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NARRATING ANTIPODEAN CULTURES

edited by
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INTRODUCTION

The “Antipodes” is a term dense with cultural and historical meaning, because it is the sign of ultimate geographical, cultural and ontological Otherness. Geographically the ‘antipodes’ (from the Greek “anti” – opposed and “pous” – foot) of any place on Earth is the point on the Earth’s surface which is diametrically opposite to it. Two points that are *antipodal* to one another are connected by a straight line running through the centre of the Earth. This technical meaning of the term is rarely used, however, perhaps because only 4% of land on the earth’s surface is antipodal. In other words, the latitudes in which most of the land is located in the Northern Hemisphere are matched in the South by water. This absence, this interminable stretch of sea helps to explain the ways in which the “antipodes” have existed in the European imagination. This was a region of monsters, where you sailed off the edge of the earth, a region of the unknown.

Indeed for St Augustine the idea of human habitation and even land itself on the other side of the globe was highly dubious:

As to the fable that there are Antipodes, that is to say, men on the opposite side of the earth, where the sun rises when it sets on us, men who walk with their feet opposite ours, there is no reason for believing it. Those who affirm it do not claim to possess any actual information; they merely conjecture that, since the earth is suspended within the concavity of the heavens, and there is as much room on

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Eleonora Federici

*"Selling Australia": From Pioneer Land to Earthly Paradise**

What images does Australia present to the world through its tourist advertising campaigns? Have they changed from the beginning of the country's investment in tourism in the first decades of the twentieth century until today? How do tourist representations end up shaping national identities at home and overseas?

My essay is aimed at exploring how the representations of Australia as a tourist destination have been modified over time, reshaping and re-using the main cultural themes and images associated with the Antipodes. The aim is to offer a diachronic perspective on tourist representations of Australia and "Australianness", and to outline how traditional images connected with Australia have been remodelled and re-presented in tourist material for international audiences in a continuous recycling of "markers" and "signs" (MacCannell 1976) regarding the country and its culture. The corpus is made up of a number of tourist posters dating from the beginning of the twentieth century, print advertising campaigns from the 1980s and the latest TV spots and the March 2010 website campaign. The choice has been made in order to analyze how some cultural representations refer to a sort of "historical archive" which has been used in different periods, and how these key elements have

* *Selling Australia* is a four-part documentary series on the tourism industry. Directed by Julia Redwood, it was produced by ABC television in 2001 and shown in Australia.

changed over time.¹ By using methodological tools from CDA, semiotics and Cultural Studies, my aim is to demonstrate how the branding of a nation and its tourist representations reveals multiple layers of meanings present in visual and verbal texts and to highlight how an “imaginary geography and community” is perpetuated.

1. *Reading Tourist Representations of Australia*

While past and contemporary images of Australia addressed to an international audience have always been intended to catch the tourist’s attention – as the “Brand Australia campaign” of the mid-90s clearly reveals – they can also be interpreted as signs of a changing perception of national identity over different historical periods. An archive of core elements which have typified Australian myths and legends since the beginning of its settlement and can be considered part of a national collective imaginary – for example, the outback, the bush, the ocean and the sandy beaches – is recurrent in all Australian advertising campaigns. This cultural archive presents the link between images of the country and its imaginary. Representations of a destination are commercial texts and work as cultural metaphors for the identity of the place. While posters from the first half of the twentieth century introduce stereotyped images of a holiday destination of sun and fun, from the 1980s, a period when the tourist industry began to be acknowledged as an important factor in Australian economic growth, tourist ads began to be assembled in a different way. This was also due to the fact that, in those years, the perspective of Australian identity and culture was slowly beginning to alter, both within the country and outside its borders.

Time and setting are important elements when we examine advertising texts in a specific context such as in our example, because social practices and behaviour change over time and cultural images

¹ My choice is of course a personal one, due to it not being possible to refer to all the twentieth-century campaigns. Nonetheless, I acknowledge the importance of the campaign for the 2000 Olympic Games which I have decided not to include in my analysis.

are shaped and reshaped while we move from one culture to another. The contexts of production and publication, therefore, provide a key for textual interpretation and, as we will see, the selling of Australia has always been thought of by taking into account the social, economic, political and cultural factors of the various epochs.

If, on the one hand, advertisements are dictated by economic choices, on the other hand, they are the result of social practices. Tourist adverts for the same destination may differ from target country to target country or, on the contrary, be very similar because they are part of a collective imaginary of a specific place. The iconography of tourist ads is created by keeping a particular consumer target in mind and tourist advertising campaigns aim at a specific market sector. Tourist ads are strictly connected to discursive practices and are intended for a community that recognizes specific patterns in them, people who, in belonging to a given culture, “share a common social space and history and a common system of standards, believing, evaluating, and acting” (Kramsch 1998: 127). Tourist texts are thus written and interpreted according to the would-be tourist’s ideas and expectations regarding that precise destination. They are cultural representations structured through multi-semiotic texts where different verbal and visual sign systems relate to each other closely, echoing the same message. The communicative function of the verbal message is aimed at the selling of a product – in this case a destination – through a web of visual and verbal connotations. As this regards the selling of places the visual aspect is very important because what the consumer sees is just a glimpse of what is waiting for him. The way the destination is sold reveals unwritten assumptions behind the communication and unveils ideological standpoints. This is due to the fact that all textual data are always “filtered or mediated; they are in themselves a form of social re(construction)” (Jaworski and Coupland 1999: 13). The interpretation of these ads relies on context because their implicit discourses are aspects of Australian culture and are rooted in its institutions. Moreover, as Mills has suggested, discourses are not “a disembodied collection of statements, but groupings of utterances or sentences, statements which are enacted within a social context” (Mills 1997:

10). Tourist images recall these discourses and represent some concepts which are commonly associated with a place; expectations of a destination inevitably shape the ads. These images are codified and de-codified according to a precise and individual cultural interpretative schema that is different for each culturally diverse reader.

As a well-known scholar in CDA, Teun van Dijk (2008) underlines, a text is meaningful and coherent if it refers to a mental model because discourses are produced and interpreted in terms of mental representations which refer to specific events and are socially shared. Mental models are personal and subjective; they represent the individual way people make sense of their environment, how they interpret events and discourses that permeate the texts they read. As Van Dijk highlights, "context models become the crucial interface between mental models of events and the discourses about such events" (Van Dijk 2008: 59). This means that the understanding of an advertising discourse occurs as a consequence of mental models based on social representations. The selection of words and images is, therefore, selected with great care because it is connected to the consumer's ability to interpret these texts.

2. *Branding Australia, a Mythical Land*

As with any other object, places can be branded by using selected aspects of culture. Wally Olins (2002) talks about a branding of the nation where the country itself is transformed into a brand. In his opinion, a country like Australia, whose reality has greatly changed over time, has carefully adapted the techniques used by corporations in marketing in order to project a new and modified view of its cultural products and what is on offer to tourists. Similarly, in a recent lecture on Australia, Simon Anholt discussed tourism in the country as the most visibly promoted aspect of nation branding.² This branding often supports the "imaginary" place the visitor has already in mind. We also know that the choice of a holiday destination is an

² AIEC 2010 opening plenary, Sidney, Oct. 13, 2010 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?G3YMZNPfRs>). See also Anholt 2007 and 2009.

indicator of a particular lifestyle; some destinations are considered as elitist places for upper-class people, others are "packaged" for mass-tourism and this modifies how they are advertised. Australia is a peculiar example for tourism, both because of its isolation in the Pacific Ocean and distance from other places, especially Europe. For Europeans, Australia was, and probably still is, the "Antipodes", a faraway place isolated from everything else. First of all, even though vast, it is an island, an extraordinary escape from ordinary life and, at the same time, a safe enclosed space to wander about. As Susan Bassnett underlines,

[...] islands have always occupied a powerful place in the European imagination. The island, a territory separated from other lands by water, lends itself easily to fantasy and mythologizing. Folklore abounds with tales of magical islands, places where heroes go to rest and from which they may one day return, islands that draw people in and never let them leave, islands that appear and disappear. (Bassnett 2002: 6)

Australia certainly has a mythological place in European minds; Western Australia especially was seen in the past as part of an antipodean paradise that extended from Africa to America. This imaginary continent has been described by writers and travellers since the sixteenth century as a healthy, wealthy, utopian land (Cameron 1974). As Smith says, the Australian landscape,

[...] began as a kind of dream, a sea-tale fashioned from old nautical myths. The Blessed Isles of the Greeks, the medieval belief in a Terrestrial Eden, and the El Dorado of Spanish voyages all contributed elements of their dream scenery to that belief in a southern continent which obsessed the European imagination for many centuries. (Smith 1976: 159)

Australia as a remote and mythical place gave the country an aura of mystery and fascination; for Europeans it was the other side of the world, the ultimate unknown, wild destination. From its "discovery" onwards Australia has always been visualized as a distinct country, isolated and only partially linked with other islands in the Pacific (Lewis and Wigen 1997). Curiosity regarding its remarkable natural characteristics has always struck travellers to Australia, from

eighteenth-century natural philosophers to contemporary geographers. The image of Australia as “a land of enchanted wonders” (Smith 1960: 135) made of rocks, birds and plants, was central to the writing of early eighteenth-century European observers whose drawings and paintings presented a version of the country’s natural environment through a European perspective and taste which permeated the common imaginary about Australia. The eastern coast of New South Wales was a paradise for botanists, a “garden of astonishing delight” (Frost 1996: 58). Nineteenth-century travellers wrote about what they saw from the sea: plants, animals and immense crops; a vision that “delighted the spirit” (Frost 1996: 69). The imperial vision and rhetoric was filled with natural metaphors. Even a city like Sydney was portrayed as a “vast garden” with orchards, pastures and thousands of sheep. Australia was the “other world”, the other hemisphere, a vast “blank space” interpreted through European eyes but at the same time, an outpost of European civilization. Moreover, as Simon Ryan outlines (1996), nineteenth-century journals portrayed, through a scientific approach, a spatial construction for exploration and for cartographical maps which were the result of ideological constructs.

If ever a space may be depicted in metaphorical or imaginative terms and where even popular geographical knowledge ends up defining a country from a particular perspective (Crouch 1999), then the European conception of Australia has influenced the perception of the country by Australians. From this perspective, tourist texts offer an interesting example of changing self-representation. Contemporary images of Australia reiterate the common ideas of a land of sandy beaches and bush adventures where tourists still look for the mysterious big rock at the centre, the exotic flora and fauna, the old colonial-style frontier towns, the infinite space of deserts, the bush of outlaw heroes, which nowadays is conceived of as a place for meditation and rest, and, finally, the sea, the old route for settlers’ supplies and European trade which is now a natural wonder to be discovered. However, this visual archive has been re-interpreted and re-moulded through the various tourist campaigns of the twentieth century.

In the tourist texts analyzed here, which include printed ads (posters and brochures), spots and websites, Australia is “translated” into visual and verbal discourses that international audiences can recognize and be fascinated by. Given that a tourist destination is a place to sell, these ads encapsulate historical and cultural elements which are considered to be icons of the nation; the idea of nation itself, in fact, is bound to the idea of place and iconic heritage. Discourses of nationalism and national identity emerge distinctly when analyzing these tourist ads because, as Benedict Anderson (1991) has outlined, the territory is part of national identity and national identity is itself a social construct which is continually imagined, re-invented, renewed by individual persons, the state, and global flows of commodities. Moreover, as Homi Bhabha has stated, the nation is a narration, a cultural system of signification (Bhabha 1990). Therefore, every country possesses its national self-image, some monuments or places which have acquired a cultural significance over time because they are part of the national history and have become icons of that place, elements of a national imaginary which transcends the borders of national territory. It may be said that bush “signs” have suggested “a *secure* point of identification” (Bhabha 1994: 69) for constructing a collective self in Australia all through the twentieth century.

Places are made of landscapes and tourist texts are filled with images of beautiful and unique landscapes to be visited. The tourist text is made of symbolic and textual readings of the landscape portrayed. Advertisers use landscapes as signs of a destination but markers of a country are also social expressions; these ads, in fact, are read in different ways by different communities. Landscape interpretation depends on the existing mindset of the interpreter and is influenced by what he knows or expects to find. Visitors bring their own constructions of the landscape they intend to visit, idealized images they have already acquired from literary texts, paintings or movies about that destination. In tourist texts, “Place” is not only some material entity that exists autonomously, but is also a praxis whereby the material place – its geography – is defined by a series of discourses that become inseparable from the place itself. The physical

terrain of place is like a blank canvas upon which a series of representations are layered producing a landmark that is uniquely identifiable. The place is reduced to metonymic characteristics that stand for the whole country; they can be symbols for natural features (Wallach 2005) such as, in this case, Uluru and the kangaroo or cultural features, like the “walkabout”.³

3. *Tourism Australia and the Australian Legend*

Tourism Australia, a government agency which has created the tourist ads of the last decades, is the main agent responsible for marketing Australia abroad. “The Australian legend”, perpetuated by historians, of a proletarian bush life (Ward 1958) has always been in the background of these ads. The dominant themes in Australian tourist advertising have been based on a collective imaginary archive of strong male characters, beautiful and wild landscapes and indigenous cultures; all images that have their roots in the Australian past. The typical Australian male character has been associated with specific characteristics like simplicity and straightforwardness; a sort of rebellious romantic hero. It has been a common picture in the Australian imaginary since the late nineteenth century, when the *Bulletin* magazine filled its pages with the “Little Boy from Manly”, a character devised by an artist, Livingston Hopkins, to represent colonial innocence (Inglis 2005).⁴ *Bulletin* writers and artists depicted primarily Australian landscapes, pioneers and bushmen but,

[...] the bush ethos was *distinctive not representative*. Artists, particularly the writers of the *Bulletin* made the bush accessible and gave it expressive meaning for all Australians. Thus because it filled an imaginative need, it entered the Australian consciousness [...] and the values that had their basis in the experience of bush life – self-reli-

³ Clearly Uluru and other such places are not just natural features but important sites for powerful representations of Aboriginal culture and legacy; see Head 1993.

⁴ Livingston “Hop” Hopkins was an important cartoonist on the *Bulletin* where he worked for more than thirty years. He depicted “Young Australia” through this character who personified New South Wales. His cartoons were a source for advertisers of the Federation period (Crawford 2001).

ance, egalitarianism, mateship – were encapsulated in the national character. (Walter 1992: 15)

The Bulletin was a nationalist, protectionist and republican publication that started in 1880 and went on until 2008, changing its format over time. However, the magazine always perpetuated the idea of Australian independence and the image of a “white nation”; suffice to say that the masthead logo was “Australia for the white man” and it was also known as “the Bushman’s Bible”. A character like the Bushman, who represented the supposed egalitarian society of Australia, loyalty to the country and dislike for authority, has provided testimony of the land from the very beginning. The bohemian representation of the bush began in the 1880s, a period when it was necessary to create a national culture and portray it through some visual metaphors which could refer to the country and its characteristics just as the Heidelberg school of painters did. At the time it was important to portray Australia through “Australian eyes”⁵ and art was part of a process of self-recognition and self-representation of a “new” country. The preoccupation with being perceived in a certain way by others has always been at the centre of Australian society; “as others see us” was a common refrain even in the press during the first decades of the twentieth century (Pryke 2009). It has taken some time for Australians to detach themselves from the European – especially British – representation of their country. This is also due to the fact that Australia was a land of immigration before becoming a tourist destination. The idea of a wealthy, warm and peaceful country to settle in was also exhibited in immigration posters at the beginning of the twentieth century when sophisticated promotional material was created to persuade would-be emigrants to settle in rural areas of the Dominion. As Brayshay (2002) has stressed, there was a great mismatch between the mi-

⁵ The Heidelberg School of Painters, so called because it began in the area of that name near Melbourne, is part of an Australian art movement of the late nineteenth century known as Australian Impressionism. The main artists were Arthur Streeton, Walter Whitters, Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin and Charles Corder. It began as an avant-garde expression opposed to Victorian taste and the artists emphasized the idea of Australian nationalism that led to the Federation.

grants' expectations and their actual experience once in Australia. Although advertising was rarely deliberately inaccurate, the style and imagery employed in posters, newspaper articles and other media presented national landscapes that were far less arduous than proved to be the case. The negative image of the penal colony needed to be forgotten and Australia became a paradise for young workers:

Australia is a fine country, but above all for young people. Its sunny freedom, its unlimited offer of opportunity, its enormous natural wealth, its undeveloped condition, which called for energy and muscle and confidence – all this appeals to the Boy, nay claims him. Youth is what Australia represents to the whole world. (White 1994: 24)

Australia was sunny and free, two adjectives that would permeate the representation of Australia for the whole century and be borrowed by the tourist industry. In the late 1940s, Australia was still presented to Britons as a potential home through official pamphlets available from the Australian High Commission; the idea was that of an "Australian way of life" (White 1992: 42) which perpetuated ideas of freedom and was connected to the conception of a "White Australia". A common slogan on immigration posters was: "There's a man's job for you in Australia" portraying a smiling, muscular Anglo-Saxon man happy at work in the Australian fields. In the 1950s, the country was still advertised as "the land of tomorrow" with agricultural images perpetuating the idea of a newborn "young" country. The rhetoric of a nation to be built and "filled" with British workers was still there, but something changed with the non-British immigration waves of mid-twentieth century. Even though the White Australia policy continued from the 1890s until the very early 1970s when non-British immigration grew and new ethnic communities began to question the portrayal of a mono-cultural country. The racial connotation of a white Australia, still central in the 1960s, started to adapt to new political, economical and social factors in the 1970s when the country was looking for a "persuasive unitary sense of the nation" (Williams 1970: 178) in a multicultural society of migrants and Aborigines whose presence was finally recognized (even though this recognition was more on paper than in

real life). The slow process of a different perception of the Australian nation came into existence because,

[...] even within the white community, understandings of Australia may have altered radically, for instance after about 1830 when free-born immigrants began to supersede convicts and their administrators, roughly after 1890 when the native-born outnumbered immigrants, and again after 1950 with the large influx of immigrants from diverse, non-English speaking cultures [...] from a contemporary perspective it seems that distinctive views of Australia may be held by different cultural groups. (Walter 1992: 8)

Tourist texts regarding Australia in the first decades of the twentieth century recapture the promotional spirit of the immigration country and offer images of sunlight, natural wonders and local colour. Australia was a new, undiscovered territory, distant from England, but at the same time portrayed as not so different, a destination where old European traditions could be found. In the years following the Federation, Australia the country was promoted as a "little piece of England" or "the Riviera", the ultimate escape from winter, so that the faraway destination could remind one of a familiar and known place while, at the same time, promising the high standards of European tourism. 1930s tourist posters invited tourists to "Discover Australia", perceived as a domesticated "terra incognita" with images of Captain Cook, the Endeavour, the British flag and other colonial symbols. First of all, Australia was the land of "Sunshine and Romance" with beautiful women advertising Australian beaches or romantic posters showing coaches with horses that made people think about Ned Kelly's gang and the danger of bandits in a land of adventure. Secondly, it was the land of curious and peculiar animals and plants, koalas, penguins, kangaroos and wild flowers were the symbols of a unique flora and fauna. Thirdly, it was the land of Aboriginal people and adventurous trips; the Northern part of the territory was depicted as the most savage and unexplored: "Go North to Adventure!", "See the Heart of the Continent" were the most common slogans accompanied by stereotyped representations of Aborigines whose images were, and still are, used for tourist materials. An exemplary case for the representation of tourism in

Central Australia in the 1930s was “One Pound Jimmy”, a young Aboriginal man that Charles Holmes, the manager of ANTA (Australian National Tourism Association), met in 1932 while he was touring around the country with a photographer in order to take some pictures for a new magazine emblematically entitled *Walkabout* (Barnes 2007). His photographs which were used for tourist purposes stand nowadays as historical records and reveal much about the ideas of Aboriginal culture at the time. The renamed “One Pound Jimmy” became a celebrity and a symbol for Australian colonization, modernization and colonial conceptions of Aboriginality. Holmes used photographs to glorify explorers while Aborigines were marked by their “otherness” in derogatory terms. The positioning of people from pre-modern societies alongside symbols of modern civilization was common in tourist images; their juxtaposition of primitivism and modernity provided tourists with a measure for Western progress.⁶

4. “Another Shrimp on the Barbie”: A “Truer” Australia

It has only been since the 1980s, when the country became an international destination, that tourist campaigns have changed and focused on representation of a “more real” Australia; the intention was to present the country as being different and distinct from any other place in the world. This campaign aimed principally at the American market and was constructed around the testimony of the actor Paul Hogan, famous for the *Crocodile Dundee* film series. He was chosen because Australian people could identify with him and he recalled a certain idea of “Australianness”; being the face of Australia at the time, he could represent a popular national sentiment. Offering “another shrimp on the barbie” and inviting people “to come and say g’day”, Hogan popularized Aussie slang, identifying Australian language and the accent with the territory; the message

⁶ TAA used a stylized image of Jimmy looking at an airplane flying over Uluru to promote it as a tourist site where tourists could see primitive men gazing curiously at modern technology.

could easily be distinguished as Australian. This campaign was the first to communicate Australia’s self-positioning vis-à-vis the world through tourist texts. From this campaign onwards, all tourist messages have been created by performing an Australian identity for an international audience, bearing in mind the way others might perceive the country and presenting an expected Australia while distinguishing it from stereotypes. “The Wonders Down Under” tagline of the brochures was accompanied by images of sandy beaches, bush adventures and a renewed nostalgic interpretation of the past (Crawford 2010). The campaign was thought up in the years of the 1988 bicentennial celebrations, an event which revealed the country’s precarious relationship with history and how much multiculturalism was still a conflicting discourse in Australia. While it was important to reassess the myths on which Australia has been built, it was also urgently necessary to switch from a mono-cultural image of the country to one of a rich and diverse multicultural nation.

A decade later, tourism had become recognized as a significant economic industry for the country and tourist institutions decided to involve ordinary people in advertising their own country; an idea which was again developed in 2010. In 1992, Tourism Australia invited Australians to send postcards in order to promote the country abroad, especially the cities. Still embedded in the national mythology of settlers and bush, Australia began to be advertised as a country of beautiful cities, a more difficult product to sell for this destination (Rowe 1993). The “Brand Australia campaign” started with the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games when attention to minority cultures was renewed in the selling of the national image. The opening ceremony of the Games showed Aboriginal people and their smoking ceremonies while an indigenous athlete, Cathy Freeman, was chosen to light the Olympic flame. The signal for reconciliation however, was accompanied by protests by Aborigines. Just a few years before, Bruce Chatwin had published one of the best known literary representations of Australia, *Songlines* (1986) which brought Aboriginal Australia (even if from a European standpoint) to international public attention.

The idea of selling something different from the stereotyped im-

age of Australia, even if using the same repertoire of images, was also central to the 2004 campaign "See Australia in a different light" which once again featured well-known Australians and suggested a wide range of places to visit. The logo still combined the kangaroo with the sun, two main themes of Australia, the good climate and the extraordinary fauna, while the slogan played on the link between the light, the land and life in the country. At the same time, it invited would-be tourists to think about Australia in a different way. The verbal message was tightly connected to the visual, made of pictures and aiming at strengthening the mood of the persuasive discourse. Selected colours were used in order to grab the viewer's attention and emotions and Australia was portrayed as a bright and warm country where people were gentle and optimistic: the perfect place to rest and recuperate. Part of this campaign was constructed with the aim to celebrate cultural diversity and achieve social harmony and cohesion, offering glimpses of minority cultures presented as the authentic part of the country, recognizing the importance of non-Anglo-Celtic Australia as a market for cultural tourism and visualizing a destination for tourists in search of alternatives to tales of national origins based on the first fleet, the Eureka Rebellion and the bush legend. However, the diversity depicted in the brochures seemed "to build up a sensualist imagery of the noble savage living close to nature, untamed certainly, but also pure, innocent and authentic" (Dann 1996: 191). The anthropological gaze melts into that of the tourist on glossy pages full of sophisticated and elegant photographs. Historical images supply valuable documentation of a long gone past while providing the basis of a collective visual and shared memory which is part of the sense of national identity. The romanticized past is here associated with a romantic conception of the environment and used as an historical archive. It becomes a tourist production and, as Marie Françoise Lanfant says, "in becoming a tourist product, 'heritage' changes its meaning [...] the assaying of heritage and its conversion into a tourist product imply that its cultural value is transformed into a commercial value" (Lanfant 1995: 37). For this reason, "society has to reinvest in its past, to reappropriate it, having exposed it to the gaze of the foreigner as a

diacritical mark of its own identity" (Lanfant 1995: 38). A tension still exists in fact between the outsider's stereotyped conception of Australia and the Australian re-appropriation and re-presentation of an identity of belonging.

The 2006 "Australian Invitation" campaign, probably best known as "Where the bloody hell are you?" campaign, was very different. This featured a young woman in front of iconic landscapes and ordinary people who uttered sentences like "we've poured you a beer", "we've had the camels shampooed", "we've saved you a spot on the beach", "we've got the sharks out of the pool", adding the controversial phrase "so where the bloody hell are you?". The campaign was not successful and there were many negative comments which linked the use of the swear-word to stereotypes of Australians as simple, ignorant people; some of the media comments suggested that the "bloody hell" phrase indicated a backward step and a return to an unsophisticated "Ocker" image which reflected poorly on contemporary Australians (Winter and Gallon 2008). Curiously, the humour of the campaign was more successful in Australia than abroad. The campaign was based on the myth of a needed holiday and carried out through an ego-targeting strategy (Dann 1996: 185) of addressing the tourist directly. The informal register aimed at perpetuating the idea of an easy-going Australia while adding a value to the destination through the tourist's involvement. The myth of the individual (Urry 1990) and the idea of liberation from ordinary life while on holiday were combined. The message was structured through a dialogue between the "we" (Australians) and the "you" (tourist). The accent was on Australian traditions and hospitality in a representation of the place as "unique". The singling out process of indicating an individual co-existed with the distinctiveness of the destination.

5. *The "Walkabout" and the Search for Authenticity*

Of a different form and directed at the emotional appeal to tourists was the 2008 campaign directed by the famous Australian direc-

tor Baz Luhrmann. It came out together with the release of the film *Australia* where the central themes were once again the bush, the bushman and the walkabout. The pioneer pastoral myth was still at the centre of the message, both in the film and in the ads; the resourceful, independent bushman is the protagonist of the story and the inhabited land of the “never never” became a place to be visited through the allegory of a spiritual journey. It was a cinema dominated campaign with a complex and integrated marketing programme; the sophisticated commercials implied “semiotics of commemorative spatiality” (Halbwach 1992) – here connected to Aboriginal culture and history as if Australia had to recover a lost “social memory” (Burke 1989). The spiritual meanings of the various places were at the centre of the spots which visualized Australia as an escape from ordinary life, the perfect place to take a rest and re-think one’s existence. The campaign was permeated by a nostalgic longing for a rediscovered past with a focus both on authenticity and exoticism. Australia was strongly associated with the culture of its indigenous people; it was presented as a unique place which could enrich the way tourists understand their own world (Hinch 2004). As we have already seen, indigenous images to promote the destination, from the stereotyped image of the Aborigine in the 1930s posters to the brand new spot featuring a young actor from the movie, are a very old practice in advertising Australia. It is a publicly constructed view of Aboriginality, created by the Australian Government for campaigns which present an “imagined geography” of Australia and an “imagined community” (Waitt 1999).⁷ From this perspective the tourist campaign can be seen as a new way to render Aboriginal people powerless by appropriating their culture for tourist consumption (Zeppel 1998). The anthropological gaze ends up by freezing Aboriginality in Dreamtime. The appropriation of Aborigine representations aims at the construction of a multicultural and ancient national identity. These ads, however, can also be interpreted as signs of the importance of Aboriginal culture in the Australian contemporary context. The “Topsy-Turvy Land” of the beginning of

⁷ See also Waitt 1997.

the twentieth century has been transformed into a paradise to discover around an Aboriginal theme, the walkabout.

It should be borne in mind that, generally speaking, tourism packages the past and, in the process, simplifies it while producing an inauthentic version or explanation of things. As Culler stresses, “tourism reveals difficulties in appreciating otherness except through signifying structures that mark and reduce it” (Culler 1988: 167). Taking this into account, it can be affirmed that the stereotyped perspective of Aboriginal people is here turned upside down by an ironic performative action. In “The Transformation” commercials, the main character is a young Aboriginal child (the same actor as in Luhrmann’s movie) who takes by the hand stressed business executives whose lives are transformed by their encounter with Australia.⁸ While, in the commercials, people are invited “to get lost in order to find themselves” through walkabout, in the brochures, advertisers played with “regression” strategy, “a return to Mother’s breast” (Dann 1996: 105) highlighting the pivotal concept in Aboriginal culture of the land as mother and integrating this idea with the image of a land of adventure and rejuvenation. These ads were thought up for tourists looking for a cultural experience which could change their outlook on life. This “transformation” was presented as being possible through “arrivals” and “departures” to the country: “Arrived planning to see the whole country – Departed still trying to get over Uluru”, “Arrived in search of the ultimate break – Departed having found paradise”, “Arrived with the weight of the world on the shoulders – Departed on the top of the world”, “Arrived wanting to get back to nature – Departed not wanting to get back home”, “Arrived looking for an experience to remember – Departed with an adventure we’ll never forget”. These ads focused on the link between identity, recovery and spiritual journeys; they referred to the Aboriginal way of life and philosophy, as was revealed in the tagline: “it is true what they say: to find yourself sometimes you need to lose yourself. In Australia they call this going ‘walkabout’. And with Uluru’s magical presence, sacred history and spectacular natural col-

⁸ This recalls the famous movie by Nicolas Roeg, *Walkabout* (1971).

our show at sunrise and sunset, it's no wonder people are finding themselves every single day". The "timelessness of nature" (Rowe 1993: 264), always used in tourist ads for Australia, is here represented as part of the tourist's pilgrimage to his inner soul. Uluru nowadays is both an Aboriginal sacred site and a national icon. It is one of the culturally produced Australian tourist landscapes. For some people it embodies Aboriginal spirituality commodified into a tourist landscape, for others it remains a symbol of (neo) colonial appropriation (Paschen 2010: 64).⁹ However, the use of the place as a central icon and the theme of the "walkabout" around which the spot is constructed highlight the importance of this concept in Australian culture. Aboriginal signs and culture become a metonymy for the whole country. In the presentation leaflet for the campaign, the writer asserts: "Walkabout' involves a person returning to the bush for a short period of time to re-connect to their traditional way of life and the land. For the majority of us, our 'walkabout' takes the form of a holiday – a time to refresh and rebalance". The Aboriginal practice is thus re-interpreted through a Western perspective exemplified by the use of the lexicon (the choice of a "person", a very general term) and pronouns ("their" for Aborigines and "us" for the majority of Australians – meaning not Aborigines) but recognized as an important heritage for all. The brochures are permeated with this discourse of nostalgia which as Francesconi asserts "enacts a self-centred longing for pleasure to be read as a narcissistic self-closure" (Francesconi 2007: 78). The tourist, plunging himself in a nostalgic Australia, fulfils his expectations and finds himself at home; it is an illusion of immediate and totalizing contact with the place and his inner self. The "language of authentication" (Dann 1996: 9) permeates these ads where the country is visualized as a place of authenticity and purity, a purifying site of renewal opposed to everyday life's superficiality and restlessness. This state of peace is promoted through "a feeling of *nostalgia*, a [...] longing for somewhere else. Nostalgia is the yearning for a missing human, spatial or temporal *Otherness*, an entity which is idealized as authentic precisely thanks

⁹ See also Mercer (1994), du Cros and Johnston (2002), Waitt *et al.* (2007).

to its distance" (Francesconi 2006: 69). The idealisation of past identities however, has always taken place in the form of representations of heritage and rituals of identity (Abram *et al.* 1997).

The brand new 2010 campaign is entitled "*There's Nothing Like Australia*" and invites tourists to share "*Our uniquely Australian experiences*", continuing to involve different typologies of tourism directly. Experiences are the drivers and motivators of the international target audience to whom the campaign is addressed; these experiences highlight what makes Australia distinct from other destinations. Not only do these experiences make up the story of Australia but they are ordinary people's experiences. The first phase of the campaign, announced on 31st March, invited Australians to upload images of their favorite places or experiences on www.nothinglikeaustralia.com, a website created by Tourism Australia for the new promotion. At the same time, Channel 9 began to show spots encouraging all Australians to "share your Australia". Tourism Australia also created an interactive map on www.australia.com which is searchable by experience type, location and keywords; supporting the website was a suite of adaptable digital, print and broadcast advertising materials. Being a country between the Pacific and Indian Oceans – a long distance destination for US, British and European tourists, Australia in 2010 puts the emphasis on quality, authenticity and experience, outlining its natural and cultural resources as key elements. Tourism Australia plays with a "real dimension" and a "perceived dimension" (Giordana 2004),¹⁰ through a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present recovered by Australians themselves. The idea of "authenticity" permeates these ads, "how the natives really work and live [which] is a major touristic *topos*, essential to the structure of tourism" (Culler 1988: 159). The tourist desire for an "authentic" Australia is fed by the publication and exhibition of photographs by Australians which offer "true" glimpses of life in Australia. A photographic record provides witnesses; it is a visual experience and as Culler points out, "the existence of reproductions is what makes something original,

¹⁰ My translation.

