

‘Lose yourself in Oz’: memory and nation in Baz Luhrmann’s *Australia* and the ‘Come Walkabout’ tourism campaign

Nations, and the way we belong to them, are discursively produced by the media we create and consume, the stories we tell ourselves and the histories we commemorate. To recall Benedict Anderson, modern nation-states are ‘imagined communities’. Baz Luhrmann’s historical epic *Australia* (2008) is a recent and potent example of how national narratives are formed and sold to viewers domestically and internationally. With its capacity to attract international audiences, Tourism Australia partnered with Twentieth Century Fox and Bazmark Inq to create a fifty million dollar global tourism campaign in conjunction with the promotion of *Australia* in 2008. At the campaign’s centre was a short ‘film-style’ advertisement by Luhrmann featuring Brandon Walters, the lead star of *Australia*, inviting people to ‘come walkabout’ in Australia. This paper explores the creation and exhibition of Luhrmann’s Australian narrative(s) and questions the function of these particular stories on Australian public memory at home and abroad. The concept of losing and finding oneself in the Australian “outback” on invitation by a famous Aboriginal child actor, as championed by the tourism campaigns, will be discussed alongside the curious relationship between Lady Sarah Ashley (Nicole Kidman), Nullah (Brandon Walters) and land, country and ownership in the feature *Australia*.

Paying attention to *Australia*’s “factual bookends” which explicitly frame the film as a post-apology Stolen Generations narrative, I argue that the relationship between Lady Sarah Ashley, Drover (Hugh Jackman) and Nullah operates to legitimate a (benevolent) white Australian sovereignty at the cost of an exploration of Indigenous sovereignties and Australia’s colonial history of invasion and dispossession. This will be considered alongside *Australia*’s self-reflexive position as a media and film product and the ways with which it negotiates its post-Apology constitution in the twenty-first century.