

SPEAKERS

Ashenden, Dean

Australia, The Overlanders, and Australian images of Australia

Session 6B

Australia bears striking similarities to a film made 60 years ago. *Australia* (2008) and *The Overlanders* (1946) are set in the same moment (Japanese invasion threatening), the same place (the far north), and the same milieu ('in the cattle'). They have similar storylines (romance, and a cattle drive) and some dramatic moments/devices in common, including a stampede. Both celebrate a remote, mythic landscape. *The Overlanders* was by far the biggest Australian film of its time, perhaps ever, which seems to have been Luhrmann's ambition for *Australia*. Both films are preoccupied with Australian-ness which, given the setting, crucially includes us-and-the-Aborigines. They might almost have been designed as a laboratory test: how, how much, and why have our ways of depicting these things changed in 60 years?

Dean Ashenden has been a teacher, academic, consultant/journalist and ministerial staffer. He was co-founder and compiler of the *Good Universities Guides*.

Balint, Ruth

Australia Gets Lost and Goes Missing: Baz's Tourism Australia ad

Session 3Bi

This paper uses the advertisement created by Baz Luhrmann for Tourism Australia in the wake of *Australia*, to explore a wider history of Australia in the geographic imagination as both a place for escape and a place of exile. The ad presents Australia to an international audience as a way to 'get lost' in order to find oneself. In the ad, the frenzied life of the city is contrasted with the timeless, 'natural' world of the outback. This idea of Australia as a place removed from the modern 'civilised' world has a long history, once manifest in dominant representations of the Australian landscape as 'Aboriginal': timeless, primeval, silent and without history. Its image as a place of escape similarly has its own past, bound up with constructions of Australia as the 'new world' and sixteenth century European spatial imaginaries of Australia as the periphery to Europe's centre on the world map, or, more recently, as a 'downunder' to the 'up-above' of Europe. Haunting the image of Australia as a place to lose oneself, however, is its darker, uglier paradox, the idea of the Australian outback as a place to go missing. The infinity of space instead becomes, in these imaginings a place of horror. This paper examines the Tourism Australia ad in light of these ambivalences and explores how these ideas of Australia, as a place to go missing or get lost, have played out in popular representations and media events (such as the Peter Falconio case).

Ruth Balint is currently a lecturer in History in the School of History and Philosophy at the University of New South Wales. She is the author of the Vogel prize-winning *Troubled Waters: Borders, Boundaries and the Timor Sea*, and the writer/director of the documentary *Troubled Waters*. She is currently researching the Displaced Persons of Eastern Europe and the postwar period of Australian history, in particular ideas of home in this period. She also writes on film and the audio-visual archive. She holds a 2010 Scholars-in-Residence fellowship at the National Film and Sound Archive.

Boyde, Melissa

"Mrs Boss! We gotta get those fat cheeky bullocks into that big bloody metal ship!": Live export as romantic backdrop in Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*

Session 4B

This paper discusses the representation of cattle in the film *Australia* (2008). *Australia's* romanticised quest is for the Drover and Lady Sarah and a small troupe to get 1,500 cattle overland to Darwin before the Australian Army sign a deal with cattle baron 'King' Carney. The cattle, destined to be eaten by Australian troops fighting overseas in WWII, must be loaded ahead of Carney's cattle on a live export ship docked in the harbour. The paper examines what is visually revealed in the film and yet simultaneously concealed behind the powerful national myths of the cattle drive: the realities of the Live Export trade. Taking into account the film's critical reception, its resonances with the classic American Western *Red River* (1948), and drawing on Giorgio Agamben's theories of the state of exception, the paper considers not only the situation of animals from the fictional 'Faraway Downs' but also the conditions of the live export trade in Australia. As a postscript the paper sheds light on what happened subsequently to animals which appear in the film.

Melissa Boyde is a Research Fellow in the School of English Literatures and Philosophy at the University of Wollongong. Her work includes an Australian Research Council Linkage Project 'Contemporary Art, Craft and the Audience'; research in the fields of visual and literary modernism, and animal ethics and representation including Replace Animals in Australian Testing (RAAT) a website which provides information on replacement alternatives to the use animals in scientific experiments and medical research in Australia: <http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/research/raat>

Candusso, Damien & Jen Thompson

Aural semiotics: how sound shapes our understanding of the land and indigenous identity in Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*

Session 4A

The debate about the cultural impact of Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* is preoccupied with narrative and images. Yet a more powerful determinant of how we are ideologically positioned by the film goes unexplored. Holman (1997) suggests the auditory 'object', composed of disparate elements of dialogue, music and sound, evokes an emotional response, yet the separation and analysis of these elements are beyond the perceptual capability of the audience. How then do we critically analyse auditory semiotics? Van Leeuwen (1999) uses a systemic – functional linguistics approach but admits

it is limited. This paper argues that Allston's term, 'the objective correlative' (Dana, 1850) provides an alternative. We are able to see the objective correlative in action by peeling back the layers of sound and effects that create emotive auditory objects in the film.

Damian Candusso, a sound effects editor for Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*, was responsible for designing and creating the sounds associated with the environmental and Dreamtime sequences. As a sound designer, Candusso consciously synthesises the elements of story, location and character using physical, emotional, intellectual and moral parallel qualities of sound. If 'each culture carries its own soundtrack formed through the environment, religion, work ethic, social life, language and musical expression' (Sonnenschein, 2002) then film sound design involves the creative (re) creation of these soundscapes through aural semiotics.

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van Leeuwen, T. (1999). *Speech, music, sound*. London: Macmillan.

Damian Candusso is a multi award winning Sound Designer with over 12 years of industry experience spanning film, animation, games and music. As a lecturer at Charles Sturt University, Damian took six months leave at the end of 2008 to work on the sound effects for the Baz Luhrmann film *Australia*.

Jen Thompson lectures in literature and multiliteracies at the School of Education, Charles Sturt University. She is a DCA candidate at the University of Technology Sydney. Her research explores how screen representations can disrupt cultural understandings of historical events.

Conor, Liz

The 'Creamy', the 'Piccaninny', Racialised Childhood and Future Race: intersections between Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* and Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country* and *Capricornia*

Session 6B

Xavier Herbert's classic Australian novels, *Poor Fellow My Country* and *Capricornia* are acknowledged as directly influencing Baz Luhrmann's film *Australia*. This paper will revisit Herbert's Aboriginal child characters, Prindy and Norman, assess his nationalist ambitions for the race destiny they embodied in his work, and ask whether Australia similarly deploys the 'creamy' Aboriginal child as a redemptive claim against racially homogenised national identity.

Liz Conor is a Research Fellow in the Department of Culture and Communications at the University of Melbourne. She is the author of *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s*, Bloomington, Indiana, 2004 and is currently researching white imaginings of Aboriginal women and children.

Curthoys, Ann

Plenary Panel

Ann Curthoys is an ARC Professorial Fellow in History at the University of Sydney, and a former Manning Clark Professor of History at ANU. She has written on many aspects of Australian history and historical writing, including Indigenous history, colonial debates over Chinese migration, Australian feminism, national identity, and media history. Her books include *Freedom Ride: A Freedomrider Remembers* (2002) and (with Ann Genovese and Alexander Reilly) *Rights and Redemption: History, Law, and Indigenous People* (2008). She has co-edited many books, including (with Mary Spongberg and Barbara Caine), the *Companion to Women's Historical Writing* (2005) and (with Marilyn Lake), *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* (2006). She also writes about theory and method in history. Her books include (with John Docker), *Is History Fiction?* (2005, with a revised edition to appear in 2010), and (with Ann McGrath), the recently released *How to Write History that People Want to Read* (2009).

Docker, John

Thoughts on Massacres, Actual, Surrogate, and Averted

Session 1B

In this talk I want to think about three allegorical scenes of massacres actual, surrogate, and averted, in three texts.

In *Beersheba: A Journey Through Australia's Forgotten War* (2009), journalist Paul Daley evokes how the Australian Light Horse in Palestine, heroes in 1917 of the cavalry charge at Beersheba, participated in a massacre of a Bedouin village Surafend in 1918. Daley suggests that because of this massacre, Beersheba, a military victory, barely features in white Australian mythology, in contrast to Gallipoli, a military defeat.

In the recently restored *Wake in Fright*, there is a massacre of kangaroos, a deceptive surrogate for the actual massacres of Indigenous peoples, leaving an empty landscape that we see at the beginning and end of the film.

In *Australia*, Nullah averts a massacre of cattle at the edge of a cliff, a surrogate wish fulfillment that the long history of massacres of Indigenous peoples, often at the edge of cliffs, did not (have to) happen. They would not have happened if the European colonizers had had the attitudes the good white characters in the film now possess, leading to a reconciliation with the Aboriginal characters in a common national effort. The second half of *Australia* features a purported Japanese attack on the Australian coast. Here Australian society is under attack from a vicious aggressor nation, while being defended heroically by an Aboriginal friend of Hugh Jackman's white drover.

I suggest that the dyad of dishonourable massacre and honourable courage (as in Gallipoli or in resisting Japanese invasion) shapes and haunts and brings incoherence to white Australian historical memory and consciousness. The haunting can never be resolved and will always require new, impossible, attempts to create an unambiguous narrative. The result, in *Australia*, is aesthetic chaos, reminiscent of Edward Said's evocation of Late Style, or Walter Benjamin's reference to the baroque text fragmenting itself into capricious particles.

John Docker's most recent book is *The Origins of Violence: Religion, History and Genocide* (2008). In 2009 he is working on disparate topics like Martin Buber's idea of a bi-national Palestine, partition in India and Palestine, and the Baz Luhrmann film *Australia* in relation to massacre studies; he will devote 2010 to working on a longterm book project, *Sheer Folly and Derangement: Disorienting Europe and the West*. And he is starting to think about writing an intellectual autobiography, tentatively entitled *Growing Up Communist and Jewish in Bondi*.

Ellis, Cath

Exposing the Diffused Racism of *Australia* and *Rabbit-Proof Fence*

Session 2B

T. Muraleedharan opens his excellent chapter 'Rereading *Gandhi*' by quoting David Lloyd who says: 'the racism of culture is not a question of certain contingent racist observations by its major theoreticians nor of the still incomplete dissemination of its goods but an ineradicable effect of its fundamental structures' (Lloyd p. 63 quoted in Muraleedharan p. 60). Muraleedharan then goes on to emphasise the 'need for organized resistance and opposition to racism at a social level but also the necessity for enhancing investigations of the structural complexities of various cultural products that subtly camouflage and sustain the racist foundations of the dominant orders, and thereby aid the proliferation of discriminatory feelings in an apparently invisible and subsequently more alarming way' (p.60). It is to expose what he calls 'diffused racism' in the 1980 Attenborough film *Gandhi* that his chapter is focussed.

Inspired by Muraleedharan's work, this paper aims to expose the 'diffused racism' in two recent Australian films: Philip Noyce's 2002 film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and Baz Luhrmann's 2008 film *Australia*. Informed, as Muraleedharan's analysis is, by Michael Ryan's approach to reading film texts in relationship to their socio-historical contexts, this paper offers a comparative analysis of the portrayal of key figures in the process of Indigenous child removal (both victims and perpetrators) in these two films in relationship to their respective representations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous sovereignty. It argues that this analytical approach helps us better understand the anxieties and contradictions at the heart of the dominant White-Australian national story and ultimately exposes how it has sought to both camouflage and sustain its racist foundations.

Cath Ellis is the Head of Humanities in the School of Music, Humanities and Media at the University of Huddersfield, UK. Previously she was a lecturer in the Department of English Literatures, Philosophy and Languages at the University of Wollongong, in New South Wales, Australia. Her research interests are in the area of postcolonial literary and cultural analysis, with a special interest in the representation of Indigeneity.

Freebody, Charon

Dialogues of War in Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*

Session 5A

Film footage is included as a narrative device in Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* three times. While the use of The Wizard of Oz segments has received most critical attention to date, the focus of this paper will be the Allied News Reel footage, including the depiction of the threat of the spread of the "Japanese horde" and the militarisation of Darwin after the fall of Singapore. Just as Luhrmann's film prioritises aboriginal subjectivity within the narrative so does it unequivocally condemn the invading Japanese army who are represented as a menace to all and murderers of the innocent. During their occupation of the Netherlands East Indies, the Japanese made a propaganda newsreel film *Calling Australia* (1943) that showed the comfort enjoyed by Australian POWs, a claim later refuted in *Nippon Presents* (1946). A third film "Prisoners of Propaganda" (Graham Shirley, 1987) investigates the relationship between these two propaganda films. Collectively, the films prompt questions about dialogues of war. Specifically, I invite you to work through with me how the contest for the hearts and minds of their Australian audiences both confirms and challenges the national myths that are implicit in Luhrmann's film.

Charon Freebody is currently completing a PhD thesis in Cinema Studies at Latrobe University, Bendigo Campus. She has recently presented a visual reminiscence of Romsey, the poet Vincent Buckley's birthplace, photos to be published in a special *JSAL* edition. Her area of research is the work of filmmakers, Rachel Perkins and Tracey Moffatt.

Genovese, Ann

***Australia* and Myth Making: Law's Stories of the Stolen Generations**

Session 1A

Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* is clearly a stolen generations narrative, played out through the experience of Nullah (Brandon Walters).

But the narrative offered is also clearly a liberal myth, a story of assimilation policy in which white station owners and drovers understand the centrality of return to country and belonging for children like Nullah who live between two cultures, and two sets of laws. The film intends for the audience to consider or rethink the policy of child removal as one in which alternative endings were possible, in which white agency could be redeemed. But there are multiple sites in which to confront the myths surrounding indigenous child removal and the possibilities for national reckoning. I want bring to bear some reflections on myth making from law, as another key site of the current Australian need to reconfigure or atone for past wrongs in relation to stolen generations. In the context of the public debate over HREOC *Bringing Them Home Report* in 1997, indigenous litigants attempted to bring their individual cases to Australian courts for recognition of their removals as being without legal authority. The myths that inhere in law about authority, and about reading evidence supporting or contesting removals, infamously meant however that litigants such as Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner and Alex Kruger were unsuccessful in their claims. But in 2007, in the

South Australian Supreme Court, a Ngarrindjeri man, the late Bruce Trevorrow was successful in having his removal recognised as unlawful. In my paper I will analyse, and reflect on this case, a powerful story that resides in legal archives, as opposed to on film. I will argue that the slow process of the Australian state's coming to terms with the implications of child removal is circumscribed yet also enabled by law's own mythologies, and that these stories and practices need to be discussed alongside the mythmaking surrounding Nullah's story, and the techniques of the film makers craft.

Ann Genovese is a legal historian who teaches at the Melbourne Law School. She works on the history and theory of the relationship between Australian law, the State and political culture. Her major projects, more specifically, have focused on: History, law and indigenous peoples; History of feminist legal activism and Histories of the administrative state.

Through these projects Ann has expertise in a range of jurisdictions: evidence, family law, legal theory, Administrative law, criminal law and native title. Her most recent representative publications include *Rights and Redemption: law, history, indigenous peoples* (UNSW Press, 2008), co-authored with Ann Curthoys and Alexander Reilly; and 'Poisons and antidotes: Historicising feminism and equality in an age of rights competition' (2008) 27 *Dialogue* 10-22.

Haag, Oliver

***Australia and Rabbit Proof-Fence* in German Cinema—a Comparative Study**

Session 2A

For all their differences, *Australia* and *Rabbit Proof-Fence* share a few similarities worthy of deeper analysis. Produced in the 2000s, both films are fairly recent, make direct reference to Australia, have been shown across German (and European) cinemas, and have attracted international interest in Australia and particularly in Indigenous Australians. Furthermore, both films have presented different images of Australia, most noticeably images that—in contrast to equally popular films like *Crocodile Dundee*—cannot be reduced to pure exoticism and clichés: While both films make reference to Australian nature, they also present aspects of Australian history, most apparently, the inter-racial history between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Drawing on empirical data, this paper takes as its focus the German reception of both films. Interestingly, both films have been differently reviewed in Germany—*Rabbit Proof-Fence* far better than *Australia*, the latter often said to not raise any significant emotion. Furthermore, this paper aims to draw particular attention to the impact of Germany's own racist past on the perception of both films. As one German viewer said, the forcible removal of Indigenous children 'reminds me of Hitler'.

Oliver Haag was born in Graz and studied History and Political Science at the University of Vienna, Austria. He specialised in the history of historiography and autobiography, Indigenous Studies, and theories of nation-building, with particular interest in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand. Oliver is the author of academic writings on published Indigenous Australian autobiographies, Indigenous Australian literature in German translation, and Australian historiography. He is currently working on a collaborative research project entitled 'national unity through diversity' and on a project on the reception of Oceanic literatures in Europe.

Harada, Yoko

AUSTRALIA – An “Anti-Japanese” Movie?: Australia in the Japanese Consciousness

Session 2A

The movie *AUSTRALIA*, which was loaded with Baz Luhrmann's and other fellow Australians' patriotism, was released in Japan on 28 February 2009. It was fairly well promoted as a Hollywood movie and Luhrmann and actors Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman made a red carpet appearance in the central Tokyo for the premiere. The review of the movie was the mixture of both positives and negatives as it was so in Australia. On the one hand, it was praised as a dynamic epic and, on the other hand, it was criticised being too long and containing too much episodes. However, there was one reputation which was probably unique to Japan. *AUSTRALIA* was labelled as an “anti-Japanese” movie by some Japanese viewers. Why was that?

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how Australia sits vaguely and ambiguously in the Japanese consciousness by exploring how *AUSTRALIA* was introduced and seen in Japan. The examination of Japanese subtitles, promotion posters and pamphlets and movie reviews in magazines, newspapers and blogs shows that there is a significant ignorance about Australia in Japanese society. Overwhelming sentiment of the Australian production team was, unfortunately, seems to be “lost in translation” in Japan.

Yoko Harada recently completed her PhD thesis, *Floating Between the Orient and the Occident: Japan, Australia and their inferiority complex*, in the School of History and Politics at the University of Wollongong. This thesis focused on the position of Japan and Australia in the Asia-Pacific and in the world today. National identity, nationalism, migration, multiculturalism, memories of war related to Japan and Australia and their bilateral relationship are some of my research interests. She is affiliated to the Centre of Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies, UOW, and also a Friend of the Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University.

Healy, Alice

‘You’re going to be famous all over the world’: Aboriginal actors in Australian films

Session 3Bii

Mainstream publicity introducing Brandon Walters onto cinema screens as the ‘new face of Australia’ tells much of an ongoing narrative of Aboriginal child actors in the industry. Even in 2009, the promotion of an ‘authentic child talent’ dominates the description of Walters in feature articles and is measured against the fickle commercialism and ‘hollow promises’ of a global cinema industry. Walters is painted as a quiet, unassuming boy of extraordinary talent, a child who has enough emotional maturity and presence on screen to up-stage his famed peers while also being the boy who lives the ‘traditional life’ in his country (south of Broome) whose rise to fame is buffered by his close-knit family. There is a narrative of innocence and experience in these articles that could be compared historically with the publicity surrounding earlier Aboriginal actors since the release of *Jedda* in 1955, reflecting the paternalism of both the wider society and the film industry itself. Actors such as Rosalie (Ngarla) Kunoth-Monks and Robert Tudawali in *Jedda*, David and Jamie Gulpilil, Tommy E. Lewis in *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*, Frances Daingangan in *Ten Canoes* all began their film careers as non-professional actors selected ‘from the crowd’ by non-Indigenous

directors for their appeal and potential presence as Aboriginal icons on screen. In the more historical films, these Aboriginal actors' celebrity personas have arguably been the creations of white filmmakers narrating the story of the nation. I question whether the promotion of Walters is an extension of such a narrative.

Enabled by the emergence of Indigenous directors in Australian cinema in the last decade, these identities have begun to be re-spoken in the mode of biographical film. Ivan Sen's story of Tommy Lewis's search for his 'white' father in *Yellow Fella* (2005), Darlene Johnson's film about Frances Daingangan's dreams of escape in *River of No Return* (2008) and Warwick Thornton's *Rosalie's Journey* (2003) allow the actors themselves to voice the legacy of celebrity, history and living 'in between' cultures. This paper will initially examine these historical constructions of 'Aboriginality' in the publicity material surrounding each film's release and contrast it with the subjectivity of each actor enabled by Indigenous film-makers.

Alice Healy has taught Australian Studies at [David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research](#) (DUCIER) at the [University of South Australia](#), including courses in Aboriginal literature, Australian history and Australian film and literature since 2005. Her research focuses on the concept of cultural translation and examines contemporary screen adaptations of Australian literature, screenwriting as art-form and historiography. She has published essays analysing screen adaptations of the late 1990s. Since 2006, she has been South Australian representative on the Executive Committee of the [Association for the Study of Australian Literature](#) (ASAL) and co-director of the ALTC funded project 'Teaching Australian Literature' with Philip Mead, Kerry Kilner and Anna Gray.

Heydon, Nick

A Melodramatic, Epic Tornado: Viewing Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* from *Written on the Wind* to *Gone with the Wind*

Session 3A

In this paper, I view *Australia* as a tribute to the Hollywood melodramatic epic, using two classic films to enhance this investigation. I shall employ theories of film melodrama and epic cinema to analyse how the space of the 'land' is vital for *Australia*. The rural cattle station, 'Faraway Downs', serves as a deliberate 'Tara' imitation, Scarlett O'Hara's Southern plantation in *Gone with the Wind*. Lady Sarah Ashley (Nicole Kidman) proclaims that she will "bring 'Faraway Downs' back to life", stressing her maternal desire and search for a return to an idyllic "space of innocence", a term central to Linda Williams' theory of melodrama. It is in this return to innocence that Sarah becomes reconciled to the land of Australia, as I shall demonstrate in an analysis of the film's final scene. Sarah's reconciliation will be linked to not only to cultural issues but further, to *Written on the Wind*, an overt, excellent example of the Hollywood melodrama, and I read the conclusion of this blatantly melodramatic film as the start of an epic film. The paper thus blends these distinct forces of epic and melodrama together, which blow impressively (much like Dorothy's tornado) over the filmic landscape of *Australia*.

Nick Heydon is an Honours student in Film Studies at the University of Sydney. His thesis, 'Bullet Holes in the *Rear Window* Screen', explores Hitchcockian claustrophobia and voyeurism within action and thriller cinema. His research interests include the cinema of Hitchcock and Kubrick, along with action and epic film.

Jayamanne, Laleen

The Drover's Wives and Camp Couture: Baz Luhrmann's Preposterous National Epic

Session 3A

Invoking the rhetorical figure implied in the etymology of the word preposterous (the inversion of order), and hearing a ring in my ear of a BBC type voice saying "Preposterous!", this paper is an attempt at understanding the material stuff with which Luhrmann's camp-epic film *Australia* is fabricated. A concept of epic performance will be theorised through the ideas of the Indian director of epic cinema, Kumar Shahani.

Laleen Jayamanne teaches Cinema Studies in the Department of Art History and Film Studies at the University of Sydney. She is the author of *Toward Cinema and Its Double: Cross-Cultural Mimesis* (Indiana, UP 2001), and is currently writing a book on an avant-garde Indian director entitled *Cinematographic Avatars: Kumar Shahani and Others* (Indiana, 2011?). She has also directed the short film *A Song of Ceylon* starring Juan Davila (1985).

Jensen, Lars

Performing nation, performing difference: *Australia* and Luhrmann's multicultural vision

Session 2A

Baz Luhrmann's self-consciously epic film narrative, *Australia*, lends itself to a number of discourses all related to contentious ideas about the nation. The film's unusual juxtaposition of hyperbole, romanticism and dramatic realism makes it difficult to argue precisely where it is situated in relation to these discourses. This may, of course, be celebrated by some as a vindication of art's indeterminacy, while others, including myself, find the film's status as national epic and its focus on 'the national story' invites a discussion on how the nation is represented for domestic but surely also for international consumption. The film is, after all, directed also at an international audience, a factor that is underlined by the Australian Tourism Commission's sponsorship. Because of this, the question the film raises is not only how it defines Australian national preoccupations in relation to a domestic public opinion, it is also a question about how Australia, and particularly how the film presents itself to an international audience with limited, if any, knowledge about Australia. It is this simultaneous positioning as both a national film for the nation, and a film about the nation for an international audience that I wish to engage with, and I will pursue this through a focus on the film as a purveyor of several incompatible national narratives.

Lars Jensen is a Lecturer at Cultural Encounters, Roskilde University, Denmark, who has worked in Australian Studies for almost two decades. He has written a book on Australian cultural history, *Unsettling Australia* (2005). His most recent Australian Studies article is 'Locating Asian-Australian Studies' in *JAS*, special issue 2008. He is also, until September 2009, the chairman of EASA (European Australian Studies Association).

Kelada, Odette

Love is a Battlefield: Inversions of Historic Narratives in the White Imaginary

Session 6A

In Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*, audiences encounter emotive scenes including depictions of an Indigenous child stolen from a white 'mother' in a time of war. Given that the film is framed with reference to the history of the Stolen Generations and the Apology, this paper explores the functions of such a narrative in constructions of the white imaginary. Inverting truths around the destruction of Indigenous families and policies of assimilation, management and control, requires in this instance the appropriation of the maternal domain of the Indigenous mother by the white female body; an English woman reclaiming 'her' land. Through such a re-positioning, anxieties around belonging and guilt may undergo a form of catharsis via the apparent empathetic engagement with a 'stolen' maternal love. Drawing on Ghassan Hage and Aileen Moreton-Robinson's insights into the possessive logic of the 'white' nation and Sara Ahmed's analysis of emotional politics, I address here the potential for such a cinematic catharsis to assuage shame, and reify national virtue. I contend there is a violence inherent in colonising 'love' through such fantasies which inhabit the locus and stories of 'the other' at the moment of 'apology', neutralising threats to negative conceptions of self as benevolent bodies at 'home' in the imaginary landscape of Australia.

Odette Kelada is a lecturer in Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne. She researches and publishes on whiteness, race and gender in Australian writing and the arts. Research interests include the constructions of nation, body and identity in creative representations and the teaching of racial literacy. Recent publications include 'White Blindness: A National Emergency', *ACRAWSA Journal*, University of South Australia and 'Is the Personal Still Political?: Australian Women Writers Waltzing to a Different Tune', *Australian Cultural History Journal (ACH)*, Vol 27 Issue 1, 25.

Kevin, Cath

Solving the 'Problem' of the Motherless Indigenous Child in *Jedda* and *Australia*: the White Maternal in the Australian Epic before and after *Bringing Them Home*

Session 1A

With half a century between them, both *Jedda* (1955) and *Australia* (2008) negotiate race relations in a way that ignores questions of land and frontier violence instead making pivotal the white maternal in the history of race relations. This paper looks closely at the making of *Jedda*'s Sarah McMann and *Australia*'s English-born Sarah Ashley. In each character there is a maternal desire that drives the plot to which responsibility for the children's fate is attributed. National assimilation policies are expressed emphatically through Sarah McMann's desires for *Jedda* and the failures of assimilation are played out in the child's tragic fate. Sarah's arguments with her husband Bill McMann about the limits and possibilities of assimilation through adoption are echoed in the arguments between Sarah Ashley and The Drover in *Australia*. However, in the more recent film the plot is resolved by returning Nullah to his grandfather. This only becomes possible because Sarah

Ashley's agenda for intervening in the removal of Nullah by the state, in the hope of raising him as her own child, is realised (if through complex and indirect means). From this point she is eventually persuaded by The Drover and by Nullah that for the child to find a place of belonging she must let him go. The outsider status of the recent immigrant Sarah Ashley, in a narrative that collapses all indigenous dispossession into the sexual exploitation of aboriginal women and – most importantly to the plot and political agenda of the film – child removal, enables her to become a clear-sighted agent in the return of the child to his family. Unlike Sarah McMann, *Australia's* Sarah does not carry the anxieties of those whose direct inheritance is colonial violence. She is free of the psychological burdens and concomitant limitations to agency of settler-colonial maternal whiteness that make sense of the characterisation of Sarah McMann and the fate of Jedda.

This paper considers the significance of these two representations of the white maternal in the context of the history of child removal policies, *Bringing Them Home* and the National Apology.

Catherine Kevin lectures in Australian history, body politics and memory at Flinders University. She has recently edited *Feminism and the Body: interdisciplinary perspectives* (2009) and co-edited *Branding Cities: cosmopolitanism, parochialism and social change* (2009). She is currently working towards a monograph entitled *Great Expectations: a political history of pregnancy in Australia since 1945*.

Konishi, Shino

Redeeming Aboriginal Masculinity: King George and paternal love in *Australia*

Session 6A

In 1987 Colin Johnson complained about the portrayal of Aboriginal men in Australian cinema. Citing a range of 'clownish', 'womancidal', and tragic characters, he argued that 'the Aboriginal male must not be seen to triumph'. Almost two decades later Anthony Lambert observed that 'not much has changed for Aboriginal males in Australian film', for they continue to be portrayed as either 'mysterious blacktracker[s]' or 'criminal outcasts' and 'are still being killed off'. Last year Germaine Greer criticised *Australia* on similar grounds, grumbling that when the 'Drover's faithful Aboriginal sidekick Magarri' was shot on Mission Island he became 'the new Tonto, only more so', giving up 'his life for the Lone Ranger'. She also condemned the character of King George, arguing that Luhrmann made a 'tasteless joke' by depicting King George 'as a cigar-store Indian standing on one leg, the other foot propped against his knee'. In her lengthy critique Greer failed to note that King George, unlike many earlier Aboriginal male characters, was ultimately triumphant. He rescued Nullah from his murderous white father, and repatriated him to his indigenous culture and identity. This paper will examine how the representation of King George engages with earlier cinematic depictions of Aboriginal men and continuing debates about Aboriginal masculinity and paternal responsibility.

Shino Konishi is a research fellow at the Australian Centre for Indigenous History at the Australian National University. Her research interests include representations of Aboriginal masculinity and she is writing a monograph called *Embodied Encounters: European Explorers and Aboriginal Men in the Age of Enlightenment*. She co-convened this conference with Maria Nugent.

Lydon, Jane

Utopian outbacks: Elsie Masson and Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*

Session 5A

In 1915 Elsie Rosaline Masson published *An Untamed Territory*, an account of a year spent au pair with the inaugural Northern Territory Administrator John Gilruth and his family in Darwin. This was her only literary legacy, but Masson's narrative of life in the newly-separated Territory presaged the flood of 'travel writing' to follow, that as Meaghan Morris has pointed out, became a means of exploring competing possible Australian futures, and prompted popular interest in the plight of Aboriginal people. The road from *An Untamed Territory* to Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* charts a long history of popular narrations of race and identity that mobilize historical knowledges to construct utopian futures for the nation. As a form of memory-making, Luhrmann's *Australia* deploys familiar outback motifs, but also marks the emergence of new ways of seeing Australian society, re-working the colonial past to build a vision of racial harmony, Indigenous vitality and the renewal of tradition. Yet Luhrmann's *Australia* also suggests that the views of Aboriginality that underpinned assimilation are a closed chapter of Australian history, absolving viewers of complicity in continuing Aboriginal disadvantage.

Jane Lydon is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies at Monash University. Her books include *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians* (Duke, 2005). In 2008 she concluded a long-term research project conducted in collaboration with the Indigenous community at Ebenezer Mission, north-western Victoria, published as *Fantastic Dreaming: The Archaeology of an Aboriginal Mission* (AltaMira 2009). She is currently working on a collaborative history of photographing Aboriginal people from the Australian inception of the medium in 1841 to the present day.

Martínez, Julia

Imagining 1930s Darwin: *Australia* and a forgotten Asian past

Session 5A

In the film *Australia* we are introduced to the port town of Darwin in the late 1930s. It is a town of sharp contrasts. The genteel circle of the white upper-class is set apart from the working-man's world and neither group is welcoming to the Aboriginal population. But what of Darwin's Asian population which in 1939 constituted one quarter of the town's population? Where are the Chinese merchants, the Japanese pearlers, the Malay workers? *Australia* shows us glimpses of Asian faces in the cinema, but does nothing to explain their presence in Darwin. This paper examines the historical records in search of images of this forgotten Asian past. Even as late as 1939, it was impossible to ignore the Asian presence in Darwin. Baz Luhrmann was of course more concerned with the story of the Stolen Generations. But here too the Asian connection is important. In the 1930s, on Melville Island, off the coast from Darwin, the mixed-descent children included children of Japanese-Aboriginal descent. The film's fictional Japanese landing on 'Mission Island' appears strange indeed if we consider there were the children of Japanese fathers on the islands. Australian film has been slow to embrace Australia's Asian past, a puzzling omission given the wealth of published histories from which stories might be drawn.

Julia Martínez lectures in Australian and Asian History and is a researcher with CAPSTRANS, University of Wollongong. She publishes on race, labour and multiethnic social history. Current projects include an ARC project on migration between Australia and the Netherlands East Indies; domestic servants in Indochina; and Chinese in Southeast Asia.

Mayes, Robyn and Pini, Barbara

***Australia* and the negotiation of contemporary ruralities**

Session 5A

'The rural,' as socially and culturally contested sets of defining characteristics and ways of doing and being, as numerous scholars have richly demonstrated, has long lain at the heart of dominant understandings of Australian identity. This paper examines the multiple productions of 'rurality' encoded, negotiated and ultimately rendered coherent in Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*, in particular as occurs in the modernization of "The Drovers Wife." In doing so, we draw upon the substantial rural studies literature around the notion of rurality as ongoing, power-laden and plural imaginative space constructed through representation and performance. We examine intersections with contemporary rural issues and lived experience, focusing on the ways in which a multiplicity of rural spaces—variously informed by gender, class, race—are inscribed onto the same "territory." This critique highlights the film's privileging of a re-visioned, hybrid rural space (as dominant value system, as "truth", as authentic).

Robyn Mayes is a Research Fellow in the John Curtin Institute of Public Policy. Her work focuses on rural change in Australia, senses of place, and the production of community and national identity/ies. Her publications include refereed journal papers, short fiction, and an edited journal volume.

Barbara Pini is a Professor of Sociology in the John Curtin Institute of Public Policy. She has written extensively on gender and rurality. Her first book *Men, Masculinities and Management in Agricultural Organizations Worldwide* was published by Ashgate in 2008.

McGrath, Ann

Parenting Aboriginal Children: the Good, the Bad and the Beautiful

Session 1A

The casting of morality in the movie *Australia*, and its powerful aesthetic and emotional affects, will be discussed. This will lead into an analysis of the intersection between the practices of film and drama and the practice of historical expertise in the academy. Drawing upon my work on the Gunner & Cubillo case, the Kungarakany Land Claim, and with novelist Xavier Herbert, this paper considers how the film has played upon and fused the relationship between story-telling, history-telling and national narratives pertaining to Indigenous policy and the law. Does this create a satisfying fusion or mere confusion? My aim is to incorporate the genre of film-making - both documentary and drama - to expand the raging debate about the distinction between history and historical fiction.

Ann McGrath is Professor of History and Director of the Australian Centre for Indigenous History at the Australian National University. Her article 'Must Film be Fiction' was published in *Griffith Review* 2009. She has been active in film-making, including *A Frontier Conversation* (Ronin Films, 2006) and is currently commencing a large collaborative project 'Deepening Histories of Place' in Australia which includes two parks organizations, the National Film & Sound Archive and Ronin Films. Her most recent publication with Ann Curthoys is *How to Write History that People Want to Read* (UNSW Press) which will be launched at this Conference.

Mills, Jane

Mapping *Australia*: cinematic cartographies of location, dislocation and bilocation

Session 5B

What stories do the maps in *Australia* tell? The maps in Luhrmann's film are deployed to establish a 'national geography' and at the same time they question the very boundaries that the maps themselves depict. These maps serve to locate and fix at the same time as they dislocate and mobilise. They introduce intersecting notions of location, bilocation and multilocation by inviting spectators to consider where we are in the narrative thus reminding us where we are not. As Tom Conley (2007) points out, when a map appears in a film it locates the narrative but a map is not the territory any more than the landscape of a film is. A map in a film might locate the geography of its narrative but it also serves to remind the spectator that s/he is not where the maps says it is taking place. The story that is said it be there is nowhere, or perhaps it is elsewhere.

Arguing that cinematic cartography invites its spectators to consider the relationship of the image to movement, time, place and space, this paper examines the points at which the diegetic and non-diegetic maps inscribed in this film reveal the 'spaces-in-between' of an international cinema operating at the intersection of two or more cultural regimes of knowledge (Marks: 2000). They offer itineraries that allow us to trace the cultural flows as they travel to and from global, national and local cinemas, and they reveal the geopolitical milestones that map notions of home and away within the disruptive spaces of postcolonialism.

References:

Tom Conley (2007) *Cartographic Cinema*, Minneapolis & London: University of Minneapolis Press.
Laura Marks (2000) *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Jane Mills is Associate Professor in Communication (Research & Teaching) at Charles Sturt University and Honorary Research Fellow at the Australian Film, Television & Radio School. Her most recent book is *Loving and Hating Hollywood: Reframing Global and Local Cinemas* (Allen & Unwin, 2009)

Morris, Meaghan

Transnational Glamour, National Allure: on preferring Baz Luhrmann to Zhang Yimou

Keynote Address

Meaghan Morris is Professor of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney, and Chair Professor of Cultural Studies at Lingnan University, Hong Kong. Her engagement with Australian cinema began with writing for *The Digger* and *Cinema Papers* in the 1970s and she worked in the 1980s as film critic for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Australian Financial Review*, writing also for *Filmnews*. She works on the rhetoric of nationality in transnational conditions, and her books include *Identity Anecdotes: Translation and Media Culture* (2006), *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema* (co-ed. with Siu-leung Li and Stephen Chan Ching-kiu, 2005); *"Race" Panic and the Memory of Migration* (co-ed. with Brett de Bary, 2001); and *Too Soon, Too Late: History in Popular Culture* (1998).

Morrissey, Philip

Other Eyes: The half-caste in Luhrmann's *Australia*

Session 2B

In engaging in a critique of Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* it's appropriate to acknowledge the generosity of the director's vision and his understanding of a mass-viewing audience. Luhrmann's *Australia* aspires to be more than popular entertainment. Though set in the 1940s in northern Australia the film invites the Australian viewer to interpret it in a larger framework, resonant with contemporary Aboriginal-Settler concerns. From this perspective we are obliged to note some of the film's shortcomings. For instance, the issue of sovereignty is never addressed and Lady Sarah Ashley's tenure of Faraway Downs is unproblematised. In this paper I will address its other major shortcoming - the manner in which it attempts to resolve the 'half-caste problem'. I argue that the resolution of the 'problem' is a form of what I call romantic pessimism. And that this is still prevalent in some liberal conceptions of Aboriginality and that its genealogy is to be found in racist beliefs of the 'half-caste' as a being, in a sense, without a caste.

Philip Morrissey is the Academic Coordinator of Australian Indigenous Studies in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne. In an essay titled 'Aboriginal Children' published in the *Australian Humanities Review* in 2007 he considered the role of the 'half-caste' in Australian society with reference to the Philip Noyce film *Rabbit Proof Fence*.

Morton, John

Redeeming the Bastard Child: Exploring Legitimacy in *Australia*

Session 2B

Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* might be considered a lengthy meditation on the subject of legitimacy. In the first place, Luhrmann invites his audience to consider the future of Nullah, the bastard half-caste child of Daisy and Fletcher, and representative of the so called 'Stolen Generations'. In the second place, Luhrmann ties Nullah's fate to questions of Aboriginal sovereignty through the boy's relationship to his maternal grandfather, King George. In this paper, I track a series of transformations and symbolic substitutions in the film which finally gives effect to both Nullah's inheritance and a deeper, more inclusive national genealogy. In particular, I focus on the meanings of the film's seven depicted deaths (of Lord Maitland Ashley, Daisy, Kipling Flynn, King Carney, Catherine Carney, Magarri and Neil Fletcher), together with the one death which occurs outside of the narrative (that of the Drover's wife). I suggest that these deaths, inasmuch as they serve to interpose the white parentage of Lady Sarah Ashley and the Drover between Nullah and his grandfather, circumscribe the basic and unalterable contradiction of Aboriginal sovereignty being mediated by Anglo-Australian law and culture.

John Morton teaches anthropology at La Trobe University in Melbourne and has been involved in Aboriginal studies for some 30 years. Apart from lecturing and researching in the academy, he has also worked as a consultant in land rights, native title and stolen generations cases and as a curator at the Melbourne Museum. His recent publications include *The Photographs of Baldwin Spencer* (edited with Philip Batty and Lindy Allen, Miegunyah Press, 2005).

Papson, Stephen

Discursive Walkabout

Session 3Bi

'Walkabout' plays a prominent role in representing Indigenous peoples in Australian cinema. Its usages in film signify a range of meanings: an uncontrollable psychological drive to go into wilderness, an interlude in the progress that a non-Indigenous work ethic supports, a romanticized relationship to the deeper meanings of Aboriginal tradition analogous to a religious initiation ritual, a desire that Indigenous culture and knowledge not be overwhelmed by Western culture, the antithesis of the maternal desire for care and family stability, and an interlude to the pressures of living in a highly bureaucratized capitalist world. While the etymology of the term is vague, it appears that 'walkabout' is a non-Indigenous construction of both real and imagined Indigenous practices.

Looking at four films (*Jedda*, *Walkabout*, *We of the Never Never*, and *Australia*) and two Luhrmann-made commercials (*Bilabong* and *Boab*) this paper argues that 'walkabout' functions as a liminal space or a contested terrain where colonial/postcolonial practices and ideology engage with Indigenous cultural practices. It is in this space that 'walkabout' has been appropriated to express a generic Aboriginal-ness, a moment pointing backward in time, and an essentialist relationship to

nature as wilderness. At this point, we can think of 'walkabout' in Barthes sense as a mythical signifier emptied of history and substance that speaks about non-Indigenous desire rather than Indigenous material practices.

Stephen Papson is a Professor of Sociology and Coordinator of the Film and Representation Studies Program at St. Lawrence University. He has co-authored *Sign Wars* and *Nike Culture* and has recently completed *Landscapes of Capital*. All three works focus on advertising texts. He presently teaches courses in cinema and representation theory including Australian Cinema: Land, Nation, Identity.

Pinto, Sarah

'I sing you to me': love, history and nation in *Australia*

Session 6A

Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* (2008) is at once an epic, beautiful, funny, engaging, messy, confused and troubling film. Difficult – if not impossible – to characterise or categorise in any overarching way, *Australia* at times feels like a jumble of contradictions: is it a serious historical film or a tongue-in-cheek epic? A realist film or playful intertextual pastiche? A comedy or a tragedy? Of course, Luhrmann's film is all these things and more. And although there is certainly a transnational dimension to the film – both in terms of its storytelling and its reception – *Australia* is also, as its title suggests, intimately concerned with the Australian nation and its (national) history-making projects.

In this paper, I'm interested in considering the ways in which Luhrmann's *Australia* tells the history of Australia, and especially the film's placement of love at the narrative centre of this history. *Australia* is framed around the romantic love between Lady Ashley (Nicole Kidman) and the Drover (Hugh Jackman) and, perhaps more significantly, the love of a (white) mother (Ashley) for her ("mixed race") child (Nullah, Brandon Walters). As the work of Judith Butler and David Eng, amongst others, reminds us, there are implications to the deployment of emotions. With this in mind, this paper will try to unpick the problems and possibilities of *Australia's* emotional narrative strategies.

Sarah Pinto completed her PhD on contemporary Australian historical fictions at the University of Melbourne in 2007. She has published work on the relationship between emotion and historical fiction, and has also worked in the fields of gender and sexuality studies. Sarah currently works at the Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies at Monash University.

Riseman, Noah

Subjects, Soldiers, or Allies? Perspectives on Yolngu Involvement in the Second World War

Session 4B

The Second World War plunged Arnhem Land onto the frontline of Australia's defence. The crisis compelled an otherwise unlikely alliance among missionaries, settlers, police, soldiers and Yolngu. Each of these groups brought their own perspectives to the war and to Yolngu participation in

defence. Government documents and missionary reports depict Yolngu passively as subjects of white Australia, obliged to support the military in coastwatching and general labour. The limited histories of Yolngu in the war – in particular histories of the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit (NTSRU) – portray Yolngu as soldiers valiantly serving to defend Australia. Yolngu oral testimonies suggest that Yolngu were neither subjects nor soldiers of Australia, but rather served as *allies* against a common Japanese enemy. This paper analyses how these three perspectives intersected and impacted on war operations and the lives of Yolngu during and after the war. Despite providing critical support to the war effort, the dominant perception of Yolngu as 'subjects' persisted and has contributed to the erasure of Yolngu from the cultural memory of Australian war history. Recent strides have attempted to re-incorporate Yolngu into popular narratives of the war, but the new emphasis on 'soldiers' continues to downplay Yolngu perceptions as 'allies'.

Noah Riseman completed his PhD in History at the University of Melbourne in 2008 and currently lectures at Australian Catholic University in Melbourne. His thesis examines the impact of the military experiences of the Yolngu people of Arnhem Land during World War II, and in a comparative context with Native American Navajo and Papua New Guinean auxiliary units. Noah's historical interests include Australian Indigenous, Pacific Islander, Native American, Latin American, Australian, and United States history.

Rooney, Monique

Performing Melodrama: from *Australia's* Nullah to *Chant's* Jimmie Blacksmith

Session 3A

It has been convincingly argued that melodrama is a quintessentially democratic genre that places centre stage the plight and moral redemption of a wronged or suffering victim. As Linda Williams argues, the spectacle of this dramatic suffering plays out a social "quest for a democratic, plain-speaking recognition of innocence or guilt". "Audiences of melodrama" Williams writes "are positioned like juries of common law trials" in that they are called on to recognise the pathos, or suffering, of a wrongly accused-innocent or misunderstood victim. In the history of Hollywood—not only the films themselves but via their supporting apparatus, Hollywood's powerful culture industry machine—this drama of witnessing and retribution has often been staged at the intersection between fictional portrayal and extra-filmic context, between on-screen performance and off screen drama or politics, between mis-understood character and wronged actor.

In both the film's pre-release media hype and in the storyline itself, Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* (2008) screens its stolen generation narrative via announcement of its supposed debt to melodrama—and to classic Hollywood film in general. In particular, its melodramatic exploration of race is staged through its extradiagetic imaging of central Indigenous actor, Brandon Walters. The success of Luhrmann's media publicity culminated in the larger-than life portrait of Walters, which won the 'People Choice Ward' in the Archibald Prize the year that *Australia* was screened.

My paper draws on the hyperbolic depiction of Australia's Brandon Walters/Nullah—who, in representing melodrama's wronged victim, becomes the locus of *Australia's* "drama of recognition"—as a departure point for exploring the intra- and extradiagetic representation of an Indigenous character/actor in an earlier Australian film about race relations, Fred Schepisi's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978). Through an analysis of the film and its deployment of race melodrama, as well as its supporting apparatus of interviews, oral histories and documentaries, my

paper will compare the on-screen portrayal of Jimmie Blacksmith to the off-screen performance/representation of Tom Lewis. In doing so, I want to explore how *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith's* post-civil rights representation of race demonstrates the influence of melodrama—a classic Hollywood mode. By exploring the relationship between Tom Lewis and his on-screen counterpart, Jimmie, I want to draw attention to melodrama's capacity to exceed its own stereotyped, and morally polarised, framework.

Monique Rooney teaches literature and film in the English Program, School of Humanities, Australian National University. Her current research is a study of race and melodrama in late twentieth-century Australian films.

Russell, Lynette

Plenary Panel

Lynette Russell has worked and researched in the area of Australian Indigenous Studies for the last 15 years. She is the Director of the Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies and the Deputy Dean of Arts, Monash University. Her books have focused on Australian Aboriginal history, museology, race relations, archaeology, post-coloniality and cross-cultural interactions. She is currently working on several projects, the key one being *Roving Mariners* (in press, Suny Press), a study of Aboriginal participation in the nineteenth-century maritime industries of whaling and sealing.

Sheckels, Theodore F.

Australia, American Style: Baz Luhrmann's Revision of the Australia Implicit in the Films of the 1970s and 1980s

Session 1B

Those who have written on the Australian films of the 1970s and 1980s, this author among them, recognized that one of the missions the government-supported industry was projecting—at home and abroad—"the Australian story." Some films, for example Weir's *Galipoli*, did so rather explicitly, but, explicitly or implicitly, the films as a body told of a nation of hard-working, hard-drinking white men who were fiercely individualistic, loyal to their mates, and rather rebellious (especially against anything English). They furthermore saw life as both a struggle and a sport at which they were almost destined, in the end, to fail at, with the story of Galipoli perhaps synecdochal. Some films softened the edge of this "story"; adapted it to the lives of girls and women; and—in line with Hollywood—added romance and a happy ending. A handful of films asked about the place of the aboriginal in the story. These qualifications were, however, filmic footnotes to the dominant message.

The distinctive dimensions of Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*, an early 21st Century attempt to project "the Australian story" can be seen if the 2008 film is situated next to the earlier ones. Whether Luhrmann intended to refute the earlier message is not something we can determine. However, we can surmise that he wanted his audience to see Australia quite differently than the film makers of the earlier decades. Luhrmann's tendency to mimic Hollywood—very evident as early as *Strictly Ballroom*—is only a small part of the explanation for his offering a different "Australian story" from

that which dominated Australian cinema's "Next New Wave" and "10BA" phases. Luhrmann's "story" does more than superimpose Hollywood on Australia. Rather, it superimposes the United States on Australia, giving viewers "Australia, American Style," going so far as replacing Galipoli as synecdoche with a Pearl Harbor-like assault on Darwin. The proposed paper outlines the differences between the two "stories" and speculates that the shift represents not just the inclinations of different directors but different Australian self-definitions.

Theodore F. Sheckels is A. G. Ingram Professor of English (and Professor of English and Communication Studies) at Randolph-Macon College, Ashland, Virginia, United States. He is the author of *Celluloid Heroes Down Under: Australian Film, 1970-2000* (2001) as well as essays on film adaptations of Peter Carey and the vision of director Peter Weir that have appeared in *Antipodes* and elsewhere. He is the author of the survey essay "Australian Film" in the 2007 *A Companion to Australian Literature Since 1900*. He has also published book-length studies of South African literature and Canadian women's fiction as well as several essays on Canadian authors L. M. Montgomery and Margaret Atwood. He also teaches and publishes on political communication and has in print two book-length studies, two textbooks, and numerous articles in that area of study. His most recent projects are an edited collection on Senator Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign (in press) and a book-length consideration of politics in Margaret Atwood's fiction (under consideration at University of Toronto Press). He is the editor of *Margaret Atwood Studies* and the President of the American Association of Australian Literary Studies.

Simic, Zora

The Fall Girl: Nicole Kidman, *Australia* and Australians

Session 3Bii

One striking feature of the backlash to the film *Australia* was the extent to which leading actor Nicole Kidman was routinely singled out for negative criticism, much of it from women. In one widely-cited attack, British journalist Melanie Reid described Kidman as 'exquisitely accomplished at being awful'. Her casting, wrote Reid, is a 'big mistake' that will turn off potential female viewers. Stephanie Zacharek of *Salon*, indexed the film's failure to the 'Nicole Kidman problem', principally the actor's inexpressive forehead. Australian newspaper columnist Mia Freedman wrote Kidman an open letter in which she encouraged the film star to be more 'real', starting with some honesty about her botox treatments.

As these comments suggest, widespread dislike of Nicole Kidman did not begin with *Australia*. Allegedly, it is also a 'girl' thing. In this paper, I identify numerous strands of anti-Kidman sentiment that encompass but also extend beyond gender. In Australia, hating or loving Nicole Kidman has a history as long as her career. At home, 'our Nic' has been the source of urban myth, the butt of jokes and the staple of women's magazines. What does the peculiar nature of hating Nicole Kidman have to tell us about contemporary celebrity generally, and Australia and Australians specifically?

Zora Simic teaches Australian history and women's and gender studies in the School of History and Philosophy at the University of New South Wales. With Monica Dux, she is the co-author of *The Great Feminist Denial* (MUP, 2008).

In this paper I focus on *Australia* and how it accommodates Collins and Davis's 'post Mabo' discourse whilst also referencing a rich history of landscape cinema in this country. I return to Ross Gibson's question from the 1980s; has the landscape come to represent something much more than just an environmental setting for local narratives? "In so many ways" states Gibson, "the majority of Australian features have been about landscape" (Gibson 1992: 63). Using an eco-postcolonial framework, I will also argue that landscape cinema's aesthetic return in the 2000s reflects a developing environmental awareness that can no longer be suppressed. These films register not only indigenous agency, but they also portray a 'more-than-human' agency with a land that so often refuses to succumb.

Catherine Simpson lectures in film and media studies at Macquarie University, Sydney. She has organised film festivals in Australia and Turkey and writes on the cinema of both countries. Her latest publication is *Diasporas of Australian Cinema* (Intellect, UK, 2009) (co-edited with Anthony Lambert and Renata Murawska).

Smith, Tim

Several Grains of Truth

Session 4B

Critics have described Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* as a pastiche of other films that combine to form a distorted history of the Northern Territory. Yet among its clichés of landscape, the pastoral industry and representations of Aborigines, the film contains threads of historical accuracy. This paper presents a collage of stories from the Territory's early years of settlement that become historical fact in Luhrmann's *Australia*.

Tim Smith is a PhD Student in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. His thesis topic is the photography of Paul Foelsche who was the Northern Territory's first Chief of Police. Following his long-term research on the colonial photography of the Northern Territory and cataloguing of Foelsche's photographic works while Head of School at the Northern Territory University, he co-curated the South Australian Museum exhibition, *The Policeman's Eye, The Photography of Paul Foelsche* that toured nationally from 2003. His published work includes a biography of Paul Foelsche, in John Hannavy, (ed), *The Encyclopedia of 19th Century Photography*, (Routledge Reference, NY 2007).

Stadler, Jane and Mitchell, Peta

The Land of Oz: Journeys through the Cinematic Landscape of Australia

Session 5B

This paper examines the ways in which Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* (2008) constructs an imaginative geography of the nation through its use of maps and journeys traversing "the outback" and "the Never Never". The film seeks to create a contemporary sense of "Australianness" using distinctive representations of the landscape and references to Australia's colonial, literary, and cinematic past

that invoke current debates over land ownership, belonging and Indigeneity. We bring insights from spatial theory and cultural geography (including research by de Certeau, Conley, Leer, and Lukinbeal) together with the textual analysis of landscape in cinema studies (drawing on Gibson, Collins and Davis) to question how maps, journeys and landscapes function in *Australia*.

Shot in four states, *Australia* employs artful cinematography, CGI, and the spectacle of the landscapes through which the characters travel to make particular appeals to nationality. Set in Darwin and on "Faraway Downs," a cattle station located in the eastern Kimberley region of Western Australia, crossing over the state border into the Northern Territory, Australia's "Red Centre" is employed as a synecdoche representing the broader Australian landscape. The film establishes its geographical setting through the use of maps and journeys, and it is through these, we argue, that it constructs a mediated and historicised imaginative geography of Australia.

Jane Stadler (j.stadler@uq.edu.au) is Senior Lecturer in Film and Television Studies at the University of Queensland. She is author of *Pulling Focus: Intersubjective Experience, Narrative Film and Ethics*, and co-author of *Media and Society* and *Screen Media*.

Peta Mitchell (peta.mitchell@uq.edu.au) is Lecturer in Writing at the University of Queensland and author of *Cartographic Strategies of Postmodernity: The Figure of the Map in Contemporary Theory and Fiction*.

Starrs, D. Bruno

Voice and the Indigenous Australian in Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* (2008)

Session 4A

This paper examines the effect of positioning a non-hyper-masculine character, being the prepubescent Aboriginal Australian 'Nullah', as the protagonist in Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* (2008) through the use of two aspects of cinematic aurality: written dialogue (especially voice-over narration) and diegetic song. By making Nullah the voice-over narrator, Luhrmann makes it clear from the start that *Australia* is first and foremost this little Aboriginal boy's true story. Arguing that Nullah is a feminised foil to the masculine, white forces that seek to make him one of the Stolen Generations, this paper first addresses Germaine Greer's claim that Nullah speaks a "cutesified stage version of pidgin" (Greer 2008). It then posits that mainstream Hollywood cinema has not only a "male gaze" (Mulvey 1975) but an unconscious male voice and that Luhrmann innovatively subverts this patriarchal position to emphasise the binary distinction between Nullah and his pursuers. The result is Nullah's authoritative voice effectively undermines the credibility of Stolen Generations deniers such as Andrew Bolt. Finally it examines Nullah's ability to perform magic via singing and how the song "Over the Rainbow" diegetically serves to further validate the point of view of *Australia*'s non-hyper-masculine protagonist.

D. Bruno Starrs holds masters degrees from Bond University (2000) and the University of Melbourne (2005). His PhD, entitled "Aural Auteur: Sound in the Films of Rolf de Heer", is from Queensland University of Technology (2009). He has written three books: *I Woke Up Feeling Thailand* (Sid Harta 2004), *Dutch Tilt, Aussie Auteur: The Films of Rolf de Heer* (VDM 2009) and *Suicide Plays* (VDM 2009). Starrs was a 2009 Research Fellow at the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra.

Tascón, Sonia Magdalena

Australia's land, landscape, and 'identity': replacing or reproducing the 'old'?

Session 5B

Dermody and Jacka in their book 'The Imaginary Industry' (1988) contend that from the 1970s Australian film industry 'revival', the AFC (Australia Film Commission)-genre was born, and the land, or rather 'landscape', becomes a central motif. This was associated with a rising urgency in establishing a distinctive and differentiated national character or identity, and in film this was to be done by setting itself against Hollywood, but also in the symbols that would be deployed to portray 'Australianness'; Peter Weir's 'Picnic at Hanging Rock' (1975) was the clearest example of this genre. Many Australian movies have relied on 'the land' or 'the bush' to differentiate Australian cinema from other cinema; even in the face of the rise of cityscaped and dialogue-based films (most of which have been catalogued as 'art' or 'eccentric' films and hence have not had wide appeal) this object of land as symbol for Australia has played an important role historically, and as recently as the 'Crocodile Dundee' films (1985; 1987; 2001), 'Wolf Creek' (2004), and 'Japanese Story' (2005) continued to be employed for dramatic but also filmic purposes for establishing a specific geographic place. In an era when film is seeking to uncouple itself from place, and this is certainly evident in the funding arrangements as well as actors used, Baz Luhrmann's film appears to be an attempt to return to 'place': the reliance of film sets in situ, a practice that has become, if not obsolete, certainly less necessary, alone suggested that the authenticity of this film was to rely heavily on being 'here'. Was this an attempt to use 'landscape' again as object-central for the organisation of an internal notion of coherence, as heralded by the politics of the Howard era? Or, as I will contend here, the creation of a new mythology of place, which here and in this film, is Australia?

Sonia Tascón has had a long-standing interest in Australia the place and its people: its political formations of nationhood, nationalisms, its cultural access to forms of identity, and the cultural products these configurations have resulted in, including social policies in relation to the stranger (migrants and refugees), the stranger-within (Indigenous peoples), as well as the visual culture produced via films. Sonia has taught media theory, communications and human rights, as well as Australian film studies at a number of universities across WA and Victoria, including Curtin University, RMIT, and Monash University

Yang, Yunyu

The Pursuit of Interracial and Intercultural Harmony in *Australia*

Session 6B

Baz Luhrmann's a versatile Australian director, popular with Chinese audience for his Red Curtain Trilogy, offered us an amazing feast, *Australia*, in January 2009. This Australian epic, all the way to the bone, is cleverly-knitted and profoundly implies that despite the setting of wartime ruin and racial hostility, some ordinary Australians took trouble to pursue the interracial and intercultural harmony of the country. It was thanks to such interracial co-efforts that the government officially changed the White Policy into Multiculturalism in 1970s, which has contributed to the present harmony of the diverse society. This paper first reviews the history of Stolen Generation as background information for the contents to be explored subsequently. Then it highlights Baz's multi-

angled and constructive way to unfold the ashamed history, compared with another film, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. It consists of the analysis of the Aboriginal rituals and western Christmas in *Australia*, the main characters' mental journey of struggling for the harmony and the symbol of the film anthem, *over the rainbow*. The paper finally concludes that, with the interracial collaboration, Australians are sure to achieve what they want, just as the multi-racial team managed to drive the cattle to Darwin and rescue the aboriginal children from the Mission Island.

Yunyu Yang is an associate professor and postgraduate supervisor in Foreign Languages School of Nantong University, China, with scholarships from China and Australia doing research in Universities of Monash, Melbourne and Griffith. Interested in Australian studies, she has written a few publications on Aboriginal Australian culture for major magazines. As a coordinator of ACC Project, she is now collaborating with Australian Scholars on *Curriculum Development: Australian Film Appreciation*. Her email address is yyyang@ntu.edu.cn

CHAIRS

Baird, Barbara

Chair: Session 3Bi & Bii

Barbara Baird is an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Women's Studies at Flinders University. Her teaching and research concern the interlocking cultural politics of gender, sexuality, race and national identity in the Australian context. Most recently she has developed an interest in the way that ideas about 'the child' are summoned to play a part in all kinds of contemporary political debates.

Carey, Jane

Chair: Session 6B

Jane Carey is a Monash Fellow in the Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies and the Centre for Women's Studies at Monash University. Her current research project examines the racial population politics of British settler colonialism.

Collins, Felicity

Chair: Session 1B

Felicity Collins is Associate Professor in Cinema Studies at La Trobe University. She is the author of *The Films of Gillian Armstrong*, and *Australian Cinema after Mabo* (with Therese Davis), and Chief Investigator of an ARC Discovery Project on *Australian Screen Comedy and National Identity* (with Sue Turnbull and Susan Bye).

Curthoys, Ned

Chair: session 2A

Ned Curthoys is a research fellow at the Research School Humanities, Australian National University. Along with Debjani Ganguly he is the co-editor of *Edward Said: the Legacy of a Public Intellectual*.

Edmonds, Fran

Chair: session 5B

Fran Edmonds has lived in and worked with many Aboriginal communities over the past 15 years. In the early 1990s she spent time in Central Australia teaching in the remote Warlpiri community of Willowara. She then moved to Utopia and worked as a lecturer with Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education, working with the Anmaytere and Alyawarre people. Later she worked as a consultant historian for native title claims in the Northern Territory, Victoria and New South Wales. Fran completed her PhD in 2007 at the University of Melbourne, on the history of southeast Australian Aboriginal art and its relationship to identity and wellbeing; she continues to work closely with many of the participants from that study, including Aboriginal artists and curators. Most recently this has resulted in a 'community report' published by the Co-operative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health in Darwin, which outlines the findings from the PhD, including many colour images of traditional and contemporary art. She currently works with the Australian Indigenous Studies program at the University of Melbourne

Grieves, Vicki

Chair: Session 2B

Vicki Grieves BA (Hons1) UNSW is Worimi from the midnorth coast of NSW and a historian. Vicki has almost three decades experience in managing Aboriginal policy and program developments within universities (where she has also lectured in Aboriginal history and public policy), the Commonwealth public service and in Aboriginal community organisations. She has recently had the opportunity to review major Indigenous education initiatives of the Commonwealth government as a consultant. Vicki's completed PhD thesis *Approaching Aboriginal History: Family, Wellbeing and Identity in Aboriginal Australia* presents a case for a new Australian historiography based on Indigenous knowledges approaches and explores mixed-race marriages in Worimi from this theoretical base.

Haskins, Victoria

Chair: Session 1A

Victoria Haskins is ARC Future Fellow with the U Mulliko Indigenous Research Centre at the University of Newcastle, NSW. She researches cross-cultural histories and gender, and is currently working on a comparative history of state intervention in Indigenous domestic labour relationships in the United States and Australia, 1880-1945. Victoria is the author of *One Bright Spot* (Palgrave 2005) and co-editor of *Uncommon Ground: White women in Aboriginal history* (Aboriginal Studies Press 2005).

Lui-Chivizhe, Leah

Chair: Session 4A

Leah Lui-Chivizhe is a lecturer in Indigenous Studies at the Koori Centre, University of Sydney. Leah's current research projects include *Laying the Tracks: Torres Strait Islander migration and labour in Northern Australia*. This study will examine the history of Torres Strait Islander involvement in the railway industry in Northern Australia from the 1950s to the 1970s. It will focus on experiences of migration to the mainland and the contribution of Islanders to the construction and maintenance of railways in Central Queensland, the Mt Isa to Townsville line and in the Pilbara region of northern Western Australia.

Nugent, Maria

Conference co-convenor and Chair, Keynote Address

Until recently, **Maria Nugent** was Research Fellow at the Centre for Historical Research at the National Museum of Australia. She is now Research Fellow in the History Program's Australian Centre for Indigenous History in the Research School of Social Sciences at ANU. She's the author of *Mapping Attachment: A Spatial Approach to Aboriginal Post-Contact Heritage* (with Denis Byrne, 2004), *Botany Bay: Where Histories Meet* (2005) and *Captain Cook Was Here* (2009). She co-convened this conference with Shino Konishi.

Stanley, Peter

Chair: Session 4B

Peter Stanley is the inaugural head of the National Museum of Australia's Centre for Historical Research. An experienced museum historian specialising in military history, he published 22 books on military social history, medical and imperial history, including *White Mutiny*, *For Fear of Pain* and *Invading Australia*. In 2009 he published *Men of Mont St Quentin* and *Commando to Colditz* and his current projects include a book on Anzacs and crime in the Great War and a study of a Victorian community affected by the Black Saturday bushfires.

Teo, Hsu-Ming

Chair: Session 6A

Hsu-Ming Teo is a novelist and historian. She is based in the Department of Modern History, Macquarie University (Sydney, Australia) where she teaches European history and the history of travel and tourism. She is the editor of *Cultural History in Australia* (UNSW Press 2003) as well as the author of a range of academic articles and book chapters on the history of romantic love in Australia, the history of travel and tourism, Orientalism, and popular fiction. She is an editorial board member of the *Journal of Australian Studies* and the *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, and a member of the Scientific Committee of the International Association for the Study of Popular Romance. She is currently completing on a monograph on *Loving the Orient: Orientalism and representations of interracial love in western culture*.