features of *Evil Angels* are conditioned by and adapt themselves to the 1980s televisual culture in which the event itself was situated and represented. As Valerie Beard remarks, the film is an “extension of what had been seen on the small screen in homes around the world”.⁶⁰

However, in *Through My Eyes* a cameo performance from the “real” Lindy Chamberlain extends the film’s narrative beyond its cinematic limits, as the camera captures a glimpse of a private moment between mother and daughter. The media is nowhere to be seen in a shot that positions Lindy, at the age of 56, in the foreground with Uluru behind, her eyes fixed in the distance. Obeying the “axis of action” principle, the camera traces her averted gaze to an off-screen space revealing a surrogate Azaria playing with a group of Aboriginal children in the sand hills near “Ayers Rock”.⁶¹ The toddler, pausing while the other children continue to climb the sand hill, then turns and waves her hand in a farewell gesture both in the direction of her mother (who is still off-screen) and the wider audience. In this moment there is a conjunction of the authentic – Lindy Chamberlain and the fantasy of what she sees. The scene recalls the closing moments of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), another “lost child” narrative, in which a freeze frame shot captures Miranda farewelling the viewer as she enters into the bush proper. The imagined exchange is intertextualised within the television finale of *Through My Eyes*, suggesting a link between these narratives in a mini-series that pays homage in its aesthetic effect to another locally produced film. Moreover, via the comparison of these two closing, consolatory images of the “lost child” now envisaged as at home in the landscape, the films are able to “indigenise” the settler – especially in the image of the white child at home among Aboriginal children.

Not only characters, but also territorial locations are subject to the process of simulation identified in *Through My Eyes*. Commenting on the more challenging aspects of the production, director Di Drew recalled how, during the nine-week shoot, a makeshift Uluru had been constructed out of a Queensland coal mine:

⁶⁰ Valerie Beard, “Evil Angels”, 7.

⁶¹ For further explanation of the “axis of action” principle and the “line of sight” or “eye-line match” see David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film art: an introduction*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1997), 430.


Apart from six days out at the Rock, all of the night stuff and some of the day stuff we shot at a coal mine in Ipswich, putting thirty tonnes of red dirt down, painting the coal hill red and there you have Uluru. It looked fantastic. It's been one of those great challenges as a director.⁶²

Scenes at Uluru are spliced with those shot at the simulated rock in Ipswich, complicating further the relationship between the real and the fictional. Regardless of the tensions in this relationship which resonate throughout much of the mini-series, Lindy's endorsement of the production seems to substantiate claims that this is the definitive version of events, as the media kit for the production states: "*Through My Eyes* reveals the previously untold true story behind the disappearance of baby Azaria, with mother Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton collaborating on the project" (Figure 5.3b). Even though Lindy is at the centre of the narrative and events are re-told from her perspective, "she is often not the focus ... [as] Huge stretches of the story take place away from her – in pubs, laboratories, suburban houses and in the outback as witnesses, scientists, jurors, investigators and lawyers are pulled into the case" (*The Age*, 18 November 2004). By shifting focus away from the press circus as portrayed in *Evil Angels*, the mini-series is able to explore the "real" individuals and, as Miranda Otto states with regard to Lindy's autobiography, "get closer to the truth behind the story ...".⁶³ Otto's comment raises an important issue about the cross-promotional function of biopics and the autobiographical accounts they represent. To coincide with the mini-series' release, a new and updated version of Lindy's autobiography "*Through My Eyes*" (2004) was published. Printed by East Street Publications, the updated version contains thirty pages of extra material covering the fourteen years since its first circulation by William Heinemann in 1990, as well as a foreword by the leading actors from the mini-series. There is an interesting complementarity between these two texts, as the front cover of the autobiography heralds the televising of the mini-series with the captions: "Now a Major Mini-Series" and "Complete and Up-To-Date". Given that actors from the mini-series promote the East Street Publication as the definitive account, the flow on effect is that the film is perceived to verify events in a way that previous representations did not.

⁶² Di Drew, "Through My Eyes", 14.

⁶³ Miranda Otto in Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton, *Through My Eyes*, (Sydney: East Street Publications, 2004), rear cover.

Figure 5.3 (b)



Through My Eyes

In the heart of the Australian outback lies one of the greatest natural monoliths on earth. On a freezing cold night in 1980 a baby girl disappeared from the camping ground at Uluru, known formerly as Ayers Rock. Her mother, Lindy Chamberlain, claimed she saw a dingo running from her daughter's tent.

What happened next continues to intrigue a nation.

Through My Eyes reveals the previously untold true story behind the disappearance of baby Azaria, with mother Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton collaborating on the project. The disappearance and the events that were to follow caused a media and public frenzy. The story reverberated around the world as forensic experts from London were flown in to confirm the gruesome evidence. Lindy Chamberlain was found to be guilty. Convicted of murdering her child and jailed for life, only later was Lindy to be released and pardoned.

This is the story of one woman's struggle against injustice, of finding hope in the face of despair.

Through My Eyes features the most outstanding cast ever assembled for an Australian television drama, including Miranda Otto (Lord of the Rings), Peter O'Brien (Neighbours, Flying Doctors), Barry Otto (Oscar and Lucinda, Strictly Ballroom) Paul Mercurio (Strictly Ballroom) and John McArdle (Brookside, Merseybeat, The Bill, Peak Practice, Cracker, Kavanagh QC).

Produced by Liberty and Beyond

 <p>BEYOND DISTRIBUTION</p> <p>www.beyond.com.au International Sales: Beyond Distribution Pty Ltd</p>	<p>Australia ☎ 109 Reserve Road, Artarmon, Sydney NSW 2064 Australia ☎ 61-2-9437 2000 ☎ 61-2-9437 2017</p>
	<p>UK ☎ 22 Newman Street, London W1T 1PH ☎ 44-20-7636 9611 ☎ 44-20-7636 9622</p>
	<p>USA ☎ The Film Center, 630 Ninth Avenue, Suite 415, New York, NY 10036 ☎ 1-212-977 2480 ☎ 1-212-262-3925</p>

Claims made in the media kit that Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton assisted in the making of *Through My Eyes* are an attempt to authenticate the production. (Courtesy of Fiona Crago at Beyond Distribution).

Changes in the way films portray the Chamberlain story raise the question that, if an event cannot be represented apart from and external to the simulation process, then how can its origins be distinguished from the repetitions themselves?⁶⁴ This challenges Christine Higgins' argument about the difference between media "storying" and "personal narratives". She states that personal narratives "provide a means of framing and ordering (or distancing) private experience – important in the process of understanding and incorporating it into consciousness" – in contrast to "public narratives" or news texts that define and rationalise aspects of social and cultural practice.⁶⁵ While there are obvious differences in the stories circulated in the media and those told by private individuals, Higgins' argument is complicated when applied to an analysis of the film *Through My Eyes*, in which the personal narrative is made public. How can news texts be distinguished neatly from the event (or Lindy's personal recollection of it) when the two are intimately linked? Where the film adopts a range of narrative perspectives, they form an integral part of the story and its public reception, thereby augmenting the meaning of the event. The publicity given to private experiences and the removal of ownership of the story from those involved was implied in Michael Chamberlain's comments that "... from the moment she [Azaria] died she seemed to become public property".⁶⁶ The idea that the public "owned" Azaria's disappearance and interpreted the loss through the media, suggests the origins and subsequent representations of the event were inextricably tied.

This analysis of film representations of the Chamberlain case has centred on their changing approaches and conventions over the past twenty-four years. In this time frame the original event has been supplanted by the persistence of the Azaria spectacle across a range of genres. However, as I have argued, there needs to be a distinction between the loss of the original and the loss of meaning, since the layering process seems to have added to the overall experience of the event. By examining the decline of reality alongside the ascending importance of its representations (the most authoritative being *Through My Eyes*), I have located meaning in a variety of places – in the unique perspectives of minor participants, in the creation of fictional characters

⁶⁴ Similar questions are raised in relation to the simulacrum in Scott Durham, *Phantom Communities: The Simulacrum and the Limits of Postmodernism*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 13.

⁶⁵ Christine Higgins, "Naturalising 'Horror' Stories", 135.

⁶⁶ Richard Shears, *Azaria*, 111.

illustrating the way “ordinary” Australians behaved, and in the cameo performance of the event’s primary figure. The distance, therefore, between an original and its reproduction allows for the transformation of popular attitudes, in line with theories that the simulacrum has the potential to repeat and transfigure events and distil their meaning.⁶⁷ From this standpoint, Moya Henderson’s opera *Lindy* (2002) can be examined for its illustration of the layering of meaning within cycles of image repetition.

“More to come”: DingoBlue and the “Lindy” Aria

By the time Moya Henderson’s opera *Lindy* (2002) premiered at the Sydney Opera House on Friday, 25 October 2002, audiences obviously interpreted Azaria’s disappearance and its aftermath as a simulated spectacle since, in the 1980s, television had played such an integral role in publicising the event, as it had in the formation of public opinion about the case. Over two decades later, it is little wonder that the operatic message borrows heavily from televisual culture and its mediated lens. The opera’s entire first act, for instance, is told in sequences of flashback, dream or nightmare, shifting in time from August 1980 to February 1986. Unlike the original event, the performance condenses six years of the Chamberlain story into the first act in non-linear and fragmentary scenes that are narrated from Lindy’s perspective. In Baudrillardian terms, this translates to the substitution of signs of the real for the real itself, culminating in the triumph of imagination and the loss of the original. While a loss might be felt in the projection on stage of a “poeticised contemporary reality”, the meaning the opera adds to the Chamberlain case as a whole is measured in comments that it confronts “the great issues of being human; *Lindy* takes the raw facts of the Chamberlain case and makes them a piece concerned with truth and hypocrisy, faith and courage and the myths of the dreamtime, all set within a melodic and communicative musical landscape”.⁶⁸ Investing the “raw” with substance, *Lindy* capitalises on opera’s performative aspects and the competencies of the audience to interpret a visual spectacle.

⁶⁷ Scott Durham, *Phantom Communities*, 11, 14.

⁶⁸ *Lindy*, “The Program Guide”, *Opera Australia*, 25 October 2002 (no page reference available).

According to *SMH*, it even carves out a new market audience by attracting “music or theatre students who are involved in the art form” instead of the “very confident, opera-loving group [of] long-term subscribers” (*SMH*, 8 October 2004). This diversified youth audience carrying with them a different set of decoding strategies than would Opera Australia’s season ticket holders, might arguably have been more acquainted with television’s signifiers, and its postmodern and visual techniques. The capability of an audience to read these signs is reflected in Frederic Jameson’s comments about the postmodern tendency to intertextualise “as a deliberate, built-in feature of the aesthetic affect” and that a younger audience would be more likely to see aspects of popular culture residing in the performance text.⁶⁹

Despite receiving considerable praise, critics of the opera were inclined to fault the production’s use of the style, promotion and delivery of television. *The Bulletin* magazine called it “disarray as drama” which culminated in a confused musical pastiche more suited to the television screen than the theatrical stage: “The predominance of film and television, as the source of income and ideas, strengthens the tendency to create soundtracks” (*The Bulletin*, 30 October 2002). A soundtrack enables opera producers to capitalise on a performance after its season finale through the sale of compact discs. Veiled suggestions in *The Bulletin* to the opera’s source of “income” imply that, by hosting the production, official sponsor Channel Seven could exploit the opportunity for financial gain. One example of this inclination is contained in the opera’s program guide, which parodies the language of television through a series of pop-cultural references in which *Lindy* is said to contain: “More drama than *All Saints*; More tension than *Hot Property*; More tragedy than *Providence*”.⁷⁰ Reference to each of these programs, broadcast on Channel Seven at the same time as the opera, had a cross-promotional function for the network. Audiences would most likely be familiar with the series *All Saints* which continues to out-perform television programs in its timeslot and, like the Azaria Chamberlain case, has been described as a uniquely Australian “drama”. What is most interesting about the marketing slogan is the repetition of the word “more”. For Umberto Eco, in *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality* (1986) widespread use of the term in American parlance reflects a tendency to hyperbolise mainstream culture. He argues that instead of saying “Give

⁶⁹ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 20.

⁷⁰ *Lindy*, The Program Guide, (no page reference available).

me another coffee”, locals ask for “More coffee”, similar to American broadcasters who promise audiences that there is “More to come” instead of “The program will continue”.⁷¹

By announcing the *Lindy* production will contain “more”, audiences are led to believe they will not only be given more drama than their favourite television series, but more than they expected and more than they paid for in the ticket price. There is also “more” in a performance which crystallises “the media’s” response to the Chamberlains in a howling chorus of mongrel journalists, “Ding”, “Dong”, “Belle” and “Co”. These characters are seen in Act I Scene IV draped over the bonnet of a car in seductive and frenzied poses singing in refrain the word “blood” to reconstruct a time when forensics claimed they had discovered “blood” in the Chamberlains’ Holden Torana vehicle. Following this scene are others, such as that at a fancy-dress ball when a number of masqueraded “Lindys” and “Michaels” wait to hear the jury’s verdict. The way these performers are artistically directed on stage captures “more” of the event than the real-life scenario.

In the program guide other sponsors incorporate the language of television which serves to enhance the *Lindy* performance. In an advertisement for Lexus motor vehicles, a man in a tuxedo stands with his arms aloft in a convertible, singing to a woman positioned above him on a Juliet-style balcony, the accompanying caption: “Life is far more dramatic in a Lexus”. Despite the scene from classical opera, the dominant reading is the same as in the Channel Seven advertisement, with the concept of “more” steeped in popular culture alerting the viewer to linguistic codes commonly found in television. The program guide provides historical information about an opera, including the social background of its commission and performance, biographies on actors and information about the story. By incorporating glossy magazine conventions to its already condensed format, it has the effect of enlarging the operatic experience. In an article in the *Spectator* Henrietta Bredin observed how program guides now resemble “‘beautifully designed magazines like Vanity Fair and O that grab people’s attention on the newsstand’”.⁷² As the effects of visual culture on historically displaced art forms, such as opera, are apparent in promotional material

⁷¹ Umberto Eco, *Faith in Fakes*, 8.

⁷² Henrietta Bredin, “Between the Sheets (opera program guides)”, *The Spectator*, 26 August 2006.

incorporating glossy images, it is interesting that Henderson's opera criticises the media, and yet relies on the aesthetic conventions of television and print to narrate the spectacle. The opera unfolds in episodes, dreams and fragments, the musical score is a soundtrack and the program guide resembles a glossy magazine more than an information booklet, each of these storytelling modes made possible by late twentieth century changes within the media. Thus, the congruence of television language and opera performance provides a "more" nuanced reading of events.

As there is an overt connection between this type of production and broadcast television, perhaps it was purposefully manufactured by Henderson to comment on Australia's experience of the case through nightly news broadcasts. The blending of "daily life, emotional response and nightmare", as the program guide suggests, functions as an aesthetic sign that, like television, puts into question the boundaries between reality and representation. Questioning Henderson's ability to manage the delicate subject matter and, by implication, preserve the original event in the face of its representations, one ABC journalist asked: "Doesn't opera, though, risk turning the Chamberlain's tragedy into farce?" to which Henderson replies: "How could it? No. The music is not that kind of music. The farce is the way the country behaved".⁷³ Later she commented that the events were far better suited to the stage, since it was "the nation [that] put on a performance" in the first place.⁷⁴ Of course, Henderson has a vested interest in claiming that the story was more appropriately *staged* rather than *televised* or *filmed*, as opera has traditionally exploited the grandeur and spectacle of the stage through a combination of elaborate costuming, musical aria and orchestral performance. For Henderson, the interaction between Lindy and the Prosecuting Counsel, Ian Barker QC, at the Supreme Court trial, is the "major contest of the opera" and shows the depth of emotion underlying the performances of the characters in real life in dialogue drawn almost entirely from original court transcripts.⁷⁵ Even though this scene obscures the distance between the original event and its representation, the addition of music in a simulated courtroom heightens the portrayal of emotion on stage.

⁷³ "The 7.30 Report", *ABC Radio*, 22 October 2002.

⁷⁴ *Lindy*, "The Program Guide", (no page reference available).

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

As the opera is narrated entirely from Lindy's perspective, there is little opportunity for alternate angles of perception to be expressed. Unlike *Through My Eyes*, which is based on Lindy's autobiography but told from differing points of view, the opera is solely focused on its heroine, to the detriment of Michael Chamberlain, whose character, played by tenor David Hobson, is obviously marginalised. Critics of the opera describe his part as "scarcely sketched in" (*The Age*, 28 October 2002) and "undeveloped" (*The Bulletin*, 30 October 2002), thus diminishing the range of possibilities such a central role might have afforded the production. One critic, writing in the journal *Meanjin*, even went so far as to say that the replacement of both Michael and Uluru with a "courtroom cut and thrust" amounts to "something of an opportunity lost".⁷⁶ This view is supported by *Bulletin* writer, Humphrey McQueen, who argues that "because their love [Michael's and Lindy's] is never established musically, its fraying cannot be revealed" (*The Bulletin*, 5 November 2002). Michael's reduced role in the production is offset by the inflated part of Barry Ryan, playing the Crown prosecutor, Ian Barker QC, who, in an interview with the ABC's *7.30 Report* described himself as: "... an absolute bastard, which is good. I normally don't get to play nasty characters".⁷⁷ This is in sharp contrast to the portrayal of the same character by Peter O'Brien in *Through My Eyes*, as a multi-dimensional ambitious tactician with an affable and charming exterior. The opera, by stereotyping Ian Barker's role as the malevolent prosecutor, enlarges his presence in the Chamberlain case and narrows the contributions of other performers such as Michael, who is made superfluous by the feminist portrayal of events.

It is not surprising that Moya Henderson adopted a feminist perspective, as it was the first time "... an opera had been written about a real persona and performed while the composer, librettist and the subject person are all still alive, and in this case, were all women".⁷⁸ During the performance she reallocates the gender of senior defence counsel, John Phillips QC (performed by female vocalist Elizabeth Campbell), and justifies her decision to change Phillips' character thus:

⁷⁶ John Rickard, "Writing opera in Australia: three new operas made it to the Australian stage at the end of 2002. John Rickard takes a look at them and their creators", *Meanjin*, 62. 2, (June 2003): 67-8.

⁷⁷ Moya Henderson, "The 7.30 Report", *ABC Radio National*, 22 October 2002.

⁷⁸ Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton, *Through My Eyes*, East Street Publications, 770.

... ‘switching’ [gender] gives me a chance to take a pot-shot at a typical institution in Australian society, the Law. Assigning the role of Defence Counsel to a woman translates expectations for future gender equity into the present, if only on stage.⁷⁹

Transposing gender might provide balance in the musical score, highlight the sex-role stereotyping that occurs in Australian legal institutions or symbolise a character’s lack of importance, but it also oversimplifies the gender debates the couple provoked, overlooking the speculation surrounding Michael’s masculinity (see Chapters One and Four). Despite concerns about “switching” and selectively animating the roles of certain characters, critics judged the opera to be a success – implying that it was far more convincing, as a realist project, than the docu-drama *The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain* or the film *Evil Angels*. More “real” rather than “true”, the multimedia spectacle of lighting, sound effects and surtitle technology that is intrinsic to live performance contexts, elided any critical distance between subject and audience and contributed to an ever-expanding system of meanings in the primary event. No longer a contained incident, it revealed how the original event comprised a shifting array of images, each competing for legitimacy over Azaria’s disappearance.

One final example of the way representations of the Chamberlain event have evolved across time concerns an unrelated advertisement published in the *Sun-Herald* on 10 March 2002. Promoting the Internet service provider, *OzEmail*, the full-page advertisement contained in bold typeface the slogan “The Dingo Did It” (Figure 5.4). Its intention was to persuade customers of rival Internet provider, *DingoBlue* (which had recently gone into receivership), to switch to a more reliable server. Included in fine print at the bottom of the advertisement was written: “If you’re angry about *DingoBlue* going out backwards, we don’t blame you. But don’t be left high and dry. Come over to an Internet Service Provider you can rely on”. There are a number of signifiers contained in this description. For one, the company name *DingoBlue* is evocative of the popular John Williamson folk song “True Blue”, as well as the ambivalent national icon, the dingo. Two years later the front-page of a *Bulletin* article written by Paul Toohey reiterated this message with a photograph of the animal

⁷⁹ Lindy, “The Program Guide”, (no page reference available).

Figure 5.4

March 10, 2002 THE SUN-HERALD

THE DINGO DID IT

If you're angry about dingo blue going out backwards, we don't blame you. But don't be left high and dry. Come over to an Internet Service Provider you can rely on. OzEmail. If you join our OzEunlimited \$24.95* plan today and you're a Dingo Blue customer, not only will you get our acclaimed 24x7 technical support, but we'll also give you the **FIRST THREE MONTHS FREE***. So don't make the same mistake twice by going back to an ISP that may not be here for the long haul. Call 132 884 now or visit www.ozemail.com.au.



* Offer available only with OzEunlimited \$24.95/month, unlimited hours, 400Mb download limit. Telephone charges are separate. 12 month commitment applies. Plan fees waived for the first three months on new accounts only. Maximum 4 hour session limit applies. Customers may reconnect as often as they wish. Excess Mb charged at \$0.20. Valid credit card required. Offer only available to current dingo blue customers. OzEmail reserves the right to change or withdraw the offer at any time. Offer expires on 30 June 2002. If not changed or withdrawn earlier.

1/OZE0599/SH

Advertisement for OzEmail in the *Sun-Herald*, 10 March 2002.

situated next to the headline “Guilty: How the dingo got away with murder – and why the Chamberlains deserve an apology”. His fervent hope was that Lindy forgive us all for siding with “a predator like the dingo”, an animal often symbolised within discourses of nationalism (*Bulletin*, 20 July 2004).

Also connoted in “The Dingo Did It” advertisement are debates about the dingo’s innocence in the Azaria Chamberlain story. The advertisement playfully resurrects hostile attitudes towards the animal found responsible for Azaria’s disappearance, with those *DingoBlue* customers blaming their own financial loss on the insolvency of the internet service provider. Calling upon the reader’s knowledge of the Chamberlain case and its vast cultural legacy, the slogan reveals the extent to which, in a postmodern simulated era, a text can interpolate and intertextualise such a landmark case as that of the Azaria Chamberlain disappearance. Without having to make any direct reference to the event, the slogan anchors the advertisement and its message in the Chamberlain story, ultimately finding the dingo responsible in both a literal and connotative sense. While the brevity of the allusion suggests the branding of the Chamberlain case as commercial product, the advertisement is also a sign of the level of Azaria’s penetration into the national consciousness. Ultimately, it is an example of synecdoche in which “The Dingo Did It” is the part that represents the whole, the Chamberlain saga.

Similar to the range of representations of Azaria’s disappearance on film, stage and television, the advertising slogan implies both the loss of the original event and the regeneration of meaning within cycles of reproduction. The annihilation of Azaria’s disappearance therefore also signifies the event’s capacity for renewal, reinvestment and transfiguration.

Conclusion

While it is a matter of course that in the representation of landmark cases an element of the original is lost, this does not necessarily imply the loss of meaning altogether. Meaning proliferates in those repeated attempts to explore the reasons why an event so captured the public imagination. Historical revision offers writers, social

commentators, film producers and dramatists the opportunity to explore new interpretations of the case allowing the process of evolution to occur. While sometimes this can transform the event to the extent that certain characters are overlooked or even marginalised, the simulation process is such that meaning enlarges despite the erosion of an original event through its persistent re-telling.

In this chapter, questions posed by Chamberlain writers and essayists about the effect of representations of the Azaria saga on the original event have been reconsidered. This is mostly because there is a qualitative difference between “the loss of the original” and the loss of meaning entailed in representations of the Azaria saga. The separation, in arguments advanced by Christine Higgins and Noel Sanders, between the “natal scene” or “primary event” and its media representation, implies that an original event existed and, at some point, was lost or destabilised in the ceaseless flow of media images. However, as I have shown, arguments concerning “the loss of the original” are nostalgic and may be re-framed in positive or productive terms, since the boundaries governing an event and its representation are indistinct. Rather, they are changeable because an irreducible core or true location of meaning, separate and distinct from the media production of an event, is unlikely to exist in a world structured by proliferating images. Jennifer Craik substantiates these claims, particularly when she states that the accretion of images of the Azaria saga has provoked social debate and ensured that the case remains current and firmly placed on the national agenda.

Analysing Baudrillard’s theory about the simulacrum suggests there are significant variations of meaning made possible by the recurrence of models.⁸⁰ This would explain, to some extent, the immense popularity of contemporary representations of Azaria’s disappearance compared with their earlier counterparts. While farthest removed from the original event *Through My Eyes* and the opera *Lindy* created new spectating positions and narrative perspectives, challenged earlier assumptions, promoted new historical evaluations and condensed Azaria’s disappearance and its aftermath into a concise spectacle. The productions elided differences between the original event and its representation by incorporating into a

⁸⁰ Scott Durham, *Phantom Communities*, 15.

dramatised format actual news footage and court transcripts. The mini-series went even further by exercising conventions of testimony in feature films to include a cameo from the real Lindy Chamberlain.

A narrowing distance between the “natal scene” and its cycle of reproduction was apparent as early as 1988 in the way real events were read through media coverage. Michael Chamberlain’s response to a question posed by Ray Martin in a *Sixty Minutes* interview was redeployed in the closing scene of *Evil Angels* in an entirely different context. Earlier productions, such as *The Disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain* seemed to rely less on film authentication devices and more on the recent memory of the audience. Since the event, with its element of déjà vu, was ongoing, there was little need to include any original news footage in the narrative.

Tracing an evolution in the performance of the Chamberlain story on television, stage and film highlights Baudrillard’s precession of simulacra and the cycle of image production attendant in the Chamberlain case. Viewing a cross-fertilisation of the codes of television in other performance contexts, such as opera, leads to the inevitable question: where do the boundaries between an original event and its representation lie in the mass media age? As the debate is ongoing, this chapter has merely contested the commonplace that meaning has been lost as a result of the ceaseless production of images. Rather, representations of the Chamberlain case appear to have opened up, rather than diminished the field of inquiry and popular debate surrounding Azaria’s disappearance which stands as a landmark case, and an evolving mass media event.

CONCLUSION

*In the same way that Lindy Chamberlain was judged by the public and the media before she ever got to a court, we were.*¹

Former One Nation Leader, David Ettridge speaking about the commonality of experience he and his colleague, Pauline Hanson shared with Lindy Chamberlain.

*I could be their sister, I could be their neighbour, I could be their mother; people saw me as being someone they could associate with.*²

Pauline Hanson considering the public fascination with herself, Lindy Chamberlain and Schapelle Corby.

On 10 September 1996 a newly elected and relatively unknown independent candidate from Ipswich delivered her maiden speech to Parliament. In highly controversial rhetoric, she criticised the Coalition Government for its stance on Asian Immigration and Aboriginal welfare and became the “spokeswoman for the so-called average Australian”.³ Pauline Hanson’s comments inflamed pundits from both sides of the proverbial political fence and polarised much of the Australian community. Reflecting, in an interview with Andrew Denton for the ABC’s *Enough Rope* program on the public’s response to her maiden speech, she stated: “The switchboard lit up at Parliament House. Actually, they couldn’t handle the calls. One telephonist that worked there 17 years, she said she’d never seen anything like it before”.⁴ Twelve months later the “incendiary redhead”⁵ launched One Nation Party, which spectacularly won 11 seats in the Queensland election of 1998.⁶ Over the next few years, what followed became known in cultural parlance as the “Hanson phenomenon” and “Hansonism”, while the woman at the party’s centre was the focus of a media maelstrom.

¹ David Ettridge, “Ettridge: we were treated like Lindy Chamberlain”, *SMH*, 7 November 2003.

² Pauline Hanson, “Women Who Transgress”, Background Briefing, *ABC Radio National*, 24 July 2005.

³ Iva Ellen Deutchman and Anne Ellison, “A star is born: the roller coaster ride of Pauline Hanson in the news”, *Media, Culture & Society* 21, (London: Sage Publications, 1999): 36.

⁴ Pauline Hanson, *Enough Rope*, ABC Television, Episode 60, 20 September 2004.

⁵ Julia Baird, *Media Tarts*, 256.

⁶ *ibid.*, 258.

Pauline Hanson's journey from a fish and chip shop proprietor to a politician and media celebrity resembled Lindy's own transition from suburban housewife to household name. Both women were the focus of a glaring media spotlight, attracting controversy by their style of dress, behaviour and forthright manner and punished for their "crimes": Chamberlain was incarcerated for three years at Darwin's Berrimah Prison, while Hanson spent eleven weeks at Brisbane Women's Prison for fraudulently registering the One Nation party in Queensland on 4 December 1997 and for dishonestly obtaining electoral reimbursements in the 1998 Federal election, convictions later overturned by the Queensland Court of Appeal in 2003. Ultimately, they were "ordinary" women who defied wider social and cultural judgments and conventions.

Of course, there were differences. The most obvious was that, unlike Lindy, Pauline Hanson did not lose her child under horrific and, what was widely believed at the time, questionable circumstances. Whereas Hanson "elected" to be in the public eye, Lindy, at least in the first six years after Azaria's disappearance, was an involuntary celebrity. In the same way that the origins of their fame differed, so, too did their ability to manage media interest. Hanson's career armed her with the necessary skills to self-promote, establish rapport with constituents and handle the vagaries of media coverage. To a greater degree than was afforded Chamberlain, political status presented Hanson with the space to answer critics, launch media campaigns in defence of her image and shape public debate. Whether Hanson's fame will, as it did Lindy, position her alongside other mythicised figures in the nation's history, is perhaps still an open question. It could be argued that the launch of Hanson's autobiography *Untamed and Unashamed* on 29 March 2007, and the publicity given across the media to claims she had an affair with former One Nation party adviser David Oldfield, might add further to the potential mythicisation of her figure. Regardless, shifting platforms of representation in a globalised media landscape set the scene for both Azaria's disappearance and Pauline Hanson's "appearance" in the Queensland electorate of Oxley.

A comparative discussion of the media experiences of Lindy Chamberlain and other "controversial" women, including Pauline Hanson, Schapelle Corby and Joanne Lees, illustrates the extent to which the dingo baby saga set a precedent in the

development of mass media events in Australia, having occurred at a tipping point in the modern public sphere. Such an analysis should neither overlook the differences underlying their media representations, nor equate the experiences of these women as subjects of media discourse; instead, it should highlight the function of the Chamberlain case in gauging the impact of media events in Australia, as I will emphasise in this conclusion.

Aspects of Pauline Hanson's media coverage, as well as the formation and constitution of publics around her image in the late 1990s, resembled changes occurring in the modern public sphere flagged a decade earlier in the Chamberlain case. On the horizon of the Azaria saga there emerged five critical changes in the Australian news industry affecting the production and consumption of media texts. These included the increasing popularity of entertainment-focused and personality-inflected news coverage, the formation of counter-publics, the celebrification of "ordinary" individuals (and the publicity industries established to manage them), the interrogation of Australian national identity and the saturation of media and cultural images of an event.

The first change in media function was evident in the early 1980s, when news coverage of the Chamberlain case adopted a greater entertainment focus. From this shift a series of participants emerged in the narrative, plugging readers into a set of socially constructed belief systems surrounding the dingo, the victim, the mother, the landscape and religion. Their identification as metaphors made it sufficient to anchor or headline a news story with the words "dingo baby" or "Lindy", knowing that audiences and readers would understand the wider, contextual reference. Not surprisingly, increased media interest in the story's participants and the new angles of representation they afforded, led to a decline in the importance of the original event.

A decade later, news reports of the popularity and controversy surrounding the One Nation party were similarly interpreted through images of its co-founder Pauline Hanson, whose name was synonymous with its right-wing stance on immigration, democracy, multiculturalism and Aboriginal welfare. As Iva Ellen Deutchman and Anne Ellison argue with regard to the manufacture of Hanson's image: "the media often prefer to personalize issues, allowing an individual to symbolize a larger

structural or political problem. Hence, Hanson becomes the vehicle for discussions about race, immigration and unemployment”.⁷ Like Lindy, she functioned as the “hook”, fastening reader attention to national issues and enlivening newsprint in which she appeared.

A second change in the Australian news landscape shaping public perceptions of the Chamberlain story involved the formation of counter-publics. Countless Australians intervened in the official decision-making process in which Lindy was found guilty of murder, by disseminating letters, pamphlets, booklets and circulars and signing petitions for her release. These counter-publics utilised both literary and emerging electronic technologies, namely the pamphlet and videocassette, to suggest the growing sophistication of publics in their defence of the Chamberlains. Their approach signalled a wider fragmentation of the public sphere in the 1980s, positioning the Chamberlain case at a tipping point in popular culture. This is to say that domains of access to the public sphere broadened, as did the structure and dimensions of the media, thereby affecting the number and diversity of views articulated. Entrenched views amongst critics relating to the media’s anti-woman bias, therefore, were less relevant in a postmodern age in which alternatives to mainstream thought were increasingly publicised and produced.

Counter-publics were also generated in the wake of Pauline Hanson’s conviction as supporters banded together to voice their concerns on talkback radio, in newspaper columns and internet chat rooms. Alan Jones, host of the Macquarie Network’s Radio 2GB morning program, received thousands of calls, many highlighting the questionable evidence amassed against her.⁸ Despite the mounting public pressure for her release, critics have generally credited Hanson’s popularity to the manufacture of her image by the media,⁹ rather than to any “spontaneous

⁷ Iva Ellen Deutchman and Anne Ellison, “A star is born”, 39.

⁸ This is implied in Hanson’s first media statement following her release from prison in which she thanked her supporters, notably Alan Jones, for his tireless efforts to bring attention to the issue on national radio. Julia Baird, *Media Tarts*, 256.

⁹ For instance, Meadows argues that: “Without the media, Hanson would not exist”. His article pivots on a finding, contradictory to the one presented here that the mainstream media and Hanson are “perfectly aligned”, because they both cultivate “stereotypes” and provide “simplistic explanations for often complex situations”, see Michael Meadows, “Perfect match: the media and Pauline Hanson”, *Metro*, no.109, (Melbourne, 1997): 86.

grassroots movement” of support.¹⁰ And, while Hanson’s degree of public support does not compare with the torrent of sympathy Chamberlain received after her sentencing, third estate interventions of this type shaped modern conceptions of the public sphere as a heterogenous and politicised space. In Lindy’s case, this virtual site was comprised of anonymous individuals exercising their democratic right to oppose the official verdict, their actions demonstrating the power of public forms of communication in addressing, overturning and re-writing legal discourses. So too, for Pauline Hanson, whose release was in part the result of public petitions into the suitability of her conviction and sentence. Notwithstanding limitations on the volume and type of public speech articulated, as not all voices were heard equally or always distinguished from one another, the significance of such acts can be measured in the increasing plurality of the modern public sphere.

Catharine Lumby advocates a similar idea when she describes how Hanson’s celebrity coincided with “fundamental changes in democracy, the public sphere and our broader cultural environment” associated with the rise of the mass media.¹¹ Since she existed “outside” the system and, seemingly, beyond politics, Hanson championed the concerns of ordinary Australians who felt their views were sidelined in the game of cheap party politics, spin-doctoring and political rhetoric: “Pauline Hanson, in short, has the appeal of an amateur video: she represents a rawer, ‘realer’ world which eludes the sophisticated production values of television current affairs and political spin-doctors”.¹² Her contradictory public presence was mirrored in the policies she advocated, such that her “opposition to globalisation was enabled by the globalisation of information flows”.¹³ Put simply, her stance against corporatisation and the media was facilitated by late twentieth century changes to individual forms of access in the modern public sphere.

Diversified forms of access to the modern public sphere also facilitated the campaigns launched by Schapelle Corby’s supporters. Using emerging

¹⁰ Deutchman and Ellison argue Hanson depended on the media for her “star” prominence. Iva Ellen Deutchman and Anne Ellison, “A star is born”, 34. Whereas, Baird simply presents the two opposing arguments on the generation of Hanson as cultural and media phenomenon. Julia Baird, *Media Tarts*, 258.

¹¹ Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha*, 233-4.

¹² *ibid.*, 235.

¹³ Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha*, 236.

communication technologies such as the internet, they rallied other supporters by posting either encouraging or sympathetic messages or, as the more fanatical among them demonstrated, calling for an end to diplomatic relations with Indonesia and the intervention of the Australian Government in foreign judicial processes.¹⁴ To some extent, their protests repeat patterns that occurred in the Chamberlain case over two decades earlier in which counter-publics rallied against the guilty convictions. Even though Corby's supporters were far more enabled by their instantaneous dialogue over the internet, the assembly of voices and sentiments, along with the manner in which they intervened in official judicial processes, resembled the actions of Lindy Chamberlain's own advocates.

A third shift in the modern public sphere affecting readings and wider interpretations of Lindy Chamberlain concerns the field of modern celebrity. When her daughter disappeared on 17 August 1980, Lindy was an "ordinary" woman living in the remote Queensland mining town of Mt Isa. By the end of the decade, however, there could "only be one candidate for the title 'face of the 80s' in Australia – Lindy Chamberlain".¹⁵ Her celebrity transition coincided with the elevation of "ordinary" individuals, the widening of cultural categories from which celebrities have, traditionally, been sought, and the development of a modern public relations industry. In Chapter Three I analysed late twentieth century changes to the production of celebrity in Australia through media emphasis on celebrity culture and the personal lives of public figures. This impacted upon how the Chamberlain story was represented, often as vicarious entertainment. Yet, in the midst of the unrelenting scrutiny of Lindy's appearance, there were times when she sought to control, self-manage and manipulate her own image. Granted, the opportunity for self-promotion was limited, but by employing the services of a press agent to negotiate her fee-paying appearances and, by challenging stereotyped representations within the media, Lindy began to exercise greater control over her public self. Descriptions of a unilaterally misogynistic media were less appropriate in an organization that was undergoing a process of considerable social, political, cultural and technological change.

¹⁴ Anne Summers, "Prisoners of a nation's prejudices".

¹⁵ Adrian Cunningham, "Icons, Symbolism and Recordkeeping: The Lindy Chamberlain and Eddie Mabo Papers in the National Library of Australia", *Australian Academic and Research Libraries*, 28, no.2, (1997): 103.

Interpreting news coverage of the Chamberlain case through wider organisational changes in the Australian media, challenges arguments that only dominant (read patriarchal) views were articulated. Of course, gender imbalances in the media had an effect on the type of stories selected, written and produced in the 1980s, especially in the light of second wave feminism and changes to the status of women. Yet, concern amongst feminists in particular, that Lindy was the victim of sustained media hostility, does not explain changes across time in the patterns of news coverage or the evolution of Lindy's public image.

As with Lindy, Pauline Hanson's road to celebrity had humble beginnings, to the extent that her "ordinariness" became a defining characteristic separating her from parliamentary colleagues, as she pointed out in comments excerpted at the beginning of this conclusion. Her appeal as an "ordinary" woman was both a help and a hindrance as, on the one hand, it suggested her approachability in an increasingly remote political arena and, on the other, struck fear into the minds of those who viewed her anti-immigration policies as a frightening shift in wider public sensibilities. Interest in her "common" and "everyday" charm inspired ambivalent representations of her gender. Caricatured as "Pauline Pantsdown" in the song "I'm a Backdoor Man", fragments from interviews she gave were re-mixed to indicate the depth of her voice and its masculine resemblance.¹⁶ Hanson's portrayal as a masculinized woman was complicated by her representation as a "man's woman" and an ultra-feminine figure lusted after by men.¹⁷ This recalls the varying descriptions of Lindy's own physical appearance, sometimes described as "girlish", and at other times, "tough, hard-faced ... to make her less feminine".¹⁸ Undoubtedly, gender was a factor in the public's processing of both cases, as Hanson was dubbed the member for "Oxley moron" and "Evita of Ipswich",¹⁹ while critics have argued that Lindy was "a modern-day Lady Macbeth or Pontius Pilate".²⁰

Perhaps because of the intense, and often unrelenting scrutiny of her appearance, Lindy Chamberlain displayed an acute awareness of the importance of

¹⁶ Julia Baird, *Media Tarts*, 260.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 255.

¹⁸ Frank Moorhouse, "The Azaria Chamberlain Case", 172; "Michelle Arrow, "Women Who Transgress", Background Briefing, *ABC Radio National*, 24 July 2005.

¹⁹ Julia Baird, *Media Tarts*, 259.

²⁰ Dianne Johnson, "From Fairy to Witch", 143.

self-image. Her entrance on the public stage coincided with the intensification of Australia's public relations industry, when companies such as the Harry M. Miller Group and Markson Sparks, aside from offering celebrity management services, began to intervene in situations involving "ordinary" individuals in a publicity crisis. Examining the Chamberlain case in relation to changes in the media industry, and especially late twentieth century image management services, illustrates how the case resembles other modern media events, such as those involving Pauline Hanson and Joanne Lees.

Comparable to Chamberlain was Hanson's recognition of the need to employ public relations services. As Stephen Stockwell describes in an analysis of newspaper photographs of the 1998 federal election campaign, Hanson was highly successful in appealing to the demographics of her audience. She "used photos to position herself as the quintessential female Aussie battler: currency lass, unruly woman, drover's wife, working single mother".²¹ As well as staging photographs, in one incident Hanson even wrapped herself in the Australian flag so as to "root [her] image in the traditional tropes of Australia as a woman".²² While Hanson did not always have at her disposal the public relations services used by more established political figures – at least at the beginning of her career – by the time the One Nation party was founded her campaign messages were reaching wider audiences in a more managed and self-styled format.²³ Like Lindy, she regularly appeared in women's magazines in an attempt to counter, subvert and re-negotiate dominant readings and stereotypes. Both women used the magazine to give details about their prison ordeals, daily humiliations, reunions with family and friends and hopes for the future. Not only did the articles point to a change in what counts as newsworthy, but also highlighted the renegotiated terms on which Hanson and Chamberlain now used their images. For Pauline, an "exclusive" interview with *WD* on 24 November 2003 in the cover-story "My Hell in Jail" created a platform for her to tell the story of her "shame and terror inside", "Fight for [a] child killer" and proposed "political comeback".²⁴ Posing

²¹ Stephen Stockwell, "Pauline's prominence: an analysis of party leaders in newspaper photographs during the 1998 Australian federal election campaign", *Australian Journalism Review* 22, no.1, (August 2000): 148.

²² *ibid.*

²³ Iva Ellen Deutchman and Anne Ellison, "A star is born", 37.

²⁴ Warren Gibbs, "Pauline Hanson tells: my hell in jail", *WD*, 24 November 2003, 10-13 and front-cover.

shoeless and casually dressed in photographs with her children, Hanson recalled images of an “ordinary” woman who had a story to tell.

In family photographs published in *AWW* in March 1986, Lindy is shown hand-in-hand with Michael and relaxing with her children. The article reminds readers that Lindy was an “ordinary” woman thrown into extraordinary circumstances. Like Hanson, she also gives anecdotes of her friendship with hardened criminals, daily prison strip searches, contemplation of suicide and plans for the future and, in doing so, unveils the “real” person behind the mediated persona. Ultimately, coverage in mass market women’s magazines of the stories surrounding these two once convicted criminals, established a connection between subject and reader in a type of “emotional learning” that gave substance to women who, despite their celebrity, were somewhat “ordinary”. The discourse of “ordinariness” is, no doubt, a normative one that potentially excludes difference and, in a racial sense, is often correlated with “whiteness”. However, Lindy’s “ordinariness” also functioned to suggest her accessibility as a public figure. Rather, as argued in Chapter Three, like the reality television contestant, she was far more approachable than conventional celebrities, who signified certain social, religious, economic and cultural hierarchies.

In terms of “ordinariness”, Joanne Lees was also a reluctant celebrity as a result of her boyfriend’s disappearance and her attempted abduction on the Stuart Highway in August 2001. As with Chamberlain, there was a sense that Lees, despite polarising public discourse and attracting a hostile response from members of the public and media, challenged negative publicity either by resisting or fulfilling media expectations of her. Her naivety was apparent though in the months following Falconio’s disappearance, when she seemed reluctant to speak with the media, attend press conferences and answer questions posed by journalists, a fact which often led to speculation about the accuracy of her story, as Paul Wilson remarks:

I think the thing we don’t like about her [Lees] most is that she tried to control the way in which the media presented her image. She didn’t make herself freely available to the media. When she gave a news conference she controls, [sic] very deliberately I think, and probably with the advice of police and others, who she allowed into the press conference. And I don’t think people

like that. They want – the community want young, attractive women to come out and tell it all.²⁵

As Wilson states, there were times when Lees (and Chamberlain for that matter), did little to bolster their public images, by either appearing reticent with the media or making questionable public statements; in particular, I am thinking of the interview Lindy gave in which she described dingoes consuming their prey as being like “peeling an orange” (Appendix C). Years after being projected into the public spotlight, however, both women demonstrated expertise in handling media publicity, either by altering their style of dress, selecting the news medium in which their interviews were to be represented or publishing first-hand accounts of their stories. All this points to the way that media relationships are as dynamic as human beings are responsive and adaptable and that, within the media, there are opportunities to subvert and counter dominant, stereotypical images.

A fourth change in Australia’s news landscape could be detected between 1986 and 1988 in a period of national remythologising that followed the handover of the national monument “Ayers Rock”, the 1988 Bicentenary, the release of the first full-length motion picture on the case *Evil Angels* (1988) and the National Museum’s purchase of a collection of Azaria artefacts. In cultural, filmic, museological and academic discourses, the event was becoming an object of national significance enhanced by a process of nation-building occurring in the late-1980s. One of the changes taking place concerned the story’s central participants which, identified as metaphors in the first two years of media coverage, now functioned as objects of myth, reviving settler-colonial anxieties about the land and non-Indigenous relations to it. These were resurrected in the government’s decision to transfer ownership of title of “Ayers Rock” to its traditional owners and in the Bicentenary, intensifying further the Azaria-Australia connection to such a degree that the story of the decade became part of the national story. Surrounding the exhibitions of each event were images of a progressive nation, one in which the injustices of the past were either re-written or used to show how far Australians had progressed. A similar mythological process surrounded the disappearance of Peter Falconio in July 2001, which again

²⁵ Paul Wilson, “Joanne Lees: Victim of Cynicism”, (transcript), *The World Today*, *ABC Local Radio*, 31 July 2001.

raised concerns about the safety of tourists in an alien and inhospitable landscape. In the British press, the loss of Peter Falconio symbolised Australia's rejection of imperial Britain and a danger discourse emerged in newspapers warning vacationing tourists of the perils of the Australian outback. The mapping of national discourses at two particular time frames suggests that the Chamberlain case articulated in the modern era lingering fears about belonging which continue today and imply Azaria's penetration within the collective consciousness.

A fifth change in the Australian public sphere followed questioning of the status of the image in a culture saturated by emergent media and virtual technologies. Critics argued that the image, or rather the pervasive circulation of images of Azaria's disappearance, eroded any sense of meaning residing in the original event. The circumstances of the case were so mythicised that meaning was not only lost, but irrevocably absent. Such arguments hinge on the assumption that the original event, Azaria's disappearance, remains separate and distinct from its representations. However, it is less likely in the new media age that unmediated experiences exist and, while proving this is beyond the frames of analysis discussed here, I have shown that individuals are increasingly forging new ways of speaking in the modern public sphere to which they bring their own cultural and media literacies. To this end we might pose the question: do original events, in the era of mass communication, exist in time frames and contexts separate from the media? And, is not the media an intrinsic part of the formation of public and private experiences? The Chamberlain case gives us the opportunity to examine media representations in the late modern era to see their evolving set of discursive patterns. My intention here has been to illustrate how the Chamberlain case has set an example for the way modern media events develop, having coincided with the expanding role of the media as the chief vehicle of the public sphere and an elemental part of modern life. Not so much "dingo media" – an institution privileging only patriarchal interests – it resembles a shifting arena of public contest and debate.

In a paper delivered to the University of London, Paul Reynolds argued that the Chamberlain case unfolded through "a bewildering array of unanticipated and

unpredictable phases”.²⁶ It was, he said, characterised by “various twists, turns and developments” that defied popular imagination.²⁷ Indeed, there was a sense that the hysteria arising from Azaria’s disappearance was spasmodic and uncoordinated with critics attempting to account for the way the “nation” and, most often, the “media” had behaved, by posing questions such as “Why, Australia! Why?”²⁸ As I have argued, however, analysing representations of the Chamberlain case within news and cultural industries reveals a number of discernible patterns. In the context of shifts within the modern public sphere, these patterns demonstrate the way in which media events bear resemblance across time in their phases of evolution.

In several chapters of this thesis I have compared the Chamberlain case with other flashpoints in Australian popular culture involving “ordinary” female protagonists who became the subject of persistent media attention often due to the tragic circumstances befalling them. The similar experiences of these controversial women, their dealings with the media and attempts to challenge, resist, counter and subvert stereotypical images, suggest that high-profile events involving Australian women can often be anticipated, if not quantified against the Chamberlain case as a modern media event.

²⁶ Paul Reynolds, “The Azaria Chamberlain Case”, 1.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 1.

²⁸ Young devotes an entire chapter to answering the question, “Why, Australia! Why?” see Norman H. Young, *Innocence Regained*, 275-288.

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Appendix

- A. *Azaria: A Question of Evidence*, broadcast on Ten Network, 4 April 1984 (self-typed transcript).
- B. Lindy and Michael Chamberlain, interview by Ray Martin for *60 Minutes*, broadcast on Nine Network, 2 March 1986 (self-typed transcript).
- C. *Through My Eyes* (2004), broadcast on Seven Network 23-24 November 2004. (2 x 2-hour mini-series on DVD, courtesy of Beyond Distribution).

APPENDIX A

“AZARIA: A Question of Evidence” Televised 1984 on Network TEN Hosted by Kevin Hitchcock.

TRANSCRIPT:

(In order of appearance)

KH	=	Kevin Hitchcock	JW	=	Judy West
MC	=	Michael Chamberlain	AW	=	Amy Whittaker
BB	=	Barry Boettcher	BW	=	Bill West
RE	=	Roberta Elston	MH	=	Murray Haby
RS	=	Sir Reginald Scholl	GW	=	Greg Lowe
LH	=	Les Harris	SL	=	Sally Lowe
WG	=	Wally Goodwin	MR W	=	Amy Whittaker's Father

KH Good evening, I'm Kevin Hitchcock. I've been following the Azaria Chamberlain case for three and a half years. There's no doubt it's attracted more publicity than any other case in Australia's history. But there are some facts which up until now haven't come out. You will hear this information from the witnesses themselves. Most of them witnesses from the Crown Prosecution. Some of them believe the Chamberlains are innocent, some are undecided but not one is convinced that the Chamberlains are guilty and all believe that in the various police and legal processes which led to the Chamberlains being convicted things occurred which should not occur in a system of democratic justice. They're speaking out because they believe the Chamberlains didn't get a fair hearing. The least we can do is give them one. Their unusual decision to make their views public has prompted Michael Chamberlain to give his first interview in almost three years.

(Camera switch from studio to extreme close-up of MC's face where interview is taking place in a leafy location).

KH: Michael what did happen on the night of August 17 1980?

MC: Well, as I've said before and I'll say it again, I believe a dingo took Azaria on the night of August 17, 1980. We've talked about it a lot since then and I'm confirmed in my mind as Lindy is, that is really what took place. What happened after the dingo took her, we still don't know and THAT is what I'd really like to get to the bottom of.

KH: Can you understand a lot of misunderstanding because of the strength of evidence that the Crown had? For example the blood in the car, that was surely damning evidence.

- MC: I tell you when I first heard of that at the second inquest, it just about blew our minds completely. The world seemed to have gone crazy and I just couldn't understand how or what sort of evidence like that could have gone to the court. It just seems totally mystifying to us. We just couldn't believe our ears.
- KH: Can you be certain in your own mind that your wife was not responsible in any way?
- MC: I am absolutely sure that she has nothing to do with this. Ah, many times we've talked about it since and I'm confirmed that in my mind as a caring mother, as a mother who loved her children, as a very particular mother, she could never have done that to my children- let alone Azaria.
- KH: Was Azaria something special to Lindy?
- MC: A very special baby, we cried [laughs] when she was born on the 11th of June in 1980. It was such a beautiful surprise, I just couldn't believe my eyes when they told me at the birth that it was a girl and yet we had wanted a girl so badly.
- KH: Why did you and your wife decide to have another child knowing that she was going to a trial to be charged with murder?
- MC: Well the date of the trial we understood was in June/ July, and although you can never exactly plan when you're going to have a child we were determined that we were going to have another little girl. If I had of known that Lindy had hurt Azaria or killed her there's just no way that we would ever have gone through that. I just, well I would just not have let any woman of mine have had my baby.
- KH: If you were both innocent, and you have maintained your innocence all the way through, why is it now that you have both been convicted – she of murder and you of being an accessory?
- MC: Well, I'm completely mystified because it seems that we've exhausted all the court...court appeals and the system...you know the thing that perplexes me is because... because I know and I know that Lindy is innocent, we're in this predicament. Um, I'm really at a total loss as to what has gone wrong. (Background music appears to signal advertisement).

(Commercial Break)

- KH: When the Darwin jury convicted Lindy Chamberlain of murdering her nine and a half week-old daughter Azaria, and husband Michael of being an accessory after the fact, they did so after hearing a prosecution case unique in Australian criminal history. The crown admitted there was no body, no murder weapon, no eyewitnesses and

no motive. The case relied solely on circumstantial evidence and extremely technical forensic evidence. Foremost was the discovery of foetal or baby's blood in the Chamberlain's car. In his opening address Crown Counsel Mr Ian Barker QC told the jury the discovery of foetal blood was critical to the prosecution case. But, independent forensic scientists now say, THAT evidence, was invalid. Professor Barry Boettcher, a senior lecturer in Biology at Newcastle University gave evidence at the trial. He presented details of tests he had carried out on blood samples using the same type of testing reagent as that used by the Crown forensic scientist Mrs Joy Kuhl. Professor Boettcher said that the reagent came from the same German manufacturer and was supposed to react only with foetal haemoglobin or as it's termed, Haemoglobin F. Professor Boettcher said that in his experiments the reagent had also reacted with adult haemoglobin. It was conceded that his tests appeared to be valid, but there were no samples from the car left to be tested and in addition, it couldn't be established whether the reagent he was using, came from the same batch as that used by the Crown. Since the trial it has now been confirmed that the reagent used by Professor Boettcher IS from the same batch.

(Move from presenter's voiceover to comments by Prof Barry Boettcher).

BB: The jury should have accepted the demonstrations that I provided that the reagent would react with adult blood. Since we now know that the demonstrations I provided in the Darwin court and even that the forensic biologists, uh... presented in the Darwin court were conducted with precisely the same reagent as was used in the Chamberlain car, we then should realise that the tests on the items from the Chamberlain car were not valid, or the res... the conclusions from them were not valid.

(Return to presenter's voiceover)

KH: Confirmation of his findings only came during a trip to the reagent manufacturing works in Germany just prior to the High Court appeal. While in Germany, Professor Boettcher instigated a similar experiment in the manufacturer's own laboratory. The results were identical and he was given a signed statement qualifying the properties of the reagent and placing restrictions on its use.

(Cut to BB reading out the restrictions placed on the anti-serum's use by the manufacturer. These points are summarised in print on the screen with Prof BB's head and shoulders squeezed into a square insert in the top left-hand corner).

BB: 'Fourthly, the anti-serum against Haemoglobin F of this company, therefore, is not suitable on its own for the identification of foetal or infant blood and adult blood'. (Turning to face the interviewer) And the point is that document was given specifically about the batch of reagent used on the items from the Chamberlain car (Musical interlude to signal advertisement).

(Commercial Break)

KH: The evidence of blood in the car was also questioned by the testimony of the Ayers Rock district nurse Roberta Downs, now Roberta Elston, following her marriage to local charter pilot Peter Elston. She told the various court proceedings she had travelled in the car later that night sitting on the passenger seat where the child's throat had allegedly been cut with a pair of scissors. Roberta says she didn't see or smell any blood in the car.

(Cut to interview with Roberta Elston)

RE: I would have noticed it if there had of been some but I wasn't looking for it, but I'm sure, you know, I would have seen, of noticed it if it had of been there.

KH: What is it about blood that would attract your attention as a trained nurse? Is there something about it that would make you aware of it?

RE: Well, there's a certain smell that you get... if there's a large amount. Um, I didn't notice anything like that and I didn't see any.

(End of interview with RE and cut to studio shot of KH)

KH: But the blood in the car wasn't the only forensic evidence hotly disputed at the trial.

(Cut to shot of Darwin Police Station and uniformed officer walking past)

KH: Investigations by the Northern Territory police recommenced after the first coronial inquest following a startling report by Professor James Cameron of the London Hospital Medical College. After examining the baby's bloodstained clothing Professor Cameron concluded the child's throat had been cut and said special ultraviolet florescent photography had revealed a small handprint in blood on the baby's jumpsuit. At the trial, this evidence was strongly attacked by eminent Geelong Pathologist, Professor Vernon Pleuckhahn. He described it as completely unfounded. He said the bloodstains were consistent with massive head injuries and he could find no evidence of a bloody handprint - an observation later supported by three Federal Court and five Hight Court judges. At the second Coronial Inquiry, Professor Cameron had given evidence that Azaria could not have been taken by a dingo because no canine could open its jaws wide enough to grab a child by the skull. At the trial he was forced to change his opinion after the Australian Dingo Foundation presented dramatic photographic evidence to prove that a mature dingo, could, quite easily, pick up a child by the head. Defence Counsel at the trial also attacked Professor Cameron's credibility by raising a British Court case where evidence from Cameron had helped send three men to gaol. He later agreed he had given evidence without knowing the full circumstances of the case

and the convicted men were later released and paid compensation. As it happened, Professor Cameron again hit the headlines in London just seven days after the Chamberlain trial. A British judge accused him of blundering in a case of alleged child neglect. Judge Gerald Butler said (summarised in text at bottom of screen) “Mistakes have been made which ought not to have been made”. High Court judge Lionel Murphy said in his finding at the appeal that such incidences highlighted the danger of relying on the evidence of one expert witness as opposed to another. An observation echoed by retired Victorian Supreme Court judge Sir Reginald Scholl.

(Cut from presenter’s voiceover to interview with Sir Reginald Scholl)

RS: I think it, uh, illustrates the fact that juries are not a suitable tribunal where there’s a conflict of scientific evidence. And, I think that um, the situation really has arisen in Australia where this ought to be recognised and although it would mean probably an amendment of statute law to take away the trial by jury in certain cases, my own view is that, uh, it ought to be open to either side, the Crown or the Defence to apply for an order that a trial be a trial by three judges. I think that would get over the difficulty which occurred in this case.

KH: Given that wasn’t possible in this case, what should the judge in charge of the trial have done?

RS: Well, as I said some months ago I thought there was a risk of a grave miscarriage of justice because of the conflict of scientific evidence. I feel with all respect to the judge who is an experienced judge and was there in court and heard the evidence, that had I been in his shoes I should have directed the jury that it would be quite unsafe to convict on a conflict of scientific evidence, ah, and circumstantial evidence and that they ought to acquit the accused. I feel myself that in this case on the probabilities there has been a very grave miscarriage of justice and a woman who on all the probabilities to my mind is innocent, is now serving a life sentence in gaol. This is the very kind of the thing that the law ought to be anxious to prevent. (Musical interlude to signal advertisement).

(Commercial Break)

KH: In convicting Michael and Lindy Chamberlain the jury must have rejected the account of Lindy Chamberlain seeing a dingo and of witnesses who heard the baby cry, after, according to the Crown’s submission the child had been murdered. The jury rejected the “dingo theory” as it became known, but was it just a theory or a very real possibility.

(Scene cut to Les Harris from the Australian Dingo Foundation).

LH: Smaller mammals, wallabies ... it will simply take the entire skull of that animal in its jaws and crush it to pulp. Very small mammals, down rabbit-size, hare-size and so forth, it will pick it up either by the head, shake it and break the neck or it will take it by the middle of the back, shake it and break the spine. It was certainly capable of taking and killing, and based on the factual evidence available at the...at the very time that this happened, we believe that the probability that a dingo, took, killed and carried off Azaria Chamberlain, is of such a high order as to be nearly a certainty.

(Cut to sign "Dingoes Are Wild" at the Ayers Rock camping ground, erected after Azaria's disappearance).

KH: After Azaria's disappearance, warning signs were put up. Signs which had been ordered by rangers before the events of August 17, 1980. Nurse Roberta Downs had complained of increasing attacks on children and Senior Ranger Derek Roff had requested extra ammunition so troublesome dingoes could be shot. He was concerned he said because children and babies can be considered possible prey.

(Cut from scene of Ranger Derek Roff to interview with Bill and Judy West of WA)

KH: The West family of Esperance Western Australia, had first hand experience of the problem the day before Azaria disappeared, when their twelve year-old daughter Catherine was attacked.

(Cut to interview with Judy West)

JW: The dingo had come up around her and it had taken hold of her elbow and shaken it with its teeth. And I didn't, you know, I really didn't want her to get panicky about it but it was really quite frightening.

KH: Had other people mentioned to you that they'd seen dingoes doing things to try and get food?

JW: Oh yes, Alec Mayberry had, the other, uh, couple that we had come up with, he was putting food into the bin and the dingo tried to snatch it out of his hands. So, yeah, they were well and truly...they were well and truly hungry.

(Cut from domestic scene of Bill and Judy West to searchers looking for clues by night in the area surrounding Ayers Rock).

KH: The dingo activity continued the night of Azaria's disappearance and the trial jury heard evidence of a dingo heading towards the Chamberlain's tent observed by the Whittaker family just ten minutes before the alarm was given.

(Cut to interview with Amy Whittaker)

AW: And it came right underneath our gaslight, I could see that dingo quite clearly and it saw me because it looked at me and then it veered away toward my left...(scene cut to diagram of various positions of tents the night AC disappeared and the track of the dingo to which Amy Whittaker is referring)...in a northerly direction and I followed...followed it until it had gone outside that circle of light...followed it with my eyes until it had gone outside that circle of light.

KH: If it went in a northerly direction in which direction at that time was the Chamberlains' tent from where you were?

(Cut back to diagram to focus on sand dunes. Camera lens follows the direction the dingo took).

AW: Well I now know that it was about 80 yards north of us.

KH: And what did the dingo look like, could you describe it?

(Cut back to scene of interview with AW)

AW: Oh yes, I saw that dingo quite clearly. Um, I was fascinated by it really. Ah, it had, ah...a thick tan coat with cream lighter fur, a bushy tail in the air, um...looked in very good condition...not like the camp dogs...but beautiful looking animal.

(Cut to KH in the studio)

KH: In her evidence, Lindy Chamberlain said she may have been confused in her account of how the dingo came out of the tent and in which direction it went, by the presence of perhaps not one but two dingoes in the vicinity. Defence Counsel supported this with evidence of a menacing growl, heard by nearby campers Judy and Bill West a couple from Esperance, Western Australia.

(Cut back to interview with Judy and Bill West)

BW: I heard a dog growl, and ah...shortly afterwards I heard Lindy say something and then Judy went outside and came back and said something to her, well what's happened...and the dingo's taken the baby.

KH: When you heard the growl, what time was that, do you recall?

BW: Around about 8 o'clock I think it was. It sounded like, if you've got a pair of dogs and you throw one a bone, one dog will give a growl and tell the other one to keep off. That sort of sound it was.

(Cut to KH in the studio)

KH: But unknown to the Defence at the time, a second dingo was actually sighted close to the Chamberlains' camp, again, only minutes before the alarm was raised. And in fact, Melbourne school teacher Murray Haby broke the new camp ground rules, and fed it.

(Cut to interview with Murray Haby)

MH: We were having tea, about ah... around 8 o'clock and ah, in the middle of our main, first meal we... a dingo came up to our van (cut to diagram of campsite and the position of Haby's tent) and we saw it there... it came up very quietly...but we noticed it was in the light from our Kombi Van... we had our door open...side door open. (cut to a photograph Haby took of the dingo he is describing).We decided we'd give it a little bit of meat and to bring it close and we did and it came close, it came right up to the um, (cut to diagram of Haby's tent) the side of the van and it would have um, come in the van I reckon if we half let it and (cut to another photo of the dingo) it ate another piece of meat, but it wouldn't let us pat it, we tried to pat it but it'd back away and then it sort of just vanished in the dark...wasn't very big compared to a dog...(cut back to interview scene with Haby) um and...it was sort of a dung colour with a blackish sort of saddle and it had like Alsatian's have a saddle on...

(Cut to photo of dingo and KH voiceover)

KH: Murray Haby says he told the Northern Territory police about the second dingo, but, it was left out of his statement and the jury was never told.

(Cut to interview scene with Sally and Greg Lowe)

KH: If the evidence of foetal blood in the car was crucial to the Crown case, the observations of Sally Lowe and husband Greg were crucial to the Defence. The couple from Hobart, Tasmania, were with the Chamberlains when Azaria disappeared.

KH: Well, just before the alarm was given she went back to the tent with Azaria to put Azaria to bed and with Aiden. What was her demeanour before she went? Was she in a good mood and cheerful?

SL: Hmm...um...Well, she'd been settling the baby down...um...quite happy, as I say we were very relaxed with them because they were, um...a cheerful couple. Um, I gained the impression she was a little tired, but I think we all were at the end of the day. But, yes, certainly happy and relaxed. Um, I next caught her coming about half way along this worn track with Aiden...um...I think she was chatting away... she seemed quite...quite happy. I think she was involved in a conversation with Aiden...I'm not too sure on that and...um...walked back fairly quickly and stood near the bbq...um....and was standing there...um...

about to prepare a meal and we just took up conversation where we'd left off.

KH: Greg Lowe now says he made a vital observation which he didn't include in his original statement because he didn't realise its significance.

GL: I saw her not only approach the tent, I saw her kneel down to enter the tent with the baby. Um, at that stage Aiden was waiting alongside the tent, waiting for his mother to come out. Ah, I did see her come out and ah...she wasn't carrying the baby at that stage...and she proceeded with Aiden towards the car on the southern side of the tent.

KH: Do you remember exactly how she was walking with the child...could she have been carrying the baby and you not being able to see it?

GL: No, she placed one, her left arm around Aiden and her right arm was unimpeded and there was no way, no, that she was carrying a baby at that stage.

KH: Greg Lowe was advised that because he hadn't included that observation in his original statement he shouldn't mention it at the trial because it may be regarded as a fabrication. However, both he and his wife did give evidence about the all-important baby's cry.

SL: Um, well, she hadn't been back very long and Aiden said "I think that's bubby". I heard the cry too but I didn't take much notice a) because it wasn't my child crying and b) because the child had had wind earlier and I just thought, well they do cry out in pain a little bit sometimes after they've gone to sleep with...you know...pain in the tummy from wind so I didn't think it was very significant. I thought the others had heard it. Um, as I said, Aiden said "I think that's bubby crying" and then Michael said something about it to Lindy because it became obvious that she hadn't heard the crying so I jumped in pretty quick and said "yeah"...you know..."I heard the crying too, it's definitely the baby".

GL: I was there at the time the baby cried out, I did not hear it myself, but I did hear Mike and Aiden suggest to Lindy that that was the baby. Um, I think Aiden said that "that's bubby crying" and Mike said to Lindy "Was the baby settled when you put it down in the tent" and Lindy said "yes" and he said "I think you better go and check". So she promptly went back towards the tent to check.

KH: And how did you react when she gave the alarm?

GL: Well, I was still talking to Mike at that stage and ah, all of a sudden this piercing yell comes across, her now famous cry "A....

(Cut to KH voiceover)

KH: Sally Lowe was the first one to reach Lindy Chamberlain.

SL: It's hard to describe shock but she was all kind of a jitter and ah...um...you could see she was finding it hard to think clearly and ah...you know...there were tears there and um... I think she was concerned for Aiden too and ah...at the same time trying to pull herself together for Aiden's sake but she just couldn't quite make it, you know...

KH: Did you take care of Aiden at sometime?

SL: Um, about that time some other women appeared and were comforting Lindy and um...Aiden was just standing near me and all of a sudden he just burst out these heart-wrenching little sobs and said that...you know... "that dog's got my baby in it's tummy"...something like that...

(Cut to footage of Michael and a pregnant Lindy leaving court)

KH: The new facts in favour of the Defence case established so far.

(Sound of photo lens clicking and the words 'New Facts' appear in red script at the top left-hand corner of the screen along with a picture of a jar which has written on it 'Haemoglobin F').

KH: The blood-testing reagent is unreliable. Tests on blood in the car can't be accepted.

(Sound of clicking photo lens and a picture of Prof James Cameron appears on the screen with again the words "New Facts").

KH: The credibility of a key crown witness is strongly questioned.

(Camera clicking sound again and the photo which Murray Haby took of a dingo appears on the screen with "New Facts").

KH: There's proof of a second dingo scavenging near the Chamberlains' tent.

(Camera clicking sound and then footage of the Chamberlains' yellow Holden Torana being hosed down at a police compound)

KH: Lindy Chamberlain was seen heading towards the car without her baby daughter.

(Commercial break)

(After the commercial break, Kevin Hitchcock returns to interview a young woman whose name has been elided from this reproduction).

KH: Were there any rangers or police in the party that you remember.

UNKNOWN: Um, I think there was Derek Roff there, which is the Head Ranger...I think there was at least one other official person I couldn't say who it was...

KH: Did the Aboriginal tracker appear to be confident that the tracks he was following were the right ones?

UNKNOWN: Well, he'd followed them for more than half an hour and he seemed pretty sure what he was doing.

(Cut to voiceover and then interview with Murray Haby)

KH: Murray Haby searching on his own says he saw similar tracks heading towards a house.

MH: Well, I came back going west, and I picked up another track just in from the road going west which seemed to be a big footprint, a bit like the one I followed on the ridge, but I couldn't be sure whether it was the same one...but I followed that for a while, and it was a very big print, quite heavy as if it was carrying something but it went to...towards the houses and I thought oh well, it must be a camp dog or a local dog, it mustn't be the dingo because it wouldn't go towards the houses, so I just gave up on that one and went back in and joined the other search and got involved with the organised police search where we did big sweeps...

(Return to KH in the studio)

KH: During the two and a half years of police investigations and court proceedings, none of the statements by rangers or local police mentioned dingo tracks leading to a house.

(Cut to footage of a dingo staring into the camera lens and KH questioning Les Harris from the Australian Dingo Foundation)

KH: What type of dingo would take its prey back to a domestic dwelling?

(Cut to interview scene with Les Harris)

LH: Wild dingoes, when they make a kill, particularly on the periphery of their territories will take it back towards the centre where they feel secure. A dingo which is associating with human beings, as mine do who live in my own house, regard my yard as their secure place... (Cut back to footage of dingo staring at the camera lens)...anywhere else they're likely to have their kill contested... (Cut to interview scene with LH)... So, I suppose the answer to your question is this: that any dingo which has a ...an association with a human family would tend to

come back to where that human family lives, believing it to be his secure place, to there consume whatever he had caught.

(Cut to voiceover of KH with picture footage of NT Police Headquarters)

KH: This new information must raise doubts about the competency of the Northern Territory police- their methods of gathering evidence and how it is used in court- doubts already held by many of the witnesses... (Cut to interview with Wally Goodwin) Wally Goodwin who found Azaria's clothing, says he was shocked by police handling of evidence.

WG: When we first found the clothing, the...the grey suit was (using his arms to demonstrate the position) laying out in an area the length of the grey suit with the legs slightly crumpled in, with the legs...with the arms of the grey suit being not quite spread out fully, except concentrated a bit in. The front of the grey suit was open to the waist, which exposed the singlet inside the grey suit...ah, the disposable nappy was laying with the bottom of the nappy facing upwards and the opening of the nappy, down to the ground.

KH: So there were more than two press studs open on the grey suit?

WG: Oh, yes, hmmm... a lot more than two, most of the clips were open on the grey suit.

(Cut to television footage of baby Azaria's bloody suit splayed outwards)

WG: At first impression the way the feet were sticking up on the grey suit, the way it was laying on its back, it gave the impression that the feet were still in the grey suit. Ah, and the baby had been eaten out of it.

(Cut to footage of Constable Frank Morris entering court)

KH: Goodwin says he fetched Ayers Rock policeman Constable Frank Morris, who at the trial...(Cut to highlighted court transcript with the words "That is not correct" and "I did" underlined in red)... said he looked at the clothes then left to get instructions and organise camera equipment.

(Cut back to interview scene with Wally Goodwin)

KH: When Constable Morris came back with you, what did he do when he saw the clothes?

WG: Well, the first thing he did, was knelt down, picked up the clothing, put his hand inside the leg of the grey suit and pulled out one of the booties. Now he said to me and which I was quite surprised that he picked it up... said to me, that it was the bootie which was the positive identification and that there was a query over the colour of the bootie

whether it should be yellow with a white tie or a white tie with a yellow bootie. He then asked me to leave the area and notify his wife, the other policemen and also the rangers and bring them back to the area, which when I left the area, Morris was standing there holding the grey suit in his hand.

(Cut to photographs which Morris took of baby Azaria's clothing in the scrub and KH voiceover)

KH: Morris took two sets of photographs. One with the items in the position where he says they were found and... (Cut to Morris' second photograph)... another with the various items laid out. Goodwin says the jury became confused as to whether the clothes were found in a heap or neatly spread out.

WG: I was asked to examine the photos in court and after looking through the photos I was then asked to show the court which one of the photos was the way the clothing was found. Which I replied, "None of them are"...ah...because I said that Morris had picked the clothing up.

(KH voiceover and cut to pictures drawn by court cartoonists of Morris being examined by Counsel)

WG: So even though I laid out the clothing to the way it was found, I don't think that...(Cut to additional footage of Constable Morris smiling and entering the courthouse)... the evidence was really comprehended by the jury at the time... (Cut back to interview scene with Wally Goodwin)... their reaction is that they believe Morris and not the witness.

(Cut straight to interview with Murray Haby- another witness whose testimony had been tampered with by Counsel)

MH: When I went through my statement with the Barrister before...a couple of days before I went into court, ah...he went through the statement with me and he was surprised about that part of the statement, because he didn't know that I'd seen tracks and he wanted to know more information than what was in the statement...I presume for his own edification...um...and he wanted to know whether the police had followed it up and I said "oh, I don't know"...um...then he said that...um...oh he wouldn't ask me anything about that in court and I was sort of, a bit taken aback because I thought courts were out to find the truth...

(Cut to interview scene with Amy and Whittaker family and KH voiceover)

KH: Like many other witnesses, the Whittakers were not initially interviewed by police, but asked to reply to a series of general questions on a written form. There was no opportunity to give specific information about dingo tracks.

MR W: Ah, the first time was a few months after it happened...ah...we were asked to make statements down at the local police station and they were, sort of a, standard questionnaire form.

KH: Later, when you were visited by Darwin detectives before the second inquest, how did they begin their questioning?

MR W: They mentioned to us that they had been instructed when they left Darwin, that they were to dismiss from their mind anything to do with a dingo having taken the child, that it was a murder investigation that they were on, and there...they were to... all their questions and that were to do along with that line.

KH: And as a witness giving evidence, how did that make you feel?

MR W: Well most of the evidence that I had to offer, was mainly to do with dingo tracks and pads, and following an Aborigine tracker to a house that night and I felt very much on the defensive because by...they...they did not appear to be very interested in that area of the questioning and they felt that anything you said about dingoes they were not particularly interested in. Ah, they mentioned to me that they thought that it would not come to a trial and that they expected an early confession.

(Cut to interview with Lindy's parents, Cliff and Avis Murchison and KH voiceover)

KH: Lindy Chamberlain's parents, Cliff and Avis Murchison live in the small coastal town of Nowra in southern New South Wales. Mr Murchison is the pastor of the local Seventh Day Adventist Church next door to their home. Both were at their daughter's home in Mt Isa when the family car was unpacked and both saw evidence of dingo tracks. Lindy herself referred to it in her evidence at the trial but Mrs Murchison wasn't called. She was told that her evidence, as the mother of the accused, would carry no weight.

AM: Well, I was helping Lindy unpack, and quite by accident I found two dingo footprints on the blanket...the space blanket that was covering Reagan who was asleep in the tent alongside the carry cot that Azaria was in...they were the most distinct and clear footprints (cut to image of Mr Murchison covering his face because of tears)...that could be. Well, Lindy rang Alice Springs immediately to the police there and asked them would they like it, told them what we'd found and they said "yes" they would send a policeman round to pick it up which they did and as this young policeman walked into the lounge room, Lindy unfolded the blanket and held it up to him and he sort of stepped forward almost eagerly or excitedly and he said "Oh yes there is no dou(bt).." and then he didn't say anymore he just became official and we talked and the blanket was folded and put into a plastic bag carefully and sent to Alice Springs. Well, I understand that when the detective gave evidence, he said there was nothing significant on the

blanket when he received it and I also understand that the young policeman that picked it up said there were marks on the blanket but you could not say that they were dingo footprints. Now I know that young man was convinced, the way he spoke and I would really like to know what happened to those footprints.

(Cut to court cartoonist's picture of Lindy and Michael seated at the trial with the words "New Facts" written in red at the top left hand corner of the screen. KH voiceover)

KH: The list of new information strengthens the Defence case but raises many disturbing questions.

(Camera shutter noise heard and image then cuts to Roberta Elston with the words "New Facts" written in red at the top left hand corner of the screen)

KH: Sterilising liquid supposedly used for cleaning up blood, was not contaminated.

(Camera shutter noise and cut to image of Sally Lowe with "New Facts" written in red)

KH: Crown attempts to discredit the evidence of the baby's cry, are unsuccessful.

(Camera shutter noise and cut to image of tracker Nipper Winmatti with "New Facts" written in red him on the top left hand corner of the screen)

KH: Aboriginal trackers say a pet dingo was tracked to a local house.

(Camera shutter noise and a picture of a dingo with the words "New Facts" in red appears on the screen)

KH: Local residents say the suspect dingo was definitely alive at the time.

(Camera shutter noise and picture of standing dingo and "New Facts" written in red)

KH: Residents say the later shooting of the dingo cannot be denied.

(Camera shutter noise and photo still of Mr Whittaker with "New Facts" written in red)

KH: Independent witnesses were present when tracks were followed to a local house.

(Camera shutter noise and image of an outdoor tree-filled setting with "New Facts" on screen)

KH: Rangers and police failed to report tracks leading to the house.

(Camera shutter noise and picture of Northern Territory Police Headquarters sign with 'New Facts' superimposed on the screen)

KH: Police apparently ignored dingo evidence in seeking a murder conviction against the Chamberlains.

(Camera shutter noise and image still of Avis Murchison during her interview. "New Facts" superimposed on screen in red).

KH: Paw prints on a blanket faded from view.

(Commercial Break)

KH: The Chamberlains have now exhausted all avenues of legal appeal, but independent legal experts say the new material deserves to be investigated in some way, perhaps by a royal commission.

(Cut to footage of Chamberlains entering the courthouse flanked by photographers)

KH: Sir Reginald Scholl says the new information should prompt a Royal Commission into the Chamberlain case ordered by the Governor-General or an Act of Parliament.

(Cut to interview with Sir Reginald Scholl)

RS: I suppose the Governor-General is still the Governor-General of the Northern Territory although it has an administrator, and um...I imagine that the Federal Attorney-General could order... ah...could persuade the Governor-General to order a Royal Commission. Otherwise it would be a matter for the Northern Territory to appoint a Royal Commission but there again of course you get questions of conflict of interest don't you? You get the administration perhaps tending to support the conviction which it has no business to do, but which it might be tempted to do because its own police force is involved.

KH: So, it's unlikely for them to order a Royal Commission into a case which they've carried through successfully?

RS: That might well be the situation, yes, you could even, I imagine by an Act of Federal Parliament direct a Royal Commission.

(Cut to interview scene with Michael Chamberlain)

MC: I've always believed that if a system is good, It'll eventually prove if a person is innocent. It seems to me that there is more machinery needed in our country or law reform, call it what you will, in order to make sure this sort of thing does not happen. Our case has been a very complicated case, a lot of technical evidence and I think that has been

misunderstood by certain people. If it had of been correctly understood we would never be in this situation.

KH: You've now exhausted all the normal avenues of legal appeal, what more can you do? What is the point in continuing on?

MC: Well, the point in continuing on is because the system has made a mistake in our case, we are innocent. And I affirm this and my wife would affirm it most strongly, and so we must fight on, it's...the problem is not just for us but for people who follow us...um...it's a national problem for other people who might get caught in the same predicament as we're in.

(Camera shot pans out to include KH and then re-enters to focus on MC)

KH: Have you reached the stage now where you would accept the verdict of one more inquiry?

MC: I'll accept no verdict, until the right verdict is given and that is, that we were innocent.

[Program Ends]

APPENDIX B

60 Minutes interview with the Chamberlains 2 March 1986

TRANSCRIPT:

(In order of appearance)

RM – Ray Martin
LH – Pastor Lyle Heiss
LC – Lindy Chamberlain
MC – Michael Chamberlain
KC – Kahlia Chamberlain
UV – Unidentified voice
GH – Grandma Hughes
AC – Aidan Chamberlain
YC – Yvonne Cain

Scene opens with a close-up of the Christian cross inside the Avondale College Adventist Church. The choir sings in the background as the voice-over of Ray Martin (RM) is heard, followed by Pastor Lyle Heiss (LH) addressing the assembled congregation.

RM: Saturday at the Avondale College Church.

LH: Today we come together in joy and gratitude to God to recall the high and low spots in an unfolding story of tragedy, yet of faith and courage.

RM: Pastor Lyle Heiss begins a service none of this congregation will ever forget. Ordinary God-fearing people, whose lives have somehow been linked through faith and through friendship to the fate of a convicted murderess.

LH: We have struggled with them to find some meaning in their pain and to find strength and courage from God when his face seemed so inscrutable.

RM: Now their prayers have been answered. Lindy Chamberlain is coming back to the fold. But what will she be like? How has she changed after all this time?

LH: We rejoice with the family, welcoming them to worship and to the platform for a brief moment of sharing together. Michael and Lindy Chamberlain.

Camera turns to Michael and Lindy Chamberlain as they walk on stage together to address the congregation amidst applause and a standing ovation.

LC: Words are totally inadequate to say what we feel and to express our gratitude for your love and your care and your prayers. It just reaches out like a blanket. It surrounds us. *(Lindy's voice begins to break as camera focuses on Michael's hand squeezing his wife's waist)* It's so totally tangible you can feel it wafting across the miles. The real fight for justice is only just starting. You

might think it's nearly finished but believe me it's just beginning. This is not just for our freedom and our name to be cleared it's for every Australian. We don't ever want to see this happen in Australia again. May God bless you and be with you.

Scene switches to Lindy Chamberlain's face as Ray Martin interviews she and Michael.

RM: It was a fighting speech Lindy. It wasn't a speech of someone who was lying down.

LC: Definitely not going to lie down and die. I'm not really just clearing myself, I'm clearing my family, I'm clearing every last witness that was at the Rock and knows that a dingo definitely took Azaria. Who likes to be called a liar? Nobody likes to be called a liar and I've been told straight to my face that I'm the most fanciful liar that Australia's got. Well they can say what they like but I know I'm not.

MC: See, I think a lot of people don't realise how important innocence is to innocent people and certainly we're tired and we're weary, but we're not going to do as we were advocated just recently by one senior journalist in Australia, "look give it away, walk away from it now, just find a new place for Lindy to live and put it behind you". Innocent people can't do that and we can't do it. We must fight on to clear our names, our children's names because they are our heritage.

RM: Later on we will look closely at Lindy's claim of innocence, but what of those years in gaol? She now reveals that she thought of stopping the gaol visits by her children because it was simply too painful and she even offered Michael a divorce.

LC: Yeah, I did. It was about the same time around as we discussed the children not coming. I think there comes a very low point when you're trying to come to grips with the fact that you are there. You're stuck in somewhere for life for something you've never done.

MC: There were no boundaries for her and no boundaries for me. We didn't know how long we'd be separated under what conditions and I think she felt at her lowest point that if you really love a person you'd be prepared to let them do anything. Even let them go free.

LC: You think of your children needing comfort and your husband needing comfort and there's just no one there, you're powerless to do anything and consequently, if that meant me fading out of the picture I was prepared to do it even though I didn't want to. Michael told me what he thought of my suggestion in no uncertain terms.

RM: What did you think of her suggestion in no uncertain terms, Michael?

MC: Crazy idea. Get it out of her brain.

RM: What's the biggest thing since you've come out of gaol Lindy? What's the biggest thing you've had to adjust to? What's good and what's bad?

LC: I don't know.

RM: What's been different then? Just tell me the difference, I mean...?

LC: An untidy house I guess! Decidedly different!

Scene shifts to outdoors on the Chamberlains' property with RM addressing Kahlia Chamberlain (KC).

RM: Who made the dress for you Kahlia?

KC: My mum, when she was in gaol.

RM: With all the innocence of a three-year old Kahlia announces to the world, "Mummy made this dress for me in gaol".

MC: Actually, your mummy made a lot of dresses for you whilst she was in gaol didn't she?

Scene cut to Lindy twirling Kahlia around by the arms like a helicopter.

LC: Ready, set go.... *(talking to Kahlia)*

RM: And Lindy Chamberlain now has to get to know this baby who was quite literally taken from her with the clank of a cell door.

LC: Landing! They hurt when you stand on them *(picking up a pine cone from the grass underneath Kahlia's feet)* did you know that?

RM: Prison meant more than just losing her freedom. It meant losing her husband, her two sons and the brand new baby daughter.

LC: In the pine cones again. Go on, walk in a straight line *(talking to Kahlia)*.

RM: How do you feel when your daughter is in the care of someone else?

LC: Cheated *(interrupting)*.

RM: Sorry?

LC: Cheated. Really cheated.

RM: How did you explain to the other two boys at that stage that the baby doesn't have a mum? Can you explain it?

LC: Reagan didn't even really accept her for quite a...oh, until just recently because he felt she was sort of almost an "on loan". He lost one little sister (*Lindy begins to cry*) and it was like losing two.

Scene cuts to Adventist Church gathering with Lindy seen greeting and embracing guests.

RM: Lindy is now free, but she is not the Lindy Chamberlain that Australia remembers from her trial. Just 38 years old, she's only half the weight she was and even old friends don't recognise her sometimes, they have to ask who she is.

LC: That's the funniest thing I've been asked today (*laughing*).

UV: Grandma Hughes this is Mrs Lindy Chamberlain.

GH: Is it?

LC: Yeah.

GH: Oh, you dear soul.

RM: The Northern Territory says that Lindy Chamberlain has paid her debt to society, but she remains like Michael Chamberlain, a convicted criminal. You've got to remind yourself that this isn't just another Aussie backyard party where the mum's cuddle each other's babies. This mum remember, has been found guilty of cutting the throat of her nine-week old child (*camera shows Lindy holding a friend's baby girl in her arms*).

Scene cuts to interview with Lindy Chamberlain indoors.

LC: I've spent an hour and a half almost, at one stage being asked did I kill my daughter. You are so angry. You're so frustrated that you get almost an uncaring monotone. You're just holding it back, you feel like getting up and telling them where to get off, but you can't. There is volumes more that could be said and maybe one day we'll get a chance to do just that.

RM: Has there ever been the anger there though where you've felt like you just wanted to thump someone?

LC: Yes at times. More on what was done to my parents, and my children and my husband. To see my children's reactions, to watch my father go grey, nothing will pay for that, not ever (*Lindy begins to cry*). And that makes me extremely angry indeed because it's needless. It is totally needless and is wrong.

Scene cuts to Aidan Chamberlain riding his motorbike.

RM: Almost six years down the track and with a second-hand bike at that, Aidan is the only one who was with Lindy that night when his baby sister, Azaria disappeared: of the three children, the only one old enough for the memory,

the trauma of everything that has happened to have left its mark. But he's still only twelve years old and whatever happened that night, it hurts an awful lot what people say about his mum.

Ray Martin interviews Aidan Chamberlain (AC)

AC: There are some stupid people in this country (*Aidan cries and hides his face*).

RM: Yes there are, yes. Did you ever try to explain it to them?

AC: Nup.

RM: Kids tend to understand a bit.

AC: I just tell them to mind their own business. I don't like talking about it.

RM: But you know they're only two people who know what happened that night, that's your mum and you. Your mum's said all the time what happened. Do you want to tell me what you saw?

AC: I didn't see anything. I just heard mum cry.

RM: Heard mummy crying? When she called out?

AC: Yep.

RM: What about when you went and tucked Reagan in? What do you remember from that?

AC: Mum never wanted to do...she would never want to do that (*Aidan cries*).

Scene cuts to Lindy during an interview with Ray Martin

LC: He shows his anger and his hurt a lot more, but he gets over it a lot more and yet there's a little core underneath that he keeps very private, where he keeps his hurt.

RM: Has he been the target? Has he and Reagan...have they been the target of abuse?

LC: Certainly, Aidan was given a very hard time in Mt Isa by the children there when we got back.

RM: What sort of thing?

LC: Children usually echo their parents and you know, people would come up and say, "Dingoes don't come into our house and take my little sister".

RM: Aidan as you say was six at the time of that night. He knows what happened, he was there with you, why didn't he talk? Why didn't you get him to talk in the court?

LC: The police talked to him for two hours and his statement was being read. It was quite obvious by the time when got to the trial that it didn't really matter much what we said the Northern Territory was not prepared to listen. They'd said to me outright that, "If we don't get you this time, we'll get you next time or we'll have this inquest annulled and we'll have another one until you get charged, because we're gonna get you".

Scene cuts to Ray Martin at the 60 Minutes' studio

RM: Lindy Chamberlain, quite clearly seeing herself as the victim of a witchhunt. But in a moment, we'll take her one by one through all those damning accusations made against her at her trial. And also, one by one, through the kind of questions a lot of Australians think still need answering.

Commercial Break

RM: Let me read (I don't mean to be cruel), but let me read, paraphrase from Mr Barker QC's summing up: the prosecution's summing up of what happened. He said that you put Reagan to sleep as he started to get cold; that Aidan and Michael ate dinner; shortly after you returning to the station wagon with Aidan that you cut the baby's throat; that you returned to the camp fire with Aidan, at this stage the baby's body was probably in the car in Michael's camera bag; that shortly after Michael and another person heard a noise near the car; that you walked to the tent and less than a minute later you cried out, "The dingo's got my baby"; that Michael became aware of the murder shortly afterwards and while three hundred or so people were searching the sandhills for the body it was in fact in the car; that after that the jumpsuit was cut with scissors to look like teeth marks and then buried, possibly with the body, that some time later the body was dug up and the clothes were taken to Ayers Rock. What do you think of that? What do you feel when I read you that?

LC: Anger.

RM: Well let me ask you face to face what every Australian would ask you, "Did you kill Azaria?"

LC: No way, I loved that little girl (*Lindy cries*).

RM: Why didn't you pretend, Lindy, that in fact it was postnatal depression and simply just...rather than put yourself through what has clearly been agony and great traumas for five or six years?

LC: Why should I pretend I'd done something I didn't do just in order to save myself a bit of trouble?

RM: A lot of trouble, not just a bit.

LC: Well a lot of trouble. Would you lie and say something that you'd never done, when you simply could tell the truth? It's made me very angry to think that I've been told over and over again if you'd lied and said you'd done it you'd be out of gaol, but to tell the truth you've got to stay in gaol. You shouldn't have to lie to get justice.

RM: Is it possible that you committed the crime and wiped it out of your mind?

LC: No.

RM: Simple as that?

LC: Simple as that.

RM: Why isn't it possible? It's happened before that people have forgotten, if not that crime?

LC: I've got a very good memory and all I need to do is shut my eyes and see it happen all over again.

RM: Were you suffering at all from postnatal depression from any depression?

LC: Postnatal *elation* more like it!

RM: Right, is it possible that you're covering up? That you've been covering up for someone else?

LC: I'm not covering up for anybody. If I'd done something I'd be quite happy to take the punishment for it, but I am not going to lie down and die for something I haven't done.

RM: But what about if someone else did it? In fact, obviously you know the rumours you know the reports that in fact it was Aidan that you were covering up...?

LC: Well I know Aidan didn't do it he was with me and I know Reagan was sound asleep and everybody else around there was at the barbeque. The night was so still you could hear every little movement. If there'd been a person involved you'd have heard them.

RM: Would you be surprised though if you heard a story of a mother covering up for her child who'd committed a crime as has been alleged?

LC: No, I guess I wouldn't. I could understand it. I could understand it. If you knew that it was deliberate and that they had abnormal tendencies or jealousy or something or other you could even feel ashamed and want to hide it, but you certainly wouldn't let that child near another baby.

RM: Now you never saw a dingo or a dog with the baby you simply saw the dingo or the dog at the tent.

LC: I saw the dingo at the tent mouth coming out obviously holding something in its mouth. It could have been nothing else but her that the dingo had and if I had been another second closer, even a split second closer, I would have seen what I'm glad I didn't see.

RM: Is it possible that you saw a person, not a dingo?

LC: No.

RM: Lindy, why were you so convinced after three hours of soul searching that Azaria was dead?

LC: We knew because of the blood near the tent that she was injured and just from a purely first aid point of view, blood plus shock from injury plus extreme cold is a very big factor in death- that in itself was a big negative.

RM: Well that sounds very rational and logical and medical now, in the heat of the moment ...

LC: Well that was the first thing I sort of thought of that we need to find her immediately because she might need blood transfusions and we've got maybe a maximum of an hour to do that. And we asked Derek Roff the head ranger did he know anything about dingo attacks or anything and the information that he gave us then, well one thing he said to us was, "I believe that your daughter's death would have been very quick. It would have been over very very quickly".

RM: But it wasn't everyone around you's [sic] daughter, it was your daughter, it was your baby.

LC: It was my daughter, yes.

RM: And you didn't think that out there in that terrain that she... that they may have missed her with the torches, that she may be somewhere close to the tent?

LC: Well I thought that. That's why Michael and I went out so often (*Lindy cries*)

RM: You went out afterwards did you?

LC: After the searches had gone out and they'd looked, what they considered well, in the immediate area, we went out about three times.

Scene cut to outdoor shot of RM and LC walking towards the camera with voiceover from RM.

RM: In the five days we spent with Lindy Chamberlain and her family they talked about the good, but mostly the bad moments, the mistakes and the memories. And nothing is more vivid than that night at eight o'clock on October 29, 1982 when the jury filed back into this murder trial.

Scene cuts to RM interview with MC and LC.

MC: I saw those jurors almost skulking – heads down, not looking at us – and then the monotonous tone of the head juror pronounce guilty for both of us. And then I looked across and saw the judge whose face seemed to go from an ashen grey to a ruddy red and I thought, yes I know you're feeling exactly the way we are.

RM: Did you look at the jurors? Did you look at every juror and was every juror looking down?

LC: No, three of them cried and that told me, you are not convinced of what you're saying.

Scene cuts to Yvonne Caine (YC) walking towards the camera with RM voice-over.

RM: Three years later, one member of that jury, Yvonne Cain, flies from Perth to say that she now believes she was wrong.

Voiceover of YC as the two women embrace in their first meeting since Lindy's incarceration in 1982.

YC: I wanted her instantly in my heart and I felt that she was, but the defence didn't bring anything in to say that she is.

Voiceover is interrupted as the two women speak.

YC: Are you alright now? It's all finished.

LC: Not finished yet. We've got a fight to go.

YC: Look at you (*touching Lindy's face*)

Voiceover of YC.

YC: In the end you have to say, beyond reasonable doubt.

Scene cuts to YC and MC embracing and crying.

MC: You're okay.

Scene cuts to the two women being interviewed.

YC: Well there was doubt in me and I think there was probably doubt, I shouldn't say, but I think there was in most of us. But what can we say on what we've

been shown? It shows that she's guilty – what we've seen in front of us on the forensic side.

RM: So you've been told [to] forget your own emotions and just base it on ...

YC: Yeah, and it had to be either Lindy or the dingo. I know now that the dingo could have done it.

LC: Now I would like to know, for instance, how the police knew to tell the newsmen half an hour before you came back into court, because it's supposed to be closed until the judge finds out and yet the police knew. I mean, obviously, there's a leak there somewhere.

YC: There was leaks [sic]. It was horrible. You didn't want to go into the courtroom. I mean, I wanted to go in looking straight at her with a smile on my face. I couldn't even look across there.

RM: How did you go in – with your head down?

YC: Guilty, (*shaking her head*), I was the guilty one going in there.

Voiceover of RM as camera cuts from meeting with juror to news footage of LC being interviewed by another reporter within days of Azaria's disappearance.

RM: So this juror has changed her mind, but all Australians saw Lindy Chamberlain – cold and clinical, astonishingly detached – as she described, days after, how the dingo treated her baby daughter Azaria.

Speaking to the unidentified reporter in the excerpted news footage, LC describes how Azaria would have been taken by the dingo.

LC: They use their feet like hands and pull back the skin as they go and they just peel it like an orange. And if you'll notice here (*pointing to a photograph of Azaria's bloody jumpsuit*), on the hands for instance, there is blood as well. And you also must realise that the baby had lost a lot of blood and when you have lost a lot of blood, you lose weight and she would have come easily out of her clothes anyway.

Scene cuts to RM and LC sitting in a lounge room having just watched the aforementioned news footage on screen.

RM: Now, I guess anyone watching that would have to ask how you could remain so calm, talking so clinically, about that so soon after the disappearance of your daughter.

LC: (*Extreme close-up of Lindy Chamberlain's face*) I can remember at the time being quite annoyed and irate that people [were] saying it [the dingo abduction] wasn't possible and I knew that it was and ...

RM: But you don't seem very annoyed and irate though, you seem to be very clinical about looking at a photograph of your baby's jumpsuit.

LC: Yes I know it's my baby's jumpsuit ... um ... but that seems to be very academic to me. It's divorced from her.

RM: It didn't seem to be part of her?

LC: No, it's not part of her. Anything that happened to that jumpsuit was well ... um ... she wouldn't have known anything about it and I don't see any point tormenting myself about thoughts of what happened if and how and why it becomes a clinical exercise after that. Now if that had of been clean it would have been a whole different matter because then that was how I remembered her. Her and dirty clothes was never an associated memory and its associated things that upset you.

Cut to voiceover of RM.

RM: If Lindy was determined not to cry five and a half years ago over the jumpsuit and the nappy, why did she break down recently when shown the latest sensational discovery – Azaria's matinee jacket?

LC: Oh with that matinee jacket, now see I was prepared to see it. I was determined I wasn't going to show anything in front of the police – I could feel my face very hard.

RM: But your lawyer said that, in fact, you were crying there.

LC: Yes, but that wasn't at the matinee jacket that was when I saw the tag.

RM: Why?

LC: Because it was clean.

RM: It was in the condition it was when you last saw the baby?

LC: It was clean – relatively speaking – and it also had the size on it and the size just brought back a mental picture of her.

RM: But when you're describing something like that on that videotape to that reporter (*screen cuts to earlier news footage of Lindy*), is it as though you're talking about someone else's baby, someone else's jumpsuit?

LC: It's as though I'm talking about some other thing. It's not related to a person at all. It doesn't ... it doesn't connect with me. It could be an orange, an apple or a horse.

RM: But it was your baby. It was your baby's jumpsuit?

LC: It was her jumpsuit but never in that condition.

- RM: Can you understand why people saw you, in interviews like that and then in the court, as the steely, hard, cold woman?
- LC: (*Lindy laughs*) Yes, unfortunately I can, but I was sort of ... that was me, I was sort of powerless to do anything about it. Like walking into court they say, there she goes again that hard-faced bitch and looking at it [the news footage] I would agree with them. But, if I cried I was putting on an act for the public, if I smiled I was heartless ... ah ... and that was anywhere in between. And besides, you sort of freeze with everybody staring at you and you know that they're looking at you, you know that they're ready to jump either way no matter what you do – you can't do anything right and consequently you, well I guess you sort of freeze.
- RM: Were you crying in private behind closed doors?
- LC: Too right I was, yeah. I ... I am ... well I'm just about lost for words. I don't see any reason why they should see the effect of what they're doing to me – I just won't give them that pleasure. I know they'd just sit back and gloat, so why should they know what effect they're having on me? If they don't know what hurts, then they can't do it.
- RM: Alright, let's just stay with impressions for a moment. Again, the impression in that murder trial was that it became a fashion show, that here was Lindy Chamberlain in a different dress day after day on the television cameras (*Lindy laughs*) and on the screens around Australia.
- LC: Did you change your shirt today?
- RM: Yep.
- LC: (*Lindy smiles*) Well, you're on a fashion show then aren't you?
- RM: But you know what I mean – you read it [in the newspapers].
- LC: Yeah, well that's about it. There ... I mean it's hot you change every day. Just because I happened to be the one they were looking at I had ... um ... well up there [in the two inquests at Alice Springs and the trial in Darwin] I had to have more changes of clothes than anything else. Normally I'd take seven [outfits] – one for every day – wash on Sunday [and] repeat them the next week. I obviously had to have more, [given that I was] sitting [in the courtroom] for nearly three months, because I'd grow out of one size into the next, but ... um ...
- RM: Because of the baby?
- LC: Yeah, because I was pregnant. I mean, maternity dresses I wore at the beginning of that trial certainly wouldn't fit me at the end. I begged, borrowed and stole from all of my girlfriends and ...
- RM: So they weren't the latest fashions? You weren't this fashion show which was...?

LC: Oh no ...

RM: Where did those dresses come from?

LC: Well, I had three of my own that I'd had from Aidan and the rest of them were either from the [Avondale] college swap-shop or from girlfriends at Avondale who are probably still wearing them round there now because they've gone back and others are wearing them.

Cut to footage of MC and LC, speaking to the media on the steps of the Alice Springs Courthouse, after the findings of the first inquest were handed down.

MC: This is a picture of Azaria when she was nine weeks old (*Lindy, standing beside him unfolds a large photograph of her holding Azaria*) – [which is] proof that she was, as we said, the most beautiful baby.

RM: (*Voiceover*) Why did you go out on the steps and hold up the large photograph of Azaria?

LC: Ah, [the] inquest.

RM: Inquest, alright.

Camera cuts to close-up of LC during RM interview.

LC: that was after the first inquest. I was ...

RM: It didn't fit the picture of the grieving mother again, did it?

LC: I was angry. I was angry that there was still stupid rumours [sic] around that she was ... um ... a cretin or similarly disabled – and unwanted because of that – that she was malformed in some way and it was just so totally untrue. I thought, now they know the truth about her death, let everybody see what a beautiful little girl she was. I was proud of her and I still am proud of her.

RM: But again that didn't fit, subjectively, what people wanted to see as a grieving mum standing on the steps there holding a photograph.

LC: I guess it was a way of saying goodbye (*Lindy begins to cry*).

Cut to RM in the 60 Minutes studio.

RM: Now just before we left the family, we asked Lindy if she would consider making a direct appeal to all those ordinary Australians who followed her case so closely. We asked her to think about it this way: it would be as if you suddenly came face-to-face with someone who is positive that you're guilty – just what would you say to try and change their minds? Well, she's agreed to do that, and we'll have her statement ready for you at [sic] next week's program – Lindy Chamberlain speaking directly to the Australian public and, after you've heard her, you might then like to write to 60 Minutes.

[Program Ends]