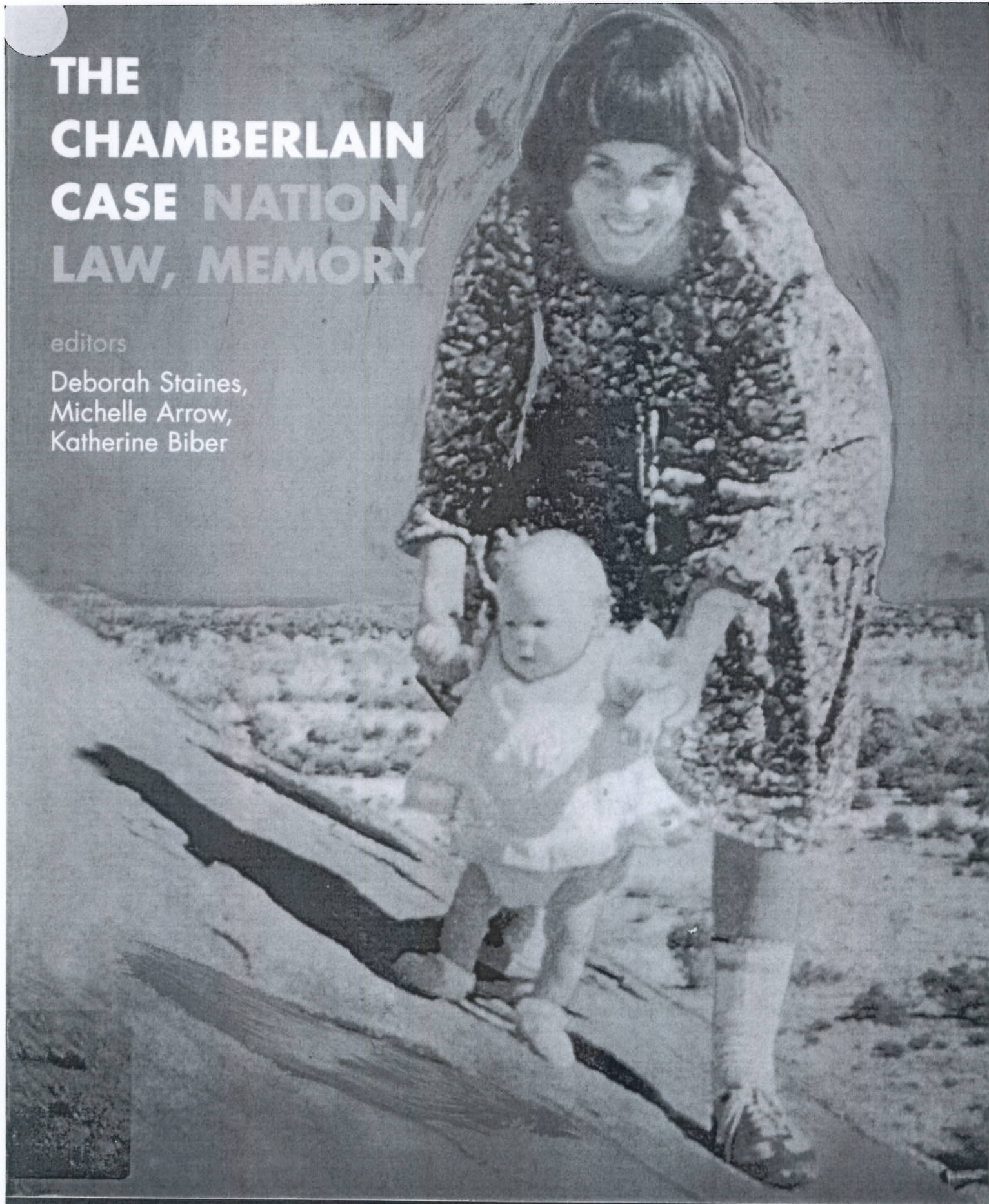


THE CHAMBERLAIN CASE NATION, LAW, MEMORY

editors

Deborah Staines,
Michelle Arrow,
Katherine Biber



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THE CHAMBERLAIN CASE

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Australian Scholarly Publishing

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DREAD, DELUSION AND GLOBALISATION: FROM AZARIA TO SCHAPELLE

Graham Seal

The benefit of hindsight allows us to see the Chamberlain case, with its attendant paranoias, prejudices and miscarriages of justice, as the first of a series of folkloric responses to the impact of globalisation on the economic and social certainties of an old Australia. In seeking ways to neutralise these threats, Australians invoked a series of ancient but still potent irrational prejudices and fears drawn from the underculture of our European heritage. These included various forms of community hysteria, such as prosecutions for Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA), and urban legend scares, stimulated by the importation of global delusions themselves derived to a considerable extent from the European irrational. More recently, reaction to the Schapelle Corby case provided further examples of mass hysteria, paranoia and prejudice in circumstances that disturbingly echoed aspects of the Chamberlain case. The folkloric and media expressions relating to the case over a quarter of a century reveal a national community grappling with challenges to its sense of shared cultural identity as the opening up of the Australian economy to international competition put increasing strain on a taken-for-granted way of life.

These cultural events were both the product of globalisation—of the economy and communications—as well as a reaction to it. Globalisation brought certain illusions with it, while our own Australian-based

dreads about the impact of globalisation on lives and livelihoods made us apply these concerns, with socially devastating consequences, to ourselves.

Facts and Folklore

Lean, mean and smart, the Australian native dog—the dingo—is one of our most potent national symbols. The spare-framed animal's outback haunts and outlaw characteristics make it an antipodean equivalent of the wolf, fierce and cunning. The dingo partakes of the lore of similar creatures like the fox and the wolf, all marauders in the wilderness: the sinister Reynardine the fox shifts shape, the wolf strikes fear into Little Red Riding Hood or, even more terrifyingly, in the form of *loup-garou*, the werewolf, which transmogrifies from human to ravening monster.

The dingo also has a less fabled presence in Australian vernacular. 'A dingo's breakfast' is 'a piss and a good look round'. The dingo's more negative characteristics of cunning, stealth and killing efficiency are captured in terms like 'He's a low dingo', meaning that the person so described should not be trusted under any circumstances. These somewhat contradictory associations make the dingo a characteristically ambivalent Australian icon. The animal has now

become indissolubly linked with the Chamberlain affair, inhabiting a unique and universally understood space in Australian culture stemming from the moment on 17 August 1980 that Lindy Chamberlain cried out that a dingo had taken her baby from the Chamberlain family tent in the camping ground near Ayers Rock.

In the mainstream, the extraordinary events of the Chamberlain case generated hostile media coverage, numerous books of various persuasions, and a sympathetic feature film based on one of them, John Bryson's *Evil Angels*.¹ Then, in March 1986, the *Australian Women's Weekly* featured the Chamberlain family group on the front cover, together with a 'world exclusive extraordinary interview'. This was in marked contrast to much of the previous media reporting on the affair and signalled a distinct change of tone and direction in the formal, institutionalised treatment of the Chamberlains, not only in the mass media but also in the spheres of government and justice where another official inquiry into the entire affair was under way. Lindy Chamberlain's autobiography, first published in 1991, gave a not-unexpected picture of events from her point of view but contributed little more to our knowledge of the fateful night. Overall, the conduct of the case still gnaws at the national conscience.

As well as these largely serious attempts to understand the Chamberlain affair, there was, and has continued to be, a great deal of unofficial communication surrounding the affair and its continuing aftermath. Most widely circulated were a large number of jokes and other humorous expressions related to the role of the dingo. This 'dingo-lore' developed from existing ambivalent images and associations of the dingo and the uncertainty attending the various inquiries and

trials into the events of that day in August 1980. The intersection of these ambivalences and uncertainties led to widespread articulation of doubts, fears, cynicism and uneasy humour.

The first items to appear were, as usual, riddle-jokes, in the form of the ubiquitous 'dingo joke'. The dingo joke is generally structured as a simple question and answer, though the riddle, through the 'have you heard ...?' opening followed by a satirical undercutting of the initial statement, is also common. These began to appear in oral circulation very soon after the start of the media interest in the Coronial Inquest into the death of Azaria Chamberlain. They grew into something of an epidemic over the subsequent months and the dingo has since become a commonplace in Australian folklore and international popular culture with examples registered in the USA, the UK and New Zealand.

These four jokes were swapped at a party in an inner city Sydney suburb in January 1981, during the period of the Azaria Chamberlain inquest at Alice Springs:²

What's worse than a bull in a china shop?

A dingo in a tent.

What kind of droppings have pink booties?

A dingo's.

What's brown and wears pink booties?

A dingo.

What were two dingoes arguing about outside a tent?

Eat out or take away?

In March 1981 this joke was current in Sydney:

Dread, Delusion and Globalisation

What event could have changed the course of history?
A dingo in Bethlehem.

In October 1981 this variant of the first quoted dingo joke appeared:

What's worse than a bull in a china shop?
A dingo in a maternity ward.

together with:

What runs round Ayers Rock on its back legs with its arms in the air?
A dingo doing a victory lap.

and:

How should you bring up children?
Kick a dingo in the guts.

There were also many jokes in oral circulation throughout Australia. The joke creation and transmission tended to go in cycles that peaked whenever television, press and radio fastened onto yet another real or fictional facet of the case. There was a tendency to link dingo jokes with other items of mass media interest, such as the royal birth, and with certain 'strange' events from the past such as the disappearance of Prime Minister Harold Holt in 1968. The main point about these jokes is that they are indicators of the unofficial attitudes and tensions that existed within the Australian community about the Azaria Chamberlain case. In November of the same year this joke significantly linked two naggingly persistent mysteries of the recent Australian past:

Have you heard that they've re-opened the Harold Holt case?
They're looking for a dingo wearing a wetsuit and flippers.

The same month brought:

Did you hear that they've found Azaria Chamberlain?
In a meat pie in New York.

When the Australian media trumpeted the news of the imminent arrival of an heir to the British throne in late 1981, this joke appeared:

What is the definition of anticipation?
The dingo sitting on the steps of Buckingham Palace.

As the trial of Lindy and Michael Chamberlain for the murder of their daughter proceeded, a number of fresh jokes were created to suit the occasion and most of the old ones continued to circulate as well. Among the new items were:

Did you hear the bookmaker's odds on the trial?
1/10 Lindy
1/1 Michael
10/1 Kids
20/1 Dingo
500/1 Suicide.

When the news was revealed that Lindy Chamberlain was pregnant, the folkloric reaction was:

A rumour has spread through Darwin that Lindy Chamberlain is not really pregnant – she just swallowed the evidence.

And soon after the child was born in gaol:

Did you hear what Lindy named her new son?

Mandingo. (A reference to a telemovie then screening, based on the book of the same name)

But the point of these jokes is not really that of the traditional riddle in which the 'riddler' attempts to put one over on the 'riddlee' by proving that he or she cannot work out a logical conclusion from a given set of data. The dingo joke, like most 'sick' jokes is told in a spirit of complicity, of shared knowing between teller and hearer(s) that this is an appalling but somehow appropriate communication upon the subject of the joke. The point is not intellectual superiority but the sharing and expression of the particular cynical point of view about contemporary events contained in the joke, a point of view that may well not be able to be expressed in any other form or arena. As far as the dingo joke was concerned it allowed Australians to say what many felt, what the mass media implied and what the prosecution of the Chamberlains was based on—that the dingo did not do it and that the only alternative explanation was that the Chamberlains', their family or someone they were shielding, did do it.

Other items of unofficial communication that began to appear a little later in the Chamberlain affair expressed the same view even more pointedly than the dingo jokes. These were in the form of numerous variants of a parody of the well known ditty *Waltzing Matilda*, usually titled *Ode to Azaria*—and circulated mainly via office photocopies. The main element emphasised by this item, and also by most of the other folkloric expressions, were the Australian-ness of the

story. There was also a certain ambivalence about power relations and identification of the Chamberlains as 'different', mainly because of their membership of a minority religious group. They were also usually portrayed as guilty—'Mummy was the one who did away with me' as the parodied version of *Waltzing Matilda* had it.

As these examples and excerpts demonstrate, the Azaria Chamberlain affair was, and is, heavy with icons and symbols of Australian-ness: Ayers Rock, dingoes, Aborigines, the camping holiday in the outback, the child lost in the wilderness. These symbols combined to give the case its bizarre quality and its widespread appeal. *Waltzing Matilda* was then an appropriate vehicle, resonant with the great Australian myth of the bush and the pioneering past, about hardship and struggle, about the power of the squatters and their allies, the police.³

Also in *Ode to Azaria* and other dingo-lore, we see another well-defined aspect of folklore, the circulation of stereotypes of difference. The Chamberlains were identified as part of the minority religious group of Seventh Day Adventists, the church to which they belonged, of which Mr Chamberlain was a pastor and which publicly and privately supported the Chamberlains' innocence. The fear of even slight unorthodoxy that lies near the surface of Australian culture here bubbled over into the remarkable characterisation of Seventh Day Adventists as child-murderers. These delusions were mild compared to the other rumours of witchcraft, child sacrifice and other beliefs that circulated widely throughout the inquest and first trial of the Chamberlains. Consequently, in accordance with deep-seated informal

beliefs usually said to be obsolete in a 'rational' society, many of the Australian public marginalised and stereotyped the Chamberlains and their supporters, pillorying them as black magic practitioners as well as murderers.

There were also other hangovers of the European past, in the form of superstition and folk belief. The most notorious examples are probably the small black coffin and marked bible allegedly found in the Chamberlains' house, a black dress for Azaria, and Lindy Chamberlain's supposedly 'witch-like' impassivity at her trial. All the belief and fears surrounding the colour black were conjured up, both at the formal level (to signify death and bereavement) and at the less formal folk level of its links with 'black magic' and Satanism of some vaguely defined kind. All these beliefs, of course, were linked with the equally vague but nevertheless pervasive suggestions and opinions about child sacrifice. Here again a complex of cultural fears was activated.

Blood and Sacrifice

An ancient and never-too-deeply submerged suspicion of minority groups within western societies has frequently been manifested in folkloric forms. Typically a child member of the dominant cultural group is believed to have been kidnapped by persons from the feared minority group and either murdered or castrated to fulfil the requirements of some foul religious or satanic rite, usually involving blood sacrifice.⁴ The rumour spreads rapidly and results in the outraged adults of the dominant group forming themselves into an armed mob of avengers to track down and punish

hapless members of the offending minority. As well as being incarnated in the folk ballad form, this rumour/legend complex is frequently heard in accounts of and about persecuted minorities the world over, though it is probably most familiar in the form of the Jewish blood libel. These superstitions also played into the discourse of blood that was central to the case in terms of the forensic evidence presented, analysed, reanalysed and disputed by numerous expert witnesses.

These ancient folk beliefs re-echoed through the events at Ayers Rock in 1981 and after. Upon hearing that a human baby had been taken by a dingo, local residents and campers reportedly mounted a frenzied hunt for dingoes, killing a number in the process. Although this initial hysteria was made to seem foolish when the 'dingo did it' finding of the first inquest was quashed, while these actions are carried out against animals rather than humans, the parallel is striking.

Religion

In the interim, it became common knowledge that the Chamberlains were members of a minority religious group, the Seventh Day Adventists. Now the Chamberlains were popularly seen to have almost succeeded in fooling the law (and hence the community) and then to belong to a little understood religious group. In an ironic reconfiguration of the elements of the murdered child motif, the Australian community symbolically vented its spleen on the Chamberlains and the religious group to which they belonged. Seventh Day Adventists were seriously accused of partaking in rites of human sacrifice in the same manner as their numerous persecutors accused medieval Jews.

The Chamberlain family were also members of a Christian sect generally, if inaccurately, perceived as unorthodox, strange and even bizarre. This, combined with the parents' liking for giving their children unusual forenames ('Azaria' was, at one stage, widely held to mean 'sacrifice in the desert'—it does not), made it possible for both the community and the mass media to perceive and present the Chamberlains as outsiders or 'others'.

These characteristics were frequently linked to Mrs Chamberlain's impassivity during both the inquest and the trial. A good deal was made of this behaviour as 'unnatural', both in everyday conversations and in the media.⁵ Criticism of these scapegoating processes came from the more thoughtful sections of the media and from academics. Anthropologist, Dianne Johnson provided a compelling analysis of the perception and treatment of Mrs Chamberlain as the persistent female folk figure of the witch, as did a number of other scholars and media commentators.⁶

Dingo Lingo

The dingo also featured in popular culture productions⁷ and in another piece of unofficial communication that circulated throughout the 1980s—a parody of the 'Top 40' song list, featuring then-current titles and artists:

MORE SELECTIONS: TOP 20 HITS

1. In the Prowl — *5501 Dingoes*
2. Hopelessly Devoured by You — *Azaria Newton John*
3. Come on Baby, Light my Fire — *Dingo Feliciano*
4. Torn Between Two Dingoes — *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 Dingo*
12. What's New Puppy Dog — *The Babies*
13. How Much is that Dingo in the Window — *Tom Dingo Jones*
14. It's a Heart Burn — *Azaria Tyler*
15. Walkin' the Baby — *The Rolling Dingo*
16. Saliva and Other Bruises — *The Dingo Supply*
17. You ain't Nothing 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*

These reactions to the Azaria Chamberlain affair suggest that large segments of the Australian community perceived the official verdict of the initial inquest to be nonsensical. Folk expressions of this kind continued to circulate during and after the legal proceedings against the Chamberlains. Linked with this was the perception that the formal framework of the law and the legal system had failed to come to a 'just' decision. So in lore, if not in law, the Chamberlains, whatever the legal and emotional intricacies involved and subsequent legal determinations, were seen at the time to be 'getting away with it' by many people in the community.

The peculiarly powerful and persistent hysteria of press, radio and television coverage of both the inquest and trial⁸ were a modern Australian version of traditional European 'rituals of justice'. These *charivaris* were a form of underculture rough justice in which a crowd, believing a malefactor to have been inadequately punished by the official judicial system, mounted a ritualistic crowd confrontation of the malefactor, usually accompanied by the parading, hanging, or burning of effigies.⁹ Such rituals were often directed against those who had, or were believed to have committed, some crime against or within the family group, and so were either ignored by the courts or simply not covered by legislation. The initial hue and cry mounted against dingoes, and their subsequent slaughter, at Ayers Rock immediately after the disappearance of Azaria, can also be seen as a medieval response of communal outrage and bafflement.

But in the 1980s, it was no longer a matter for the village to censure its believed wrongdoers, but for the entire nation. Through the mass media the community confronted the Chamberlains with its outrage in a manner normally only possible within the confines of a small community. This media *charivari*, as I termed it, together with the dingo jokes and other related folklore, expressed communal condemnation, followed by what can only be considered a ritual humiliation and expulsion (through imprisonment) of the Chamberlains, particularly Lindy Chamberlain. They could not be allowed to escape an appropriate, communally sanctioned punishment.

The 1980s was also a period in which other ancient forms of folklore and delusion made a reappearance in modern guise, at first in the USA, Europe and Britain. Through a combination of media channels

and professional networks, particularly those related to some aspects of policing, social work and psychology, these modern iterations of the past were also to play an important role in the development of the Chamberlain affair. And they would provide a background for the almost equally extraordinary Australian response to the Schapelle Corby case.

Dreads and Delusions

Looking back along twenty-five years we can see the Chamberlain case in a new perspective, as part of a series of irrational outburst of dread and delusion that characterised Australian (and western) society in this period. The counter-culture of the early 1960s saw the rise of many alternative spiritual, religious and social groupings, including communes, cults and sects. Some of these, such as 'The Power' group were involved with Satanic worship and practice.¹⁰ In some American cases, there may have been links with earlier European Satanists, such as Aleister Crowley, though the availability of Satanist books and other materials in university libraries and, increasingly, in specialised book shops, as a consequence of the liberating aspects of the 1960s, made it no longer necessary to have direct contact with those who could teach such arcana as goetic theurgy and the other vast eclecticism of black magic.

In 1965, the Church of Satan was founded on the eve of May Day (*Walpurgisnacht*). Courting public attention, the Church was first established in San Francisco by Anton Szandor Lavey.¹¹ This brought to mainstream attention the fact that what had previously been virtually unknown and relegated to the sphere of cranks and crazies, was now asking to be taken seriously

as a form of spiritual belief and practice. A few years later, Charles Manson and his 'family' were responsible for the so-called ritual murder of actress Sharon Tate and six others in California. Links with Satanists were alleged, though never legally substantiated. Nevertheless, the public perception was that Manson was representative of a growing conspiracy of Satanism and other alternative faiths and practices that had developed from the 1960s counter-culture.¹²

During the early 1970s, locals in the Montana Rockies connected Satanism with murders and disappearances.¹³ From 1977, the then CEO of McDonald's was accused of making large donations to the Church of Satan, sparking a long-running and serious spell of rumour mongering.¹⁴ Satanism rumours flared again in 1984–85,¹⁵ and the American conglomerate Procter & Gamble, has continued to be the target for occasional revivals of Satanism allegations related to the moon and stars design of its brand logo.¹⁶

From the late 1970s and early 1980s, these rumours, legends and allegations moved from the cultural sphere to the psychological. The process by which this happened might be called 'apparent ostension',¹⁷ a situation in which individuals come to believe that they have acted out certain events that are, in fact, known to them only through fiction. At this time, North American psychiatrists began reporting adult, mainly female, patients claiming ritual torture, sex abuse and Satanism in childhood. The hypothesis was that in some cases, individuals exhibiting Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) were shifting from one personality to another due to their need as victims to create 'safe' personalities without memory of the abuse; it was only when these memories were elicited through various forms of therapy

that the 'facts' came out. These 'recovered memories' were soon promoted to the status of Repressed Memory Syndrome, under which name or versions thereof, the alleged technique gained a measure of respectability in some professional circles.

In 1980, a Canadian woman named Michelle Smith, published *Michelle Remembers*, in conjunction with her therapist; the book documented Smith's memories of childhood Satanic abuse, as 'recovered' through her therapy with Dr Lawrence Padzer.¹⁸ It became a best-seller in the US and the UK, influencing police and social workers there and elsewhere, including Australia where the book was still being recommended as a resource in child abuse in 1990.¹⁹ Padzer, a fervent Christian, coined the term 'ritual abuse' in 1981, by which time he had become a sought-after authority and proselytiser of the subject.

Continuing through the 1980s and 1990s were numerous cases of alleged SRA and apparently related incidents. Among the best known of these were the McMarrin Pre-School case in the USA, 1983–87. Padzer advised on this case and spread his views widely. Subsequent legal proceedings found no evidence against those accused. It is said to have been the longest and most expensive legal debacle in US history. In 1991, the Utah State Legislature instituted an Inquiry into allegations of SRA occurring in that state. They found evidence for only one case of SRA involving torture of children and simulated murder of infants.²⁰ In Holland, an investigation found that there was no evidence for such activities and that they were largely in the minds of those who reported them.²¹ In Saskatchewan, Canada, another long-running ritual child abuse case ended in 1996 with a mixed verdict.

In the US, Kenneth Lanning of the Federal Bureau of Investigation conducted a major American investigation in the early 1990s. In Lanning's thorough analysis of the considerable number of cases already reported at that time, the author and other investigators were unable to substantiate even one verifiable claim of satanic murder. A study funded by the US government in 1994, surveyed nearly 7,000 clinicians and therapists working in the field and almost 5,000 agencies involved in relevant activities.²² In more than 12,000 cases of suspected SRA, only one was proven to have any satanic content.²³

British publication of *Michelle Remembers* began a gradual increase in allegations of SRA throughout the UK. These cases primarily involved social work agencies and police, many of whom were 'trained' by visiting American 'experts' in various forms of investigation methods and counselling of sexually abused children. American folklorist Bill Ellis, conducted an important study of the processes by which the Satanism scare reached the UK from the US.²⁴ He traced the origins of modern interest in, and influence of, Satanism in the works of Aleister Crowley, Gerald Gardiner and others, and also noted the long, if usually submerged traditions of witchcraft and black magic in Britain. A crucial element of Ellis' analysis is tracking the interaction between the folkloric beliefs and press, television, film and popular literature.²⁵ Ellis also draws a direct line between the histories, mythologies and incidents discussed in his article, and the disastrous events that took place in Rochdale (case dismissed, 1991) and the Orkney Islands from 1991.²⁶

In the wake of these and other similar legal disasters came the findings of a British report into SRA of children by Emeritus Professor Jean La Fontaine, social

anthropologist. In only three records of eighty-four British SRA cases was evidence found of ritual activity combined with sexual abuse. Her conclusion regarding the remaining eighty-one cases was that SRA 'was not happening and is not happening'.²⁷

Australia experienced its own epidemic of such cases based on similar delusions. In August 1986—the year Lindy Chamberlain was released—the world's largest ever child abuse conference was held in Sydney. The biennial conference of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) reflected the early 1980s shift in child abuse concerns away from violence and towards sexual abuse, incest and paedophilia. The NSW Child Protection Council began 1985 with a brief almost totally aimed at sexual abuse, together with a major government community awareness campaign.²⁸ While there is rarely a connection in reality between satanic ritual abuse and sexual abuse, as demonstrated by the studies cited, but under the influence of the theories mentioned above, otherwise rational professionals began to find it everywhere, including suburban Australia.

In October 1988, the notorious 'Mr Bubbles' case began in Sydney's northern suburbs, involving a preschool and allegations of SRA very similar to those made in the McMartin case. The methods used by police and social workers to extract the 'truth' from the allegedly abused children were also reminiscent of those used in the McMartin case. In August 1989, the case was thrown out of court as the evidence and witnesses had been so contaminated by community panic, including high-powered media reporting and the questioning of the children by police and parents, that the Magistrate could not hear the testimony of the alleged 'victims'.²⁹ It was not until 1998 that the couple

accused won a million-dollar claim for damage to their reputation done by the police and the media over nearly a decade of persecution. The State undertook to pay the legal costs of the couple and the judge ruled that the 'serious, untrue and defamatory' information the police had released to the Australian media in 1988 was not designed to contribute to the 'welfare of society' as the State had claimed in its defence.

In another manifestation of the Satan scare, an Australian medical professional fabricated evidence before a Royal Commission.³⁰ Many other cases have also been documented.³¹ Within the broader community, related forms of dread and delusion increasingly caused concern and occasional panic over the 1980s and 1990s as urban legend scares proliferated. Among these were the 'blue star acid' scare in which children were said to be the victims of LSD-drenched tattoos, various scares related to organ harvesting, notably in the late 1990s,³² and panic in Perth resulting from the still-unsolved 'Claremont Killer' case.³³

Like the Satanism scare, urban legends are another form of international folklore that are both symptoms of, as well as reactions to, aspects of globalisation. The variety and frequency of urban legend episodes and community concerns caused by their circulation increased dramatically as the Internet and email penetrated further into everyday life from the mid-1990s; the speed and breadth of diffusion of community fears now allowed by email and the Internet has been an important factor in spreading and intensifying reaction. Oral transmission is a very effective form of communication. The new communication technologies have the apparent credibility of face-to-face communication, intensified by their speed and spread—a potent combination, especially

when aided by the media picking up such stories from the underculture and giving them the appearance of official credibility in newspapers, radio and television.

These brief examples demonstrate the extent to which delusion can quickly take hold of communities, professional networks and government entities. Suburban Australia's previously safe, comfortable and predictable way of life was beginning to change and many sensed that, for them at least, it was not going to be for the better. The enormous changes to the rural and urban economy that began in the 1980s also brought a questioning and uncertainty about who and what we were as a nation. Stereotypical images of the bush were clutched at and projected; we had an on/off flirtation with a male 'Aussie' figure known as the 'ocker' in the 1986 film *Crocodile Dundee*, and other more or less aggravated encounters with questions of national identity, including the Blainey history debate. Prime Minister John Howard's views on Asian immigration may also be seen to have shifted cross-cultural relations with Asia, from 1996.

Throughout the 1990s, the same forces and the sense of dislocation and alienation they were producing, especially in rural and regional Australia, created another intriguing female figure, Pauline Hanson. Wrapped in nationalism of a strongly xenophobic kind, Hanson and her One Nation party were a lightning rod for the fears and prejudices of a fast-fading Australia. That was an Australia in which the rural economy was important, most people looked like 'us' and said and did what 'we' had been doing for as long as there had been something called 'Australia'. In an atmosphere of widespread fear and dislocation, elements of superstition, prejudice and paranoia became a highly potent and combustible mixture that not only affected the community, its

institutions and its servants, but also reached into the highest levels of state and federal politics.

These developments were brought about by the compression of time and space characteristic of the globalisation process and its resultant homogenisation of attitudes, values and perceptions. In the case of the Satanism scare, elements of superstition and folk belief became officialised through the integration of professional networks and the expansion of the number and speed of communication of media channels of communication. The underculture became part of the overculture institutions of the media, the police force, social work and psychological professions, all increasingly connected and influenced by the ever-expanding pervasiveness of what still appeared to be official, authorised and so, 'true' information. These irrational and unscientific beliefs derived from the history of western culture were given the appearance of official respectability at the same time as local folkloric expressions derived from similar sources were again in apparently unlikely antipodean circulation. The resulting confluence of this globalising overculture and local underculture formed a powerful discourse of delusion and prejudice within Australian society at a time when some sectors of the community—especially in regional and rural areas—were experiencing economic rupture and consequent social dislocation.

In such circumstances affected social groups have historically looked for scapegoats. In the Australia, context of the period through the 1980s into the early twenty-first century, these included a 'witch' who murdered her baby and blamed it on a national icon, 'Asians' and, a little later, other undesirables supposedly flooding the country. These prejudices were played out in the politics of One Nation, the immigration debate

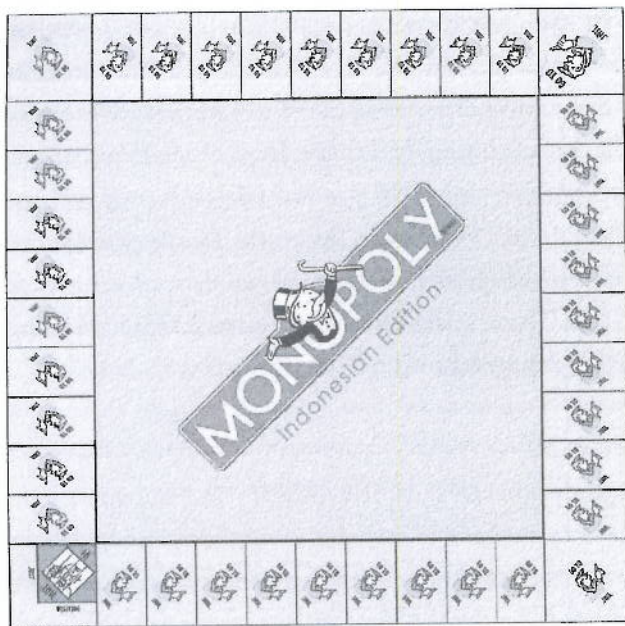
and the asylum seeker issues. Their residue became increasingly entangled in relations with and popular perceptions of Indonesia as the terrorism scare brought that country strongly into the focus of most Australians for the first time. The ground was thus prepared for the extreme reaction to the arrest and imprisonment of Schapelle Corby, an inversion of the reaction to the Azaria Chamberlain case, but constructed from the same cultural materials.

Schapelle

In 2005, the Schapelle Corby situation appeared in many ways as a kind of reverse mirror image of the Chamberlain affair. While the Chamberlains were widely—and incorrectly—believed to be guilty, Schapelle is widely believed to be innocent, with little foundation in fact for such a belief. While the dingo jokes and other folk humour of the period were predominantly convinced of the Chamberlains' guilt, the folklore of the Corby case is often the opposite. Unlike the Azaria Chamberlain jokes of the monochrome 1980s, Schapelle Corby jokes have a colourful visual dimension to them, made possible by the new communication technologies available through the Internet.³⁴

She [Schapelle Corby] also has a new board game that was found inside her Boogie board bag: (*see over*)

This joke highlights a powerful folk belief, of prejudice against the Indonesian justice system held by many Australians, which remains an important element of the reception of the Corby case. This view is related to our historic difficulties with those who are not like us,



especially if they come from Asia—previously termed here in Australia as ‘the yellow peril’.

And again there are those insistent overtones of national identity, this time in a global context. These overtones are complicated by the Australian tourist’s relationship with Bali as a holiday island. This is particularly so since the Bali bombings and the subsequent memorialisation of that event through the adoption of the dawn service format, associated with Anzac Day and thus with our most central myth of nation. The media are, once more, pivotal in all this, producing what is arguably some of the most irresponsible and ignorant journalism since the time of the Chamberlain case.

Once more a perceived injustice—this time around Corby’s declared innocence of the charge against her—has raised a media *charivari*. In the 1980s it was *against* a woman presumed guilty by many. She did not display what was considered the appropriate emotion in court and she was an outsider, a member of a little understood

religious group. This time it is *for* a woman many Australians clearly consider to be innocent, who displays her emotions graphically (as much to the delight of the media as Lindy’s failure to do so enraged the press in the 1980s) and is very much an insider, a typical young, single Aussie woman who visits the Bali playground for her holidays. The target of the media *charivari* this time around is the narrow and stilted view of Indonesia apparently held by many Australians.

Others have heard these echoes. Imre Saluzinsky has suggested that the Corby case and the Chamberlain case can both be understood in the light of the fairytale archetypes involved—damsels in distress, the lost child in the wilderness.³⁵ His article was prefaced with a cartoon by Jon Kudelka that rather neatly draws together the threads of credibility—or perhaps credulousness—that twine through both the Chamberlain and Corby cases, and which also bind them together over a quarter-century of Australian experience. The cartoon depicted a dingo riding a boogie board towards a tropical island with the caption:

Ironically, it turned out that a dingo had taken Schapelle’s boogie board.

The dingo did it, but the damsel didn’t? Kudelka’s clever cartoon neatly highlights the continuing resonances of the Chamberlain case and the way they have conditioned Australian reactions to the Corby case. The still enigmatic figure of the dingo, lurking through the Australian underculture for a quarter of a century, suddenly reappears in the national newspaper. This time, though, reminding us that we got it wrong then and—perhaps—we might be getting it wrong again.