JOURNEYS IN EXTRAORDINARY EVERYDAY CULTURE:
WALKING IN THE CONTEMPORARY CITY

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that

i. the thesis comprises only my original work.

ii. due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used.

iii. the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies, appendices and footnotes.

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ABSTRACT

The broad argument underpinning this thesis is that a feature of contemporary city life deserving further critical attention is that of the ‘extraordinary everyday.’ I coin this term as a way of identifying and describing an increasingly commonplace articulation or ‘interface’ between the extraordinary (that is, the production and experience of spectacle and intense affective states within the context of technologically mediated, contemporary urban space), and the everyday (the seemingly banal routines and structures that organise our day to day existence in a consumer society).

In order to provide an anchor for my discussion of extraordinary everyday culture, I focus on the cultural practices of ‘walking in the street.’ These practices have an important and ongoing place in the history of discourses on the everyday. ‘Walking,’ I argue, acts as an important connector between the quotidian (e.g., strolling on the sidewalk, walking to work, window shopping) and the extraordinary (e.g., televised mass street parades or semi-organised itineraries through sites of urban spectacle and wonder). It is also a useful cultural practice to discuss because it remains a central mode of mobility in the contemporary city. In particular, the multiple walking practices I discuss allow me to examine the following issues: the feedback loop between the body-subject and the city; the temporal and spatial structuring of everyday life; the production of a sense of place and identity in an era of globalisation; and, lastly, the complex relations between everyday cultural experience and the wider social, political, economic, and governmental processes that structure urban space.

My thesis is structured as follows. Part One argues that a theoretical approach to the extraordinary everyday might usefully be located at the intersection of the writings of the cultural critics Walter Benjamin, Michel de Certeau, and Meaghan Morris. Part Two uses the theoretical conclusions drawn from Part One to analyse three contemporary urban ‘interfaces’ that offer exemplary (though markedly different) instances of extraordinary everyday culture. These interfaces include the
Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade, the ‘Another View’ walking trail in Melbourne, and the Crown Entertainment Complex also located in Melbourne.
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It’s been a slow turnin’
From the inside out
A slow turnin’
But you come about

— John Hiatt

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I dedicate this thesis to Tania, and my parents, with love and thanks.
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PREFACE
One launches forth, hazards an improvisation.
— Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari

One of the most prominent debates currently circulating in the academic field of cultural studies is concerned with the nature, practices, and politics of ‘everyday life.’ While the conceptual category of ‘everyday life’ has a long and venerable history in a number of scholarly fields, no other disciplinary formation has invested it with quite the same centrality as contemporary cultural studies.\(^2\) An obvious sign of this focus on ‘the everyday’ is witnessed in this term’s increasingly frequent appearance in a wide range of cultural studies publications over the past decade. Despite the increasing circulation of the term, as Rita Felski has recently noted, ‘the everyday’ as a concept remains ‘the most self-evident, yet the most puzzling of ideas.’\(^3\) What exactly defines it? For Felski, the everyday describes ‘a way of experiencing the world’ rather than ‘a circumscribed set of activities.’\(^4\) Everyday life, she notes, ‘is the process of becoming acclimatised to assumptions, behaviours and practices which come to seem self-evident and taken for granted.’\(^5\) Put another way, it is the process by which complex social structures and processes are distilled into ‘routine’ and ‘common sense’ practices. In this thesis I am particularly concerned with how an apparently simple and transparent practice such as walking can be the location of a dense articulation of assumptions that organise the ways in which we experience and inhabit the contemporary everyday city.

To study aspects of contemporary everyday culture, as this thesis does, raises questions about the appropriateness of using a concept that was initially developed in postwar France. The invention of ‘the everyday’ as a discrete and important site of leftist intellectual inquiry can be credited to the French Marxist philosopher Henri

\(^{2}\) As Rita Felski notes, while philosophers and sociologists ‘such as Lukacs, Heidegger, Heller, Schutz, Goffman, and Habermas among others’ have written on the everyday, the ‘often abstract philosophical character’ of their writing may account for its lack of impact on feminism and cultural studies. See Rita Felski, ‘The Invention of Everyday Life,’ *New Formations* 39 (1999-2000): 15.  
\(^{3}\) Felski 15.  
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Lefebvre, and the publication of *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947), the first in a planned series of three volumes on this topic. Lefebvre developed the notion of ‘the everyday’ in order to account for the profound effects and contradictions arising from the dramatic transformation of social conditions and relations in France following the end of the Second World War and the emergence of what he later called ‘the bureaucratic society of controlled consumption.’

However, while Lefebvre was very much concerned with the changes taking place in the postwar period in which he was living, he conceived the everyday as having a much longer history. Lefebvre argued that everyday life emerged in the second part of the nineteenth century, produced out of modernity’s opening up of a gap between ‘the subjective, phenomenological, lived experience of the individual and objective institutions.’ As Greg Seigworth observes in a discussion of Lefebvre, while daily life has always existed in various forms, it is during modernity that “‘everyday life” becomes its own kind of object for theoretical understanding, political debate, aesthetic representation, and philosophical reflection.’ For Lefebvre, modernity and everydayness were inseparable as experiences, together they constituted ‘a deep structure’ that a critical analysis might work to uncover. Thus *The Critique of Everyday Life* opens with ‘Some Brief Notes on Well Trodden Ground,’ a chapter which deals with the late nineteenth century and the writings of Baudelaire (a topic which I consider in my opening chapter on the writings of Walter Benjamin). In particular, Lefebvre identifies this era as one during which the nature of daily experience of individuals underwent a profound shift. It has of course been widely recognised that a vital factor distinguishing the nineteenth century was the emergence of large-scale urban concentrations. The city of modernity ushered in new modes of perception, new possibilities of daily and lifetime social mobility, and a blurring of the relations between the private and the

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9 Seigworth, ‘Banality for Cultural Studies’ 245.
10 Lefebvre, ‘The Everyday and Everydayness’ 11. As Alice Kaplan and Kristin Ross argue (see their ‘Introduction,’ *Yale French Studies* 73 (1987): 1-4), this has important critical implications in so far as it suggests an intellectual approach that attempts to negotiate the ‘subject/object opposition so basic to postwar continental thinking,’ an opposition which corresponds to its ‘two major intellectual movements: phenomenology and structuralism’(3).
public. Much of the new training in everyday existence was produced in relation to the industrial ‘technologies’—cinema, for example—that were emerging at the time and that were based around the institutional production and the participation of ‘the masses.’ Through the imposition of these social technologies, the ‘uniform and repetitive aspects of human lives become more prominent.’

While Lefebvre argued that ‘the everyday’ had its origins in nineteenth-century experience, his speculations on the topic in the 1960s—which would eventually be published in *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (first available in France in 1967)—were increasingly marked by the recognition of a profound change in the everyday environment he was writing within. The rapidity and scale of changes in the everyday was evident for Lefebvre in the fact that the second volume of his planned series, *Critique of the Everyday*, was started but never completed or published, because, according to Lefebvre, ‘the author soon realized that the momentous changes taking place in society... had transformed his “subject” to the point of making it unrecognizable or virtually non-existent.’ For Lefebvre, the 1950s and 60s was a time when the citizenry of France experienced an unprecedented *intensification* of new ‘trainings’ in the habitual practices and dispositions that increasingly organised life at home, work, and in the city.

In *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*, Kristin Ross focuses on that same period during which Lefebvre wrote *Everyday Life in the Modern World*. This period, she argues, constitutes a ‘critical prehistory of postmodernism in France.’ With the decline of its empire, she argues, France ‘turned toward a form of interior colonialism: rational administrative techniques developed in the colonies were brought home and put to use side by side with technological innovations such as advertising in reordering metropolitan, domestic society, the “everyday life” of its citizens.’ It is no surprise, says Ross, that this was also the period when French intellectuals—including Roland Barthes, Henri Lefebvre and the Situationists—elevated the term ‘everyday life’ to the status

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11 Felski 16.
of a theoretical concept given that theoretical concepts ‘find their origins in forms of experience.’

In Lefebvre’s writings, however, his own ‘experience’ appears in retrospect to be conspicuously absent from his actual theorising of the everyday. Instead, Lefebvre’s writing from this period is strongly rooted in a philosophical and high cultural discourse that consistently positions itself as distinctly ‘other’ to the everyday. As Meaghan Morris notes,

> It is not arbitrary or inconsequential that Henri Lefebvre began *Everyday Life in the Modern World* with a few dense pages in praise of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* ... in which, for Lefebvre, Joyce had redeemed the urban and linguistic quotidian that it helped bring into discourse.\(^\text{18}\)

The context of Morris’s argument here is one concerned with what she calls the ‘powerful “modernist” themes regularly assumed by cultural studies, the “excess” of process over structure.’\(^\text{19}\) For Lefebvre, such modernist orientations organised his understanding of the everyday as simultaneously a site ‘of opprobrium . . . and a naming of a place where alternative social forms might be organized.’\(^\text{20}\) Lefebvre, in other words, critically distanced himself from the actual space of the everyday.

In contrast to Lefebvre, one particular group who metaphorically and literally took their critique of the everyday ‘into the streets’ was the Situationist International,\(^\text{21}\) a small political-artistic cell that operated in Paris and elsewhere from 1957 to 1972 and whose actions and publications have subsequently exerted considerable influence in a number of academic fields.\(^\text{22}\) The S.I. were among the

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\(^{16}\) Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies* 5.

\(^{17}\) For a radically different approach from Lefebvre (written in the 1980s towards the end of his life), in which he pursues the links between his own embodied subjectivity and the urban landscape of Paris, see ‘Seen from the Window’ in *Writings on Cities: Henri Lefebvre*, ed. and trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1996). This extract comes from *Éléments de Rythmanalyse* which, as Kofman and Lebas note in their introduction (7), was considered by Lefebvre to be the fourth volume of his *Critique of Everyday Life*.


\(^{19}\) Morris, *Too Soon Too Late* 109.


\(^{21}\) Further references to the Situationist International will be abbreviated to ‘S.I.’

\(^{22}\) The S.I. has enjoyed a resurgence of scholarly interest in recent years. See, in particular, *On the Passage of a Few People Through a Rather Brief Moment in Time: The Situationist International*
first to direct attention to what have retrospectively been identified as some of the most distinctive features of an emergent urban postmodernism, in particular the increasing centrality of spectacle and affect to everyday life. While the practices of the S.I. were historically and geographically localised, they nevertheless set an important precedent for contemporary cultural studies in so far as they actively worked to connect the cultural and urban theory associated with figures like Lefebvre with a consideration of the changing day-to-day practices and experiences of city inhabitants as experienced at the level of the street.

While the S.I.’s genealogical precursors were the avant-garde, particularly the dadaist and surrealist movements, the new degree of routinisation of everyday life being experienced in France following the Second World War marked out a significant distance between them and their predecessors. As S.I. member Ivan Chtcheglov noted in respect of the surrealist’s famous earlier explorations of the Paris streets, ‘we really have to strain to still discover mysteries on the sidewalk billboards.’\(^{23}\) Chtcheglov complained that a ‘mental disease’ of ‘banalization’ had swept the planet: ‘Everyone is hypnotized by production and conveniences—sewage system, elevator, bathroom, washing machine . . . Presented with the alternative of love or a garbage disposal unit, young people of all countries have chosen the garbage disposal unit.’\(^{24}\) Rather than a site of transcendence, everyday life in this formulation was seen as a site of inertia and colonisation by the commodity as spectacle.\(^{25}\) The goal of the S.I. then was to be the catalyst for a re-enchantment of everyday life; that is, they would work to counter the alienation of the everyday by


A number of influential writings that can be considered part of the S.I. *oeuvre*, such as Ivan Chtcheglov’s ‘Formulary for a New Urbanism’ in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981- no copyright), pre-date the official formation of the S.I. Intermediary and pre-S.I. groups such as COBRA, including the painter Asper Jorn and Dutch architect Constant Nieuwenhuys, who came together in the 1950s and had been inspired by Lefebvre’s *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947). Nieuwenhuys designed a utopian city and published the tract ‘For an Architecture of Situation’ in 1953. Their idea, according to Lefebvre, was that linking up parts of the city that had been spatially separated could create ‘new’ situations; that is, transformative environments. See Henri Lefebvre and Kristin Ross, ‘Henri Lefebvre on the Situationist International: Interview Conducted and Translated 1983 by Kristen Ross,’ *October* 79 (1997): 69-.

\(^{23}\) Chtcheglov 1.

\(^{24}\) Chtcheglov 2.

encouraging spontaneity, play, and older modes of non-capitalist popular festivity within the consumer landscape.

Perhaps the most well-known figure associated with the S.I. was Guy Debord, whose ‘Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography’ (originally published in 1955) proposed that the search for a new way of life needed to shift from the domain of philosophy and traditions to that of the actual everyday: ‘We should therefore delineate some provisional terrains of observation, including the observation of certain processes of chance and predictability in the streets.’

Debord’s critique of the street and of the instrumental rationality of urbanism was focussed in particular on the automobile. The Situationist movement’s critical response in the 1950s and 1960s to an urbanism based around what they saw as the key capitalist signifier of privilege, the car, took the form of the walking practice of the dérive, ‘the day- or week-long “drift” through everyday life, a kind of roving research among the margins of dominant culture.’ On these journeys, the S.I. members analysed ‘the factors affecting their mood, behavior, and choice of route as they wandered.’ The random foot journeys of the S.I. members across the city sought to foreground the contrasting affectual qualities or ambiences of different sections of the city.

The S.I. were certainly influential then in directing attention to the ways in which even the most basic and small-scale of everyday practices like walking in the city were affected by what they and Lefebvre famously described as capitalism’s ‘colonisation of everyday life.’ Furthermore, they translated the transcendent theory of scholars of the everyday like Lefebvre into a radical praxis. However, in a number of obvious respects the practices of the S.I. remain radically inadequate as a model for an engagement with contemporary everyday practices in the city. While the S.I. moved theory and philosophy into the street, their figure of the street-

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26 Guy Debord, ‘Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography’ in Situationist Anthology 5. This statement strongly resonates with Maurice Blanchot’s comments on Lefebvre’s privileging of the same realm: ‘The street, he [Lefebvre] notes, has the paradoxical character of having more importance than the places it connects, more living reality than the things it reflects. The street renders public. ‘The street tears from obscurity what is hidden, published what happens elsewhere, in secret; it deforms it, but inserts it in the social text’.’ Maurice Blanchot, ‘Everyday Speech,’ Yale French Studies 73 (1987): 17.

27 See Ross’s Fast Cars, Clean Bodies for a insightful account of the role of the automobile in French culture during this period.

28 Ball 31.

29 Sadler 20.

30 Ross, Fast Cars, Clean Bodies 7.
philosopher/walker was still embedded in a problematic discourse of transcendent
universality. As James Donald notes, the S.I.’s figure of the drifter was rather ‘self-
regarding’ and arrogant, taking a stance that failed to recognise the partiality of their
perspective on the everyday.31

Despite the limitations of both Lefebvre’s and the S.I.’s encounters with the
everyday, any contemporary account of this category must acknowledge the
significant contribution made by them. My analysis of aspects of contemporary
everyday culture is therefore clearly indebted to and informed by their valuable
groundwork. Having sketched out some of the original conditions under which the
everyday was formulated as an area and mode of inquiry, I want to now move on to
discussing how the term might be redeployed in the present. Any use of ‘the
everyday’ as a category in regard to today’s urban landscape will also have to
acknowledge the significant changes that have occurred since the 1950s. Obviously,
the city and the street as they existed for Lefebvre and the S.I. offered rather
different experiences to those found in the contemporary moment. In her article,
‘An Ontology of Everyday Distraction: The Freeway, the Mall, and Television,’32
Margaret Morse, however, complicates the idea of a radical break between the
contemporary everyday and previous forms. Morse perceptively maps out the
historical shift in forms of the everyday in terms of a dynamic of continuity. For
Morse, typical contemporary realms of her everyday experience—such as the
freeway, television and the shopping mall—‘are part of a socio-historical nexus of
institutions which grew together into their present-day structure and national scope
after World War II.’33 Echoing Lefebvre’s comment that the everyday is not so
much a system in itself, but a ‘set of functions which connect and join together
systems that might appear to be distinct,’34 Morse postulates that the relation
between these pervasive contemporary institutions is an interdependent and
mutually reinforcing one that allows for ‘the exchange of values between different
ontological levels and otherwise incommensurable facets of life, for example,
between two and three dimensions, between language, images, and the built
environment, and between the economic, societal, and symbolic realms of our

32 Margaret Morse, ‘An Ontology of Everyday Distraction: The Freeway, the Mall, and Television,’
Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism, ed. Patricia Mellencamp (Indiana: Indiana UP,
1990) 193-221. A more recent chapter-version of this essay can also be found in Morse’s
Thus the freeway, according to Morse, is an analog of the mall and of television; that is, while these cultural forms may not look alike they do ‘observe similar principles of construction and operation.’

As Morse further argues in her analysis, earlier cultural forms and practices clearly inform the postmodern everyday landscape in which we witness ‘the reconstruction of an idealized version of the older forms of transport, social and media communication within the very enclosures from which they are [now] excluded.’ For example, the carefree strolling enjoyed in the public space of the nineteenth-century arcade is rearticulated in the privatised realm of the contemporary mall. Thus rather than breaking with previous practices, contemporary institutions of ‘[t]ransportation, broadcasting, and retailing displaced the earlier sociocultural forms of modernity such as the railroad, the movies, and the shop windows along a brightly lit boulevard.’ Morse’s characterisation of these more recent everyday cultural forms as ‘displacing’ rather than replacing older ones is crucial to her argument that older forms of communication and transport continue to have currency in contemporary cultural interactions. For example, Morse discusses the way in which television programs link unrelated discursive segments together (constituting a passage) by having the host walk as they introduce the next section. In this example, then, we see that an older embodied practice (walking) can enter into a system of exchange with what initially appears to be an unrelated cultural institution (television) which operates in the realm of the virtual.

One of the most important consequences of this close relationship between contemporary technologies of representation and older, idealised forms of embodied communication and transport (such as walking) is, argues Morse, the production of a ‘partially derealised’ contemporary everyday environment. Such an environment engenders encounters with otherness at the level of both face-to-face contact and through technologically mediated representations. Or, as Morse puts it,

The late twentieth century has witnessed the growing dominance of a differently constituted kind of space, a nonspace of both experience and

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representation, an *elsewhere* which inhabits the everyday. Nonspace is not mysterious or strange to us, but rather the very haunt for creatures of habit... This ground is without a locus, a partially derealized realm from which a new quotidian fiction emanates.\(^{40}\)

While there are certain continuities between the everyday of the past and that of the present what *does* distinguish the contemporary everyday from what has gone before is the increasing *virtuality* of experience. Thus an important aspect of ‘the everyday’ at the end of the twentieth century is its articulation of the here and now of the body with a ‘non-space’ or an ‘elsewhere’ of technological representation. In order to describe this increasingly prominent conjunction, its implications and effects, I shift the traditional trajectory of inquiries into the everyday toward what I term the *extraordinary everyday*. The apparent paradox encapsulated within this term assists our understanding of the intersections between immediate bodily experiences of place and the simultaneous sense of displacement engendered by many contemporary urban environments. This term thus allows me to explore some of the contours and cultural implications of the quality of virtuality that Morse identifies as intrinsic to the contemporary everyday.

* * *

This thesis, then, is an exploration of the simultaneously embodied and virtualised ‘nonspace’ of the everyday identified by Morse. It extends her insightful analysis by looking more closely at some *actual practices* that operate within the contemporary everyday realm and how such practices suggest a new way of thinking about the everyday. The central trope I use to explore these new experiences of everydayness is that of the extraordinary everyday. Acknowledging cultural studies’ interest in the everyday as a site of both transformation and repetition, revolution and banality, the ‘extraordinary everyday’ captures the complexity and contradictoriness of contemporary urban life. Drawing from the lessons of postmodern theorists I have coined this term to identify and describe an increasingly commonplace articulation of—or ‘interface’ between—the *extraordinary* (that is, the production and experience of spectacle and/or intense affective states within technologically mediated, urban space), and the *everyday* (the habitual routines and

practices that directly organise our lived day-to-day existence in a consumer society). My use of the *extraordinary everyday*—that is, my self-conscious attempt to register the interfaces between the spectacular and the banal—works deliberately to put into question some of the oppositional modes of thinking that have organised accounts of the everyday. By examining sites and practices of the extraordinary everyday I hope to demonstrate the complexity of the relations between official and popular culture, academic and vernacular discourses, and modern and postmodern cultural practices.

In order to provide an anchor for my discussion of extraordinary everyday culture, I focus on the cultural practices of ‘walking in the street.’ These practices have an important and ongoing place in the history of discourses on the everyday. ‘Walking’, I argue, acts as an important connector between the quotidian (e.g., strolling on the sidewalk, walking to work, window shopping) and the extraordinary (e.g., televised mass street parades or semi-organised itineraries through sites of urban spectacle and wonder). It is also a useful cultural practice to discuss because despite the changing urban environments in which it takes place it remains a central mode of mobility in the contemporary city. Like Morse, then, part of my project here is to examine what happens when an older cultural practice such as walking becomes imbricated in various systems of cultural and symbolic exchange organised around postmodern technologies of representation. Overall, I argue, walking practices still have much to tell us about the modes of perception, mobility and experience that function to structure contemporary urban life. Furthermore, the multiple walking practices I examine offer a useful point at which to productively analyse the feedback loop between the body-subject and the city; the temporal and spatial structuring of everyday life; the production of a sense of place and identity in an era of globalisation; and, lastly, the complex relations between ‘everyday’ cultural experience and the wider social, political, economic, and governmental processes that structure city space.

My thesis is structured as follows. Part One maps out the specific interfaces between urban and cultural concerns out of which my focus on the extraordinary everyday emerges. In particular, I situate my argument at the intersections of three critical trajectories within the urban/cultural studies field. These trajectories, organised around chapters on the writings of three theorists, provide an exploration
of the extraordinary everyday through the lens of a series of interrelated organising concepts. The first trajectory emerges out of the meditations of Walter Benjamin; his writings provide a useful source from which to extract a ‘prehistory’ of the everyday. In particular, the peripatetic wanderings of the *flâneur/flâneuse* in the nineteenth-century modern city produces a number of categories (including mobility, subjectivity, technology and experience) around which the everyday might be understood. In the following chapter I discuss the social dimension of everyday practices and consider what it means to talk about ‘walking in the city.’ This second trajectory takes as its focus Michel de Certeau’s detailed analysis of walking practices in *The Practice of Everyday Life* and his evasion/resistance model—a model which has come to occupy an influential place in the favoured methodologies of cultural studies practitioners. While finding many of Certeau’s theories useful, I argue for their supplementation through an engagement with other ‘theorists’ of walking. In the third and final chapter in this section, I turn to the writings of Meaghan Morris. This third trajectory allows me to ‘update’ Certeau and link his concerns to those of Benjamin. It also enables me to foreground important questions of intellectual and historical-geographical location and identity, and the role of difference in constructing the extraordinary everyday.

Part Two of my thesis moves on to discuss a series of extraordinary everyday sites or ‘interfaces’ that are marked by contemporary walking practices. These include a televised city parade (the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras); a heritage trail in the Australian city of Melbourne; and, finally, a new casino entertainment complex also located in Melbourne. My analyses demonstrate how each of these specific/local interfaces works to produce an instance of extraordinary everyday culture by marking specific moments when walking practices become the hinge between events and/or sites of spectacle and the everyday. These contexts are not presented as exhaustive or emblematic instances of extraordinary everyday culture; instead, they are, to borrow from Susan Stewart, more a ‘collection’ than a ‘chronicle’, and are thus concerned more with a ‘display of heterogeneity than with accounting for a model of causality.’

Accordingly, they suggest particular and partial ways of thinking about the practices, effects and experiences associated with the contemporary everyday.

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Meaghan Morris has made the following comments on how she brings together often disparate texts in order to organise a critical project and her observations serve as a useful summing up of the overriding organisation and direction of my thesis:

I use these texts here to create what Deleuze and Guattari call a home. In their sense of the term, “home does not pre-exist”; it is the product of an effort “to organize a limited space”, and the limit involved is not a figure of containment but of provisional (or “working”) definition. This kind of home is always made of mixed components, and the interior space it creates is a filter or a sieve rather than a sealed-in consistency; it is not a place of origin, but an “aspect” of a process which it enables (“as though the circle tended on its own to open onto a future, as a function of the working force it shelters”) but does not precede—and so it is not an enclosure, but a way of going outside.42

Thus the quite diverse ‘texts’ that I have chosen to discuss are not intended so much to ‘limit’ or contain the extraordinary everyday. Instead, my aim is to provide a critical home from which to start exploring this significant element of contemporary urban culture. Like walking itself, as my conclusion suggests, the extraordinary everyday begins with the ‘sieve’ that is the body in the street—a body that then moves ‘outside’ of itself along a diverse array of vectoral trajectories.

PART ONE

ORIENTATIONS
1. WALTER BENJAMIN
On the Ruins of the Flâneur

Criticism is not the attempt to restore some original or primary meaning, but rather consists in a discontinuous series of interventions in the afterlife of the object in which meaning is radically contested and refigured. For Benjamin, this occurs not through reflection but in ruination.
— Graeme Gilloch

Introduction: an afterimage of the flâneur

In early 1999 an article entitled ‘Desperately Seeking Seinfeld’ appeared in a local Melbourne newspaper. The article reported on the life of the American-Jewish, stand-up comedian and television star Jerry Seinfeld following the end of the immensely popular long-running sit-com, Seinfeld. More than any other recent sitcom, Seinfeld obsessively aestheticised ‘the everyday.’ Episodes frequently revolved around the main characters’ obsessions with the banalities of daily life, obsessions which often propelled them into the realm of the absurd or extraordinary. In one of those moments of ‘life imitating television’ the newspaper article noted that, after making around $AUD 465 million ($US 300 million) from his show, Seinfeld is ‘doing exactly what he celebrated in his show: absolutely nothing.’ In particular, the article detailed the way in which Seinfeld is an everyday celebrity in the ordinary public spaces of New York: ‘If he isn’t standing in line at his local supermarket, he is out strolling in the park. The bus tours that already take in sites featured in Seinfeld might reasonably cruise around town looking for the man himself.’ Most importantly for me, the author of the article goes on to describe Seinfeld as ‘a dilettante and a rover, a flaneur of the first order.’

44 Philip Delves Broughton, ‘Desperately Seeking Seinfeld,’ The Age [Melbourne] 29 Apr. 1999: A15. This article was reprinted from The Telegraph.
45 Broughton A15. One of the most widely-remembered episodes and catch-phrases from the program was about its status as ‘a show about nothing.’
46 Broughton A15. According to Broughton, The New York Post chose to entitle a piece detailing sightings of Seinfeld around the city, “Jerry, Are You Stalking Me?”.
47 [My emphasis]. Broughton A15.
This reference to Seinfeld as a reincarnation of the *flâneur*—the simultaneously celebrated and scorned Parisian streetwalker of the nineteenth century—is an unusual one. It is unusual because, while the *flâneur* is sometimes invoked in contemporary popular culture, this figure is rarely identified or named as such. However, while ‘afterimages’ of the *flâneur* may appear only infrequently in contemporary popular media, in the field of cultural theory and theories of modernity this figure has been the subject of an astonishing resurgence of interest. This interest, particularly in Anglophone communities, has been stimulated by the translation into English (since the 1970s) of the work of Walter Benjamin who deployed the *flâneur* as a central figure in his famous studies of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century European urban modernity. Over the past three decades Benjamin’s writings have been deployed in a wide range of disciplines. While there are a number of complex reasons for the contemporary interest in his writings, the main factors have been the compatibility of much of Benjamin’s methodology with ‘postmodern’ approaches to the study of contemporary urban culture and its forms as well as the transdisciplinary nature of his work which at different times presented itself through the frameworks of history, literary criticism, psychology, sociology, theology, philosophy and personal memoir.

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48 For example, in *Falling Down* (dir. Joel Schumacher, 1992) the main character, D-FENS (Michael Douglas) is something of a contemporary version of the *flâneur* who takes a walk through central Los Angeles. See my ‘Warzones of the Street,’ *Gritty Cities: Images of the Urban*, ed. Lynette Finch and Chris McConville (Annadale, NSW: Pluto Press, 1999) 147-161.

While Benjamin’s approach is hard to locate in terms of the traditional
categories of German social and philosophical thought, certain faultlines or—to use
one of Benjamin’s favourite tropes—‘ruins’ can be traced in his work and the
*flâneur* and his various city haunts constitute one set of these. One key strategy of
Benjamin’s writing—exemplified, in particular, in his famously ‘incomplete’
Arcades Project—was to trace the fortunes of particular practices and social types,
like the *flâneur*, and present such objects as ‘dialectical images’ that simultaneously
exemplify and historicise changes in modern life. Thus, for Benjamin, the conditions
of the *flâneur*’s emergence and extinction offered insight into the nature of that
particular moment of historical change, as well as the present. Or, as he wrote
elsewhere: ‘The term “origin” does not mean the process by which the existent came
into being, but rather what emerges from the process of becoming and disappearing.
Origin is an eddy in the stream of becoming.’

Frequently, however, Benjamin’s use of the trope of the *flâneur* seems on the
surface to be inconsistent because of the number of distinct ‘versions’ of the *flâneur*
that appear across his writings. This lack of consistency is not just the result of the
critic developing this trope over time but, rather, these varying manifestations of the
*flâneur* are partly a function of another of Benjamin’s favoured critical modes, that
of allegory. As Gilloch comments, for Benjamin, ‘In allegory, the meaning of the
object is endlessly transposed, extended, elaborated, ruined and redeemed.’ In
Benjamin’s historical schema there can be no return to a referent or originary
meaning, only momentary ‘interventions’ in the afterlife of an object or mode of
being—an approach captured by the notion of criticism as ruination. This perhaps
indicates why a critic writing in the 1920s and 1930s was so interested in a very
nineteenth-century figure and his practices. It also raises the question of just how
Benjamin aligned his own critical practice with that of the *flâneur*. According to
Anne Friedberg, Benjamin as a *flâneur* was a product of past and present, ‘a
palimpsestic construct: a textual flâneur taken from the Baudelairean city of the
middle nineteenth century as well as an actual flâneur—Benjamin himself, roaming
the ‘ruined’ nineteenth-century arcades of Paris in the 1920s and 1930s.’ Yet as I
have noted, Benjamin was strongly aware of the fleeting historical appearance of the

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51 Gilloch, ‘“The Return of the *Flâneur*”’ 104.
‘original’ flâneur in the early nineteenth century. In other words, he was aware that in the very different industrialised world of the 1930s, he—following in the footsteps of Charles Baudelaire—could only simulate a simulation of the practice of flânerie; put another way, Benjamin himself was a doubly ‘ruined’ flâneur.

In the same spirit, then—and without wanting to adopt the critical persona of the flâneur myself—in this chapter I revisit the ruins of Benjamin (and others’) writings on the flâneur. My aim, however, is not to offer some definitive reading of what the flâneur ‘was,’ nor to present some ‘undiscovered’ Benjamin, but, instead, to provide directions as to what this figure might offer us in terms of conceptual tools for studying ‘the everyday’ in contemporary times. I argue that Benjamin’s writings, especially those concerning the flâneur, provide us with a way of thinking about the historical formation of everyday culture and how it might be usefully discussed through categories such as mobility, dwelling, perception and experience. However, Benjamin’s ‘objects’ of inquiry, like his intellectual approach, were often idiosyncratic and erratic. As the urban sociologist Mike Savage has recently commented, in Benjamin’s writings ‘the urban as “object” shifted incessantly—from being the general properties of the built environment, to specific buildings, the nature of urban experience, accounts of particular cities and their histories, and the ability of certain forms of representation (such as photography) to “picture” cities.’

Thus rather than trying to provide a comprehensive overview of Benjamin’s work, I propose in this chapter to focus on one thread of Benjamin’s writing—a thread which for the most part has hitherto only received tangential attention from critics—namely, his charting of the realm of the everyday. Specifically, this chapter discusses four different trajectories within Benjamin’s writings on the everyday. Firstly, it examines Benjamin’s account of the emergence of a modern everyday in the nineteenth-century city. Secondly, it discusses the different kinds of subjectivities produced through shifting constructions of the everyday in the evolving modern city. Thirdly, it looks at the social impact of modern technologies such as cinema on the behaviour of modern subjects. And finally, I critically

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54 Two notable exceptions to this trend, both of which have proved invaluable as inspiration for the specific approach I have taken here, include Mike Featherstone’s chapter on ‘Postmodernism and the Aestheticization of Everyday Life’ in Modernity and Identity, ed. Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 265-290, and Alan Latham, ‘The Power of Distraction: Distraction, Tactility, and Habit in the Work of Walter Benjamin,’ Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 17 (1999): 451-473.
examine how the radical nature of Benjamin’s understanding of experience foreshadowed postmodern understandings of the sociohistorical construction of subjectivity.

I. The flâneur and the ‘discovery’ of the everyday

Much of Benjamin’s interest in the figure of the flâneur can be attributed to the work of Charles Baudelaire, the nineteenth-century French poet. Baudelaire’s depiction of the flâneur not just as a social type but as the exemplar of modern selfhood exerted a particularly strong influence on Benjamin. In this section I discuss Baudelaire’s account of the flâneur and consider how Benjamin made use of it in order to theorise some of the important currents of transition that characterised nineteenth-century modernity.

The flâneur, as Janet Wolff notes, is ‘the modern hero; his experience . . . is that of a freedom to move about in the city, observing and being observed, but never interacting with others.’ In order to decipher the extraordinary experience of modernity, embedded and hidden within the complicated maze of the urban environment, the nineteenth-century, Baudelairean flâneur abandoned himself to the ‘intoxication’ or ‘drunkenness’ that the spectacle of the nineteenth-century metropolis offered. As James Donald comments, ‘Both Baudelaire and Benjamin watched and interpreted the city: crowds moving through space, architectural and human configurations, signs and images, the sounds and tempi of everyday life.’

That new spectacle of ‘everyday life’ became particularly visible to Baudelaire’s flâneur in the wake of the urban reforms of the prefect of Paris, Baron Haussman, whose influential urban planning decisions began in the late 1850s and impacted on the city throughout the next decade. A pivotal element of that process of modernisation was the introduction of a circulatory system of new roads that allowed the more efficient circulation of individuals, goods and troops. With the

57 Donald 45.
construction of these thoroughfares a new kind of street culture grew up around the 
shops and cafes that appeared on the sides of the boulevards. In this opening up of 
urban space, and the rich diversity and spectrum of social activity encountered in the 
city street, Baudelaire’s flâneur made a series of discoveries:

He marvels at the eternal beauty and the amazing harmony of life in the 
capital cities, a harmony so providentially maintained amid the turmoil of 
human freedom. He gazes upon the landscape of the great city ... He delights 
in fine carriages and proud horses, the dazzling smartness of the grooms ... 
the sinuous gait of women, the beauty of the children, happy to be alive and 
nicely dressed — in a word, he delights in universal life.58

The historical force driving this production of ‘universal life’ is that of industrial 
capitalism. While the flâneur may distinguish himself as the first to recognise the 
pleasures of everyday life, his practice is one waiting to be adopted by others and 
thus the tone of this celebration of the newly discovered spectacle in the city streets 
clearly contains a pedagogical inflection. At the same time this passage also 
provides obvious evidence of the gendered construction of the flâneur whose 
masculine gaze consumes women and landscape in essentially the same manner. 
Women who idle in the streets, in this formulation, can not themselves be flâneurs 
for they are instead ‘essential components of the urban drama that the flâneur 
observes.’59

Leaving aside for the moment this discussion of gender and the flâneur to 
which I will return, it is apparent that the flâneur’s joy in discovering the magical 
spectacle of the everyday alternates with disquiet, for some of the scenes witnessed 
and imagined by Baudelaire’s flâneur simultaneously shatter the illusion of its 
‘universal’ nature along class lines. As Marshall Berman notes in his now classic 
close reading of Baudelaire—and, in particular, the ‘primal scene’ detailed in 
Baudelaire’s prose-poem ‘The Eyes of the Poor’— Haussmann’s destruction of the 
old medieval slums ‘inadvertently broke down the self-enclosed and hermetically 
sealed world of traditional urban poverty.’60 The flipside of this exciting new

60 Marshall Berman, All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity (London: Verso, 
1983) 153. Also see Donald 46-47.
everyday landscape, then, is an experience of direct encounters between social
groups previously shielded from each others’ daily lives. In ‘The Eyes of the Poor,’
for example, two lovers, who are happily gazing into each others’ eyes inside a cafe
on one of the new boulevards, are suddenly confronted by the presence of a destitute
family in rags gazing enviously through the glass at the bright world inside. While
one of the lovers is ‘touched by this family of eyes,’ the other finds their gaze
unbearable and wants the cafe manager to send them away. ‘The Eyes of the Poor’
thereby registers a growing sense of mutual alienation in the modernising city that is
constituted through the everyday ‘spectacle’ of people on the street.

*_Flânerie,* in a sense, was an attempt to partially redeem that disturbing sense
of alienation. It was, above all, about being in a distracted state and being able to let
go of one’s subjective position in order to directly engage with the flow of modern
experience: ‘The poet enjoys the incomparable experience of being able to be
himself or someone else, as he chooses. Like those wandering souls who go looking
for a body, he enters as he likes into each man’s personality.’ Initially, for
Baudelaire, that intoxicating experience was most readily found in the giddy flow of
the city crowd within which the _flâneur’s* epiphany or revelation could be enabled
through a complete submersion and loss of self. For Baudelaire, says Benjamin, the
masses were the ‘agitated veil’ through which the writer-observer saw Paris. Like
many other nineteenth-century writers, for Baudelaire the crowd was a source of
great fascination. Yet while the _flâneur* was aloof by nature, Baudelaire wanted that
‘solitude . . . in a crowd.’ Thus the Baudelairean _flâneur* expresses an ambivalent
attitude toward modernity itself. On the one hand he recognises himself as part of
the crowd, as a product of modernity; on the other, he saw himself as the
transcendent artist who recorded the ‘truth’ of modern life from a critical distance.
That is, the _flâneur* believed that he had access to a unique perspective that lay
beyond the constraints of his own subjectivity and identity. He is thus motivated by

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61 Berman 149.
63 Walter Benjamin, _Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism_, trans. Harry
64 Benjamin, _Charles Baudelaire_ 50.
65 According to Benjamin’s somewhat melancholic conclusion to his essay ‘On Some Motifs in
   Baudelaire,’ _Illuminations: Essays and Reflections_, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New
   York: Schocken, 1968) 154, the poet fought something of a losing battle with the nineteenth-century
city crowd: ‘Then man who wrote these pieces was no _flâneur* . . . The lustre of a crowd with a
motion and a soul of its own, the glitter that had bedazzled the _flâneur*, had dimmed for him
[Baudelaire].’
what Michel de Certeau describes, in his writings on walking in the city, as a ‘fiction of knowledge’ that is underpinned by the ‘lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more.’

Baudelaire successfully translated the ‘fiction of knowledge’ and ‘mobile gaze’ embodied in the flâneur into an aesthetic strategy through the genre of ‘panorama literature.’ In this literary form the city became a ‘total, distant scene,’ and readers were able to enjoy the city as a unified landscape through a ‘panoramic’ narrative strategy. At the same time, this narrative strategy also gave Baudelaire the ideal means to introduce his readers to the idea of modernity embodied within the form of the city. For Baudelaire, the urban environment was the primary site and scene of investigation for the artist, and he dismissed his romantic contemporaries who still focused their art on nature and the classical and mythical past. In the modern city, observed Baudelaire, ‘The marvellous envelops and saturates us like the atmosphere.’ For Baudelaire, to understand this extraordinary new environment required a new kind of heroic subject, the flâneur, who could read, inhabit, and master, its spaces. The visual paradigm of flânerie held the key, it seemed, to unmasking the secrets and essences of modern life, and those essences could be glimpsed, as Janet Wolff notes, ‘in the transient and “fugitive” nature of encounters and impressions made’ in the public spaces of the city.

However, while Benjamin drew extensively on Baudelaire’s nineteenth-century flâneur as outlined above, the use of the flâneur as a literary trope in the nineteenth century was by no means exclusive to Baudelaire. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, who has provided perhaps the most comprehensive genealogy of the literary origins of the flâneur, charts his multiple appearances as a character in a range of nineteenth-century French literature. As she notes, the flâneur is ‘indelibly Parisian’ and is featured in the work of Paris-based writers of the day such as Flaubert and Balzac. According to Ferguson, however, the earliest textual

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67 Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire* 35.
68 Mazlish 47.
69 See Mazlish ‘The Flâneur,’ and Ferguson’s ‘The Flâneur On and Off the Streets of Paris,’ for useful accounts of the textualisation of the flâneur and his relation to modernity.
70 Baudelaire cited in Latham 455.
71 Wolff 36.
manifestation of the *flâneur* was in a thirty-two page pamphlet published in 1806 and entitled *Le Flâneur au Salon ou Mr Bonhomme*. Indeed, the *flâneur* rose to prominence not so much in the writing of the leading authors of the day but in the popular genre of ‘physiologies’ that flourished during the July Monarchy. The popularity of the physiology genre reflected the desire of the inhabitants of a rapidly modernising city to understand not only the emergent urbanscape but also to map and categorise those social types who inhabited it. Thus it was in 1841 that the *flâneur* became a widely recognised figure on the Parisian streetscape through the publication in that year of M. Louis Huart’s *Physiologie du Flâneur*.

For Benjamin, however, the protean manifestation of the *flâneur* was the early nineteenth-century, aristocratic ‘man of leisure’ who spent his time idly strolling the city streets of Paris observing the hustle and bustle of modern life and consuming its newly available, spectacular urban pleasures. At this time European cities were experiencing a series of unprecedented changes that mark the period as unique; as Wolff notes, ‘it is useful to take this period of accelerated urbanization, coupled with the transformations in work, housing, and social relations brought about by the rise of industrial capitalism, as the crucial years of the birth of modernity.’ For the *flâneur*, this environment was both a source of fascination and apprehension as the multiple territories and spaces of the emerging industrial city became subject to his voracious gaze. The *flâneur* was also among the first to discover the pleasures available in loitering and haphazardly discovering something of the essence of life in the exciting new public spaces of the modern city. Thus while the *flâneur* is at once emblematic of modernity and new kind of urban subjectivity, at the same time his leisurely pedestrianism suggested a residual mode of experience and a stance of ‘resistance’ in a society increasingly configured by the demands of rapid industrialisation and production. Accordingly, for Benjamin the *flâneur* stood as a transitional figure between pre-industrial and industrial society—a figure who is therefore useful as a marker of urban and social change.

In Benjamin’s account, however, the original aristocratic *flâneur*, with his unique perspective on modern life, quickly became something of an endangered

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73 Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution* 83.
74 Benjamin notes in *Charles Baudelaire* 35-36, that the physiology genre peaked in 1841 when seventy-six of these works were published in the same year.
75 Wolff 36.
species due to a combination of the demands of capitalism and changes in city form. The material conditions that had enabled the flâneur’s emergence, that is, mass industrialism and the birth of the modern city, had also somewhat paradoxically heralded his extinction. The utopian and carefree moment of the flâneur proved to be a fleeting one and the very processes of modernisation that had produced this figure quickly left him in its wake. The speed of urban life rapidly intensified through the introduction of techniques of mass production into multiple spheres of life, and resulted in what Benjamin described as a ‘war on flânerie.’ Even the aristocratic flâneur was pressed into the services of a society organised by capital and he seems to have become lost or subsumed within a more bourgeois mode of existence. Benjamin connects the ‘demise’ of the flâneur with the embourgeoisement of this figure in a quote from Rattier’s utopian fiction, Paris n'existe Plus (1857):

The flâneur whom we used to encounter on the sidewalks and in front of the shop-windows, this non-entity, this constant rubberneck, this inconsequential type who was always in search of cheap emotions and knew about nothing but cobblestones, fiacres, and gas lanterns ... has now become a farmer, a vintner, a linen manufacturer, a sugar refiner, and a steel magnate.

The various occupations named by Rattier indicate that the practice of flânerie did not simply disappear overnight due to the pressures of capitalism but, rather, it became fragmented and was appropriated by the ascendant bourgeoisie. Subsequently, the flâneur is frequently cast as downwardly mobile figure, moving between the transcendent stance of the aristocratic wanderer and that of the modern bourgeoisie.

It was Baudelaire who both textualised and lived the existence of the new bourgeois flâneur. Thus while the nineteenth-century poet may have provided the definitive version of the flâneur as narrative surrogate, he was already in a sense a ‘ruined’ flâneur and unable to directly experience the utopian lifestyle of the earlier, aristocratic figure. Benjamin indirectly makes this point when he notes the ways

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76 Benjamin cited in Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing 344.
77 Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire 54.
79 Cf. Donald: ‘It was almost because he knew that the flâneur was already an anachronism, because the figure was slightly out of synch with the new city, that it enabled Baudelaire to make sense of the
in which Baudelaire’s writing was driven by market forces: “Baudelaire knew what the true situation of the man of letters was: he goes to the marketplace as a flâneur, supposedly to take a look at it, but in reality to find a buyer.”

Practices of ‘work’ as much as those of ‘leisure’ were thereby incorporated within the mechanisms of emergent industrial capitalism. At the same time, the increasing regulation of city life extended its reach and encroached on Baudelaire’s everyday existence, which consisted of frequent changes of residence in order to escape creditors. As Benjamin notes, Napoleon’s administration had at the beginning of the nineteenth century made the numbering of houses compulsory in Paris thus making it increasingly difficult to make oneself ‘invisible’ in the city. Despite local resistance to using official numbers the system had taken root by the mid-nineteenth century and impinged significantly on Baudelaire’s bohemian lifestyle — or, as Benjamin puts it, ‘So he roved about the city which had long ceased to be home for the flâneur.’

The changing nature of flânerie was further linked to shifts in the everyday physical environment of the city as it was modernised. For example, the mobility of the nineteenth-century aristocratic flâneur had initially been subject to a number of annoying physical constraints such as the poor quality of the rather narrow pavements of the Paris streets of that time, and the consequent need to be wary of vehicles. This impediment was remedied to some extent by the construction of the Parisian arcades (most of which were built in the 1820s and 1830s) which subsequently became a favoured haunt of the bourgeois flâneur. From the late 1850s onwards, however, Baron Haussman initiated his radical redevelopment of Paris through the construction of massive boulevards, and a wealth of new pedestrian spaces and territories were opened up outside of the by now claustrophobic arcades. These new urban spaces, in combination with the development of ‘wide sidewalks, electric lighting and the culture of free air,’

traumatic moment of modernisation he was living through(45-6).’

80 Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire 34.
81 Benjamin comments: ‘Sometimes he had two domiciles at the same time - but on days when the rent was due, he often spent the night at a third place with friends . . . Crépet has counted fourteen Paris addresses for Baudelaire between 1842 and 1858.’ See Charles Baudelaire 47-48.
82 Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire 47.
83 Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire 47.
84 Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire 36.
85 See Johann Friedrich Geist, Arcades: The History of a Building Type (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983).
rapidly transformed the pedestrian landscape. According to Ferguson, *flânerie* underwent a certain ‘banalization’ becoming ‘an urban practice no longer confined to an elite (much less to artists) but open to anyone in the city with a minute or two to spare.’

Thus as the second half of the nineteenth century progressed, the qualities that set the aristocratic and bourgeois *flâneur* apart—that is, a privileged ability to see, experience, and convey the diversity of modern city life—became available to the crowd; or, put another way, everyone in the city became a *flâneur*. However, perhaps more so than the physical reorganisation of the city streets, it proved to be the increasing *everyday organisation of leisure* that fundamentally enabled the further dispersal of the *flâneur*’s mode of being in the world from the bourgeoisie to the urban masses. That is, in conjunction with the formation of new practices of leisure, the kind of mobility and pleasures enjoyed by the *flâneur* became redundant precisely because of their democratisation and everyday availability. The new forms of entertainment included department stores and, later, cinema—both of which were housed in the new ‘transitorial architectures’ prefigured by the arcade. As Gilloch incisively notes, ‘Seduced by spectacle, simulation and staged artifice, the *flâneur* is not the bitter critic, the last intellectual, but rather the prototypical audience, the first consumer.’

II. New subjectivities and the spaces of the everyday

The *flâneur* is thus reborn with the advent of the modern everyday: the incorporation of his particular mode of being within the new spaces of commercial leisure precipitates a transition in identity. That transition is not without its consequences, however, for the *flâneur* also stands in as a metaphor for the more general sense of alienation that individuals experienced as a consequence of different kinds of mobility in the emergent modern city. One important mechanism

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87 Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution* 81
88 Bruno, in *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, argues that: ‘The arcade signalled nineteenth-century architecture’s interest in urban itineraries. A structure built of iron and glass, it opened up the urban space and exploded the division between interior and exterior in favor of a fluid light space. The arcade was not an isolated phenomenon. Iron provided the “structural” framework for railroad stations, bridges, and exhibition halls. All were sites of transit, signifiers of a new notion of space and mobility, signs of an industrial era that generated the motion picture(45).’
89 Gilloch, ‘“The Return of the Flâneur”’ 108.
of capital that worked at an affective level to counter that experience of alienation was, according to Benjamin, that of the ‘phantasmagoria.’ In turn, as I argue in this section, phantasmagoric everyday space helped to reconstruct subjects and their experience of the city. The notion of the ‘phantasmagoria’ was a central theme in Benjamin’s writings and enjoyed wide ranging applications. The term originated in England in 1802 in relation to the optical illusions produced by magic lanterns and ‘describes an appearance of reality that tricks the senses through technical manipulation.’

As James Donald notes, Benjamin’s ‘Arcades Project’ attempted to show ‘that the transformation of the city into spectacle and phantasmagoria was as closely linked to the logic of capitalism as either the concept city of urban reformers or planners like Haussman, or the hidden misery and squalor uncovered by Engels in industrial Manchester.’

Benjamin’s ‘exposé,’ ‘Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century’ (1939), offers a useful point of entry into his thoughts on the relations between interior space and the phantasmagoria in the modern city. In a section of the exposé entitled ‘Louis Philippe, or the Interior,’ Benjamin notes that under the reign of this monarch, private places of dwelling were, for the first time, opposed to the world of work. Or, as Anthony Vidler comments, ‘[b]etween 1830 and 1848, in the Paris of Louis Philippe, the bourgeois monarch, the interior developed its characteristic role in consumer society as the realm of private fantasy, private wish fulfilment, and private display of private taste.’ In particular, as Ackbar Abbas observes, the interior of the bourgeois home was the realm of a phantasmagoria that suppressed ‘social and business preoccupations.’ How was this interior phantasmagoria produced? According to Benjamin the commodity form worked to structure the interior space of the subject and the home. As he puts it, inhabitants took on a private and individual identity which was produced through accumulated

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91 Donald 43-44.
93 Vidler cited in Friedberg 64.
possessions or ‘objects of everyday use’ which bore the traces ‘imprinted’ by their owners.\textsuperscript{95}

In what sense were these interiors phantasmagoric and how did they work to trick the senses through manipulation? For Benjamin, bourgeois interiors of that time were distinguished by an excess and ‘abundance of covers and protectors, liners and cases.’\textsuperscript{96} These everyday items were indicative of a desire on the part of the new bourgeois individual to protect themselves against the experience of ‘shock’ that characterised life on the city streets outside of the home. Writers such as Wolfgang Schivelbusch and Susan Buck-Morss, for instance, have drawn attention to the elaborate, sealed and stuffy interiors of nineteenth-century, bourgeois rooms and train compartments.\textsuperscript{97} The purpose of these interiors, they argue, was to cushion their inhabitants from the ‘shock’ experience of modernity as experienced in the rush of everyday street traffic and to anaesthetise them against its assaults on the human sensorium—paradoxically, through a veritable flooding of the senses. As noted before, an important part of that shock experience—the potential loss of a coherent sense of individual subjectivity—was highlighted in the \textit{flâneur}’s accounts of being swept up in the city crowd. Hence the phantasmagoria of the interior, enabled through commodity consumption, represents a compensatory gesture; an attempt at shoring up an everyday self.

Benjamin observed an important change in the production of everyday subjectivity during the last years of the nineteenth century: ‘as Fourier had foreseen, the true framework for the life of the private citizen must be sought increasingly in offices and commercial centres.’\textsuperscript{98} Here Benjamin signalled the emergence of phantasmagoric, exterior ‘public’ environments that replicated the bourgeois interior and blurred the previously established boundary between the two. For example, with the introduction of outdoor gas lighting, the street was transformed into a kind of interior space. As Benjamin notes, the ‘street becomes the dwelling for the \textit{flâneur}; he is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen is in his four

\textsuperscript{95} Benjamin, ‘Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century’ 155.
\textsuperscript{96} Benjamin, ‘Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century’ 155.
walls.

Phantasmagoric urban spaces such as arcades, railroad stations, winter gardens, exhibitions and casinos, and, eventually, technologies such as cinema similarly ensured that, as Buck-Morss puts it, ‘a narcotic was made out of reality itself.’ Despite their relatively rapid degeneration into ‘ruins,’ the arcades were an earlier forerunner (part of the pre-history of modernity) of these new types of urban space. As Marc Augé has observed, for Benjamin, the ‘glass and iron’ forms of the nineteenth century embodied ‘a wish to prefigure the architecture of the next century, as a dream or [utopian] anticipation.’

In particular, the arcades anticipated a number of future everyday architectures through their production of a mixed interior-exterior space. For Benjamin the arcades were ‘a cross between a street and an intérieur,’ a place of transit and dwelling. While the arcades were a clear precedent, the department store represented the ultimate hybridisation of exterior and interior and, subsequently, produced new forms of everyday subjectivity based around consumption. In 1852, for instance, Bon Marché opened in Paris and Macy’s followed shortly thereafter in New York in 1857. The significance of the department store form was in its larger-scale construction of a hybrid private-public space—a space in which flânerie, the leisurely art of walking and looking, might be productively transformed in the service of consumerism. Benjamin himself acknowledges the importance of this new architectural and social form when he notes that the department store is the site where the flâneur is transformed into the consuming subject: ‘If the arcade is the classical form of the intérieur, which is how the flâneur sees the street, the department store is the form of the intérieur’s decay ... If in the beginning the street had become an intérieur for him, now this intérieur turned into a street, and he roamed through the labyrinth of merchandise as he had once roamed through the labyrinth of the city.’

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99 Benjamin Charles Baudelaire 37. Also see Friedberg 64, and Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century, trans. Angela Davies (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1995).
100 Buck-Morss, ‘Aesthetics and Anaesthetics’ 22. Also see Friedberg 61-68.
102 Benjamin Charles Baudelaire 37.
103 Friedberg 36.
104 Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire 54.
One of the important new forms of subjectivity also enabled by this shift in the construction of ‘everyday dwelling’ was that of the female flâneur or flâneuse. Recent feminist scholarship in particular has focused on the importance of the gender differentiated nature of private and public spheres during this period.\footnote{See, for example, Wolff 12-33; Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Judith R. Walkowitz, ‘Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment, and Streetwalking in Late Victorian London,’ *Representations* 62 (1998): 1-30; and Mica Nava, ‘Modernity’s Disavowal: Women, The City and the Department Store,’ *The Shopping Experience*, eds. Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell (London Sage, 1997) 56-91.} This scholarship reminds us that the freedom of mobility between these spheres described by Benjamin was not necessarily available to all citizens equally. As a number of writers have pointed out, the history of modernity and the city privileged by Baudelaire and Benjamin is one primarily organised around the bourgeois male. In other words, the period of flânerie from the early to late nineteenth century that Benjamin discussed offered few possibilities for the construction of a female flâneuse.\footnote{See Wolff 45-47.} It was only in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the newly available social space of the department store offered a hitherto unexperienced kind of urban mobility to bourgeois women, that flânerie became ‘feminised’ to any significant degree. As Mica Nava comments (after Sharon Zukin), the department store—along with ‘the great exhibitions, galleries, libraries, restaurants, tearooms, hotels and department stores’\footnote{Nava 61. As she goes on to argue, large numbers of these women also began to visit ‘less salubrious neighbourhoods as part of the proliferation of philanthropic schemes that emerged during the late nineteenth century in order to cope with the perceived crisis of the city - with the threat of social disorder, disease, destitution and inadequate housing’(61).}—was just one of a number of new ‘public-private liminal spaces’ to emerge as an acceptable place for unaccompanied, middle-class women to socialise. Thus, it was in arenas of consumption and leisure such as these that new subjectivities were proffered and in which, as Nava argues, ‘the everyday lives of large numbers of ordinary women were most deeply affected by the process of modernity.’\footnote{Nava 64.} Or, more accurately, these arenas functioned to refigure the notion of ‘everyday life’ itself for this particular group of women.

Arguably, however, it was the later invention of cinema, an obvious descendent of the original phantasmagoria, that marked a more profound turning point in the ‘feminisation’ or democratisation of flânerie. In *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, Giuliana Bruno contends that the advent of the cinematic institution legitimated female spectatorship and leisure within the public realm. Furthermore,
as well as granting access to the ‘erotics of darkness and (urban) wandering denied to the female subject,’ cinema for Bruno plays a central role in introducing modern subjects to the notion of urban space as a site of pleasurable, everyday exploration. Watching cinema thus provided a different kind of practice of loitering, an experience of flânerie that ‘offered the joy of watching while traveling.’ Crucially, in relation to gender and modernity, the introduction of cinema marks the moment when the ‘female flâneur . . . wanders across [and into] history, establishing her identity and desire in a space of consumption (of images).’

It is important to note here that Benjamin’s interest in ordinary city life and the flâneur was not framed to any significant degree by a consideration of gender. However, I would suggest that Benjamin’s interest in ‘private’ and ‘public’ realms, and the changing relations between the two, have been usefully articulated with feminist concerns regarding the gendered division of nineteenth century urban space. What is important for my project here is the shared recognition that the emergence of an everyday sphere based around institutions of consumption is one that enables the construction of a range of different subjectivities that span private and public, interior and exterior. As James Donald observes, this is perhaps ‘less a question of barred spaces than gender-differentiated experiences of spaces and sexually inflected repertoires of public, private, or intimate behaviour and performance.’ In particular, it is the capitalist mechanism of the phantasmagoria that produces the location for a range of new everyday subjectivities and identities.

**III. Everyday technologies**

Like feminist critics such as Bruno, Benjamin was also interested in the way in which technologies like cinema acted upon and transformed social subjects. In this section, I argue that Benjamin’s commentary on flânerie also contains an important discussion of the impact of everyday technologies which operate both at the level of the body and on the social subject. Latham observes in relation to the

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110 Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map* 51.
111 Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map* 51.
112 Donald 49.
body that Benjamin’s ‘writing is ... shot through with a fascination with a set of
distracted tactile perceptual modes, which are at once other to, beyond, and hidden
within the distanced gaze of the flaneur.’¹¹³ For Benjamin, the apparatus of flânerie,
in other words, exhibits symptoms of the training of the body’s sensory apparatus, a
training brought about by the impact of various social technologies. The following
quotation then is a classic Benjaminian account of technologies of the body:

Of the countless movements of switching, inserting, pressing, and the like,
the “snapping” of the photographer has had the greatest consequences. A
touch of the finger now sufficed to fix an event for an unlimited period of
time. The camera gave the moment a posthumous shock, as it were. Haptic
experiences of this kind were joined by optic ones, such as are supplied by
the advertising pages of a newspaper or the traffic of a big city. Moving
through this traffic involves the individual in a series of shocks and
collisions. At dangerous intersections, nervous impulses flow through him in
rapid succession, like energy from a battery. Baudelaire speaks of a man
who plunges into the crowd as into a reservoir of electricity. Circumscribing
the experience of the shock, he calls this man “a kaleidoscope equipped with
consciousness” ... Thus technology has subjected the human sensorium to a
complex kind of training. There came a day when a new and urgent need for
stimuli was met by film. In a film, perception in the form of shocks was
established as a formal principle. That which determines the rhythm of
production on a conveyor belt is the basis of the rhythm of reception in
film.¹¹⁴

The first technology signalled here by Benjamin is that of photography.
Importantly, the figure of the flâneur emerges in the nineteenth century at a point
when the relations between the modern subject, vision, and the production of
knowledge converge. In particular, the second-half of the nineteenth century has
been characterised as

¹¹³ Latham 460.
¹¹⁴ Benjamin, ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’ 174-175.
a sort of frenzy of the visible. It is, of course, the effect of the social multiplication of images: ever wider distribution of illustrated papers, waves of print, caricatures, etc. The effect also, however, of something of a geographical extension of the field of the visible and the representable: by journeys, explorations, colonizations, the whole world becomes visible at the same time that it becomes appropriatable.

The city itself was an important figure in this ‘extension’ of the visible and nowhere more so than in the everyday practice of walking where the flâneur became the embodiment of what Anne Friedberg usefully characterises as a ‘mobilised gaze.’

As the opening sentences of the passage with its references to the repetitive physical actions required to produce a photograph also make clear, modernity not only heralded changes in visual perception but it also marked a major transformation of other modes of sensory experience. Photography, in other words, not only creates a new way of ‘seeing’ the world, but its practices also involve the learning and repetition of particular bodily actions (‘pressing,’ ‘switching,’ ‘inserting,’ and ‘snapping’) that are common to the world of the assembly line. Thus the visual consumption of the modern urban landscape didn’t simply extend to a refiguring of modes of visual perception but included an important haptic dimension. Elsewhere in his ‘Work of Art’ essay, for instance, Benjamin made a related argument when he observed that buildings are appropriated by users both through ‘touch and sight.’

This practice of appropriation of the city can’t simply be understood through a touristic mode of contemplation but is engendered, instead, through habit. As Michael Taussig notes, Benjamin argued that ‘only at the depth of habit is radical change effected, where unconscious strata of culture are built into social routines as bodily disposition.’ Or, put another way, Benjamin argued for a recognition of

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115 Jean-Louis Comolli cited in Friedberg 15.
116 Friedberg 29.
119 Michael Taussig, Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses (New York: Routledge, 1993) 25. Cf. Margaret Morse in Virtualities: ‘The empire of the habitual is the matrix of mental and social life, made of mundane opportunities and choices and composed of practices conducted half-aware, which assemble one’s very personhood (118).’
the everyday—the realm of habit, ritual, practice and repetition—as a site where
important cultural transformations occur.

However it was cinema, rather than photography, that for Benjamin provided
the most telling cultural technology in terms of the conjoining of ‘optic’ and ‘haptic’
experiences based on industrialism. In the darkened space of the cinema theatre, the
‘mobilised gaze’ of the flâneur was offered to a mass audience. As Bruno comments:

As perceptual modes, flânerie and cinema share the montage of images, the
spatio-temporal juxtaposition, the obscuring of the mode of production, and
the “physiognomic” impact—the spectatorial reading of bodily signs. The
dream web of film reception, with its geographical implantation, embodies
flaneries’s mode of watching and its public dimension.120

Following in the footsteps of Benjamin, critics such as Bruno have highlighted the
‘genealogical link between film and the panoramic-anatomic space of nineteenth-
century vision.’121 Bruno draws convincing links between the roughly
contemporaneous arrival of the railroad, the arcade and the advent of cinema (which
literally came together at the Galleria Umberto in Naples). For Bruno, all of these
‘inventions’ can be characterised as ‘machines of vision’ which herald the
production of a new perceptual apparatus.122 The extraordinary perceptual modes
produced by these technologies are also found in mundane urban sites such as the
department store with its emphasis on the display of goods within the window
frame. Moreover, as a body of recent film scholarship has noted, it is also no
coincidence that among the favoured subjects of early films were the city spaces and
crowds so beloved of the early flâneur.123

Returning to the issue of the impact of such technologies on the body, as
Benjamin noted industrial technologies ‘subjected the human sensorium to a

120 Bruno, Streetwalking on a Ruined Map 48.
121 Bruno, Streetwalking on a Ruined Map 4.
122 Bruno, Streetwalking on a Ruined Map 50. The first sustained analysis of this relation between
rail travel and the cinema was offered by Wolfgang Schivelbusch in his The Railway Journey. For a
more recent account see Lynn Kirby’s Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema (Exeter:
University of Exeter Press, 1997).
11-12, and Gunning 34-35.
complex kind of training." Cinema, in particular, organised a radical transformation of individual perception. Benjamin likened the camera’s movement through the city to an explosion that rocked the foundations of entrenched modes of perception:

Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling.

What Benjamin’s work suggests here is the vital role of technology in making visible the extraordinary nature of the urban environment thus heralding a profound shift in modes of everyday perception. That is, through its focus ‘on hidden details of familiar objects, [and] by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action.’ For example, while Benjamin noted that ‘one knows nothing of a person’s posture during the fractional second of a stride,’ the camera was able to reveal movement previously imperceptible to the human eye. For Benjamin, the camera produced what he termed an ‘unconscious optics’ in a mode similar to revelations of ‘unconscious impulses’ by psychoanalysis. At the same time, the techniques and industrial rhythms which organised the reception of these images (e.g., montage) suggested their location within a broader social training of the body.

For Benjamin, the new cinematic realm with its incredible flow of images constituted an exemplary instance of modernity’s increasing overload on human

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124 Benjamin, ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’ 175.
126 Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ 236. Also see Donald 77ff., for a discussion on some of the specific films that Benjamin may have had in mind when making these comments; namely, Walter Ruttmann’s Berlin: Symphony of a Great City (1927) and Dziga Vertov’s Man with a Movie Camera (1929).
perception. The modern city, as Simmel had put it earlier in his commentary on metropolitan personality in ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life,’ was marked by an ‘intensification of nervous stimulation.’ While Simmel relates this intensification to the money economy, Benjamin was more interested in reading this shift in bodily sense perception through a Freudian framework as, for example, in his commentary on the mass phenomenon of shell-shock in the wake of World War I. For Benjamin, the physical effects on the human sensorium engendered through technologically altered environments (like the modern city) produced a concordant psychic shock. The aspect of Freud that interested Benjamin most was his claim that consciousness parried ‘shock.’ Consciousness acted as ‘a shield protecting the organism against stimuli—“excessive energies”—from without, by preventing their retention, their impress as memory.’

It was technologies like cinema, where ‘shock’ became integrated as a ‘formal principle,’ which helped construct a new form of everyday consciousness. For Benjamin, then, the technology of cinema protected consciousness from the potentially damaging impact of industrial experience while transforming social subjectivity in the process.

IV. Everyday experience

Benjamin’s understanding of experience was a radical one that broke with Marxist thought of the time and foreshadowed postmodern takes on this topic. Just as Benjamin sees phantasmagoric space and its associated technologies not just as a capitalist disguise but as a positive reconstruction of the everyday, so he sees everyday experience in a complex critical and affirmative sense. However, as I go on to argue in this section, Benjamin’s account of that new everyday experience is problematic in terms of its assumed universalism.

As a category, then, ‘experience’ enjoys a central role in Benjamin’s conceptual toolbox. Latham comments that it is in his earlier work (in particular,

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pieces such as ‘The Storyteller’ and ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’), that Benjamin attempted to outline a broad argument about the ways in which modernity heralded a diminution of ‘authentic’ experience. According to Latham, in this formulation experience was ‘no longer tied in the same way to the lived rhythms of everyday life.’ In these early essays, this shift is outlined by Benjamin in his discussion of the very different kinds of experience communicated by the pre-modern, ‘oral’ practice of story-telling compared to that of the technologically mediated, mass-produced novel. Likewise, in ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,’ Benjamin begins by contemplating the difficulties faced by modern readers in reading lyric poetry: only in ‘rare instances is lyric poetry in rapport with the experience of its [early twentieth-century] readers’ and this gap may be ‘due to a change in the structure of their experience.’

In this next section I argue that Benjamin was in fact charting the emergence of a new kind of everyday experience which was the product of an industrialised urban environment. On one level, Benjamin’s argument seems to emerge out of the Marxist notion that the nineteenth century witnesses a stage in the development of capitalism characterised by an increasing gap between the structures that organise the urban environment and lived experience. According to Fredric Jameson, a central feature of this process of alienation is the fact that the new and enormous ‘global realities’ of monopoly capitalism ‘are inaccessible to [and unrepresentable by] any individual subject or consciousness.’ More specifically, as Jameson has observed, during this particular phase of the expansion of capitalism the truth of the western subject’s experience ‘no longer coincides with the place in which it takes place’ (as it generally did under the conditions of the earlier stage of market capitalism). This sense of alienation is most profoundly felt in the nineteenth-century modern city—the crucible of industrial capitalism—and heralds a profound shift in the nature of lived social experience.

Benjamin, however, offered an interesting counterpoint to this generally pessimistic Marxist argument about changes in day-to-day experience, particularly

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133 Latham 461.
135 Benjamin, ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’ 156.
in his commentary on the relations between shock, memory, and technology. To
understand some of the connections between these categories we might begin with
Benjamin’s comments on how the cataclysmic scale of the First World War made
visible a profound shift: ‘[w]as it not noticeable at the end of the war that men
returned from the battlefield grown silent—not richer but poorer in communicable
experience.’ As noted earlier, the First World War signalled an important
moment in so far as many of its participants experienced the phenomenon of shell-
shock that would later form the basis of Freud’s notions of shock and the stimulus
shield in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

While drawing heavily on Freud’s commentary on shell-shock, Benjamin’s
understanding of this notion was more strongly rooted in the conditions of daily
urban existence under capitalism. As Roger D. Abrahams puts it, in a different
context, ‘the very flow of the everyday assures the continuity between routine
activities and the more extraordinary.’ Central to Benjamin’s understanding of
modernity was a complex differentiation of experience into ‘a genuine affective
experience (*Erfahrung*) and a more immediate but disconnected experiential mode
(*Erlebnis*).’ The notion of *erfahrung* encompasses the ‘weight’ of experience,
that which has entered consciousness but not assigned a specific moment in time,
while *erlebnis* describes the momentary and fragmented kind of experience that is a
distinctive feature of the modern city and is directly connected to the notion of
shock (*chockerlebnis*).

What is useful about Benjamin’s argument here are not so much the
differences he observes between *erlebnis* and *erfahrung* but his notion in
contradistinction to that of traditional Marxism that there is an *affirmative* aspect to
modern experience. For Benjamin, the same technologies and cultural forms that

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139 See Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey* 145-151, for an informative history of the military
connotations of ‘shock.’
140 Roger D. Abrahams, ‘Ordinary and Extraordinary Experience,’ *The Anthropology of Experience*,
141 Latham 460. Also see Abbas, ‘Walter Benjamin’s Collector.’
142 This radical aspect of Benjamin’s work puts him at odds with a significant number of his
contemporaries—most famously Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s ‘culture industries’
argument in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972)—as well as a large
body of contemporary social theorists who still seem largely unable to acknowledge any politically
progressive dimension in popular and everyday culture.

Surprisingly few contemporary urban critics have taken up this affirmative dimension of
Benjamin’s commentary on experience. The most influential manifestation of this aspect of
Benjamin’s work is Marshall Berman’s *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*. Berman basically argues that
produced the shock experience and immediacy of *erlebnis* could then link to *erfahrung*. The practice of *flânerie*, of ‘just walking down the street,’ is in a sense the forerunner of this complex politics of everyday experience. The carefree yet purposeful walking of the *flâneur* in the city, which revolves around fragmentary everyday sights and impressionistic encounters (*erlebnis*), carries the possibilities of ‘weightier’ experiences (*erfahrung*) which provide historical insights into the processes of modernity (though whether we want to think of these as somehow more ‘authentic’ experiences is another issue).

As I have stated, while Benjamin’s understanding of experience was radical, it was nevertheless hampered by a tendency toward universalism. As feminist and queer critics have more recently pointed out through their rereadings of the history of *flânerie*, the category of experience itself and the question of the universality of the figure of the *flâneur* that Benjamin elaborated is one that deserves more critical attention. These readings offer the most convincing and sustained critiques of the *flâneur* as an emblematic figure of universalist modern experience (and, in turn, of the all-seeing, transcendent critical theorist). Locating the *flâneur* as a social subject always inscribed in terms of gender, sexual and racial difference, these critics highlight the shortcomings of Benjamin’s work and argue for the need to consider the profoundly *uneven* nature of the construction of modern experience. As Susan Buck-Morss has demonstrated, while Benjamin may have demonstrated strong affinities between the figures of the *flâneur*, the sandwichman and the whore, it is certainly the case that sexual difference complicates the ‘politics of loitering’ practised by each of these figures.

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*modernity might be defined by the distinctive spatial and temporal experience it produces: ‘There is a mode of vital experience-experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life’s possibilities and perils—that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience “modernity.” To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, “all that is solid melts into air” (15).’*


At the same time, as some recent feminist and post-structuralist commentators have argued, it is not enough to simply reveal the uneven nature of everyday experience. In other words, a critical project concerned with formations of everyday experience must do more than just exposing a world ‘of alternative values and practices whose existence gives the lie to hegemonic constructions of social worlds.’ \(^{145}\) Joan Scott, for instance, has argued that these kinds of histories of difference have been simultaneously successful and limiting for scholars. They are limited in so far as they tend to ‘take as self-evident the identities of those whose experience is being documented and thus naturalise their difference. They locate resistance outside its discursive construction, and reify agency as an inherent attribute of individuals, thus decontextualizing it.’ Instead, Scott suggests, scholars must also direct attention to the constructed nature of ‘experience’ itself—and its role in the production of subjects. As she comments, ‘[i]t is not individuals who have experiences, but subjects who are constituted through experience.’ \(^{146}\)

Notwithstanding these important limitations, Benjamin’s work is still useful in its identification of contemporary everyday experience as a particular historical formation, a formation that in turn creates particular types of social subjects. Rather than nostalgically yearning for a disappearing older form of ‘the everyday,’ Benjamin sought to critically understand the insights and limitations of this new form of everyday experience, the ways in which it could be valued. Benjamin and his critics’ works suggest that the study of the urban practices and environments that make up what I am calling the extraordinary everyday should not, on the one hand, simply assume a notion of a universal experience or, on the other hand, an ‘authentic’ notion of marginalised experience. Like Benjamin and his critics we need to be attuned to the ways in which particular social environments and practices produce certain types of interlinked subjectivities and everyday experiences.

**Conclusion**


\(^{146}\) Scott 25-26.
Despite its location in a quite different historical, geographical and intellectual context, Benjamin’s study of modernity has great value to us in terms of its identification of the experiences and practices of everyday urban life—in particular those practices associated with the field of consumption and leisure—as a legitimate site of cultural inquiry. As Angela McRobbie has observed, Benjamin’s writing was then and is still now a radical critique of the notion of culture ‘as something cut off and separate from everyday life.’

For Benjamin, culture was everyday life.

In this chapter I have argued that Benjamin’s writing on the flâneur and the city constitutes a well-thumbed but nonetheless still useful blueprint for a study of everyday culture. Firstly, through his studies of Baudelaire’s flâneur, Benjamin demonstrated how industrial capitalism integrates an at once ordinary and extraordinary practice (that is, flânerie) into formations of work and leisure. Following Benjamin’s lead, then, one way of understanding ‘the everyday’ is to think of it as the series of relations that function to link the diverse spaces and times of urban (post)modernity together. Secondly, the conditions that heralded the extinction of the flâneur within ‘the mass’ at the same time opened up a range of new everyday subjectivities that were primarily organised around modes of consumption. In other words, Benjamin’s work didn’t so much map the demise of the flâneur but, instead, it highlighted the dispersal of subjectivity that marks modernity. Thirdly, Benjamin’s studies show us that ‘the everyday’ as we know it is individually and socially produced through, and mediated in relation to, the bodily technologies of industrial capitalism. Finally, however, this is not to say that such a process produces a universal experience of the everyday. As Benjamin’s work reminds us, contemporary everyday experience must be thought of as complex and multi-textured, essentially fragmentary and differentiated in nature. At the same time everyday urban experience is simultaneously alienating and affirmative. Thus despite the obvious utility of the flâneur as a prism through which the experience of modernity might be refracted, we need to be wary of too simply universalising that experience.

Having established a series of categories through which to understand ‘the everyday,’ my next chapter moves on to a tradition of work that is based around questions of cultural practice, and the intellectual issues concerning how we might discuss the active participation of subjects in the culture of everyday. This tradition of work on everyday practice, figured in the writings of Michel de Certeau, has had a significant impact on cultural studies. Somewhat oddly, however, few writers directly consider the affinities and points of intersection of Certeau with Benjamin’s important pioneering work in the field of ‘the everyday.’ Here I want to suggest that Certeau’s writing on the everyday and the city can be seen as a continuation of Benjamin’s work—even though the focus may shift from the distinctive figure of flâneur to the anonymity of what Michel de Certeau famously described as the nameless, ‘ordinary man . . . walking in countless thousands on the streets.’

However, Certeau’s work also marks an important shift in that the everyday is no longer simply symptomatic of processes of modernisation but becomes more of a social apparatus in its own right. In this formulation, the everyday is the habitual terrain of life that encompasses particular practices and it is these, rather than the intellectual’s critical practice, that offer a site of potential transformation.

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2. **MICHEL DE CERTEAU**  
*What We Talk About When We Talk About ‘Walking in the City’*\(^{149}\)

**Introduction: walking as a social practice**

In my previous chapter I argued that Benjamin’s meditations on a specific practice of walking—the *flaneur*’s strolling in nineteenth-century Parisian streets—provided insights into the city of the time as well as a conceptual framework for a study of the contemporary extraordinary everyday. Rather than continuing in a Benjaminian fashion to ‘read’ walking primarily as a set of signs from which we can decode the broader meanings of urban space and its histories in modernity, this chapter turns to a discussion of walking itself *as* an embodied and material urban practice; I am concerned with charting the specifics of walking as a micro-practice and as a form of literal urban mobility. By using terms like embodied and material, however, I don’t mean to suggest an empirical mode of analysis.\(^{150}\) On the contrary, I want to argue that despite the seemingly transparent and ‘common sense’ nature of walking (as one dictionary defines it, ‘progress by advancing each foot alternately, never having both feet off the ground at once’), it is a thoroughly conventionalised practice that therefore needs to be analysed from a social or cultural perspective. Specifically, I want to consider walking as a *social* practice; that is, an assemblage of specific techniques of ‘the body’ and ‘the self’ that are performed within, and contribute to, the social organisation of the contemporary city.

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\(^{149}\) This title is borrowed and adapted from Raymond Carver’s short story, ‘What We Talk About When We Talk About Love’ in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love: Stories* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989) 137-154. The story concerns the difficulties inherent in trying to define and describe something as commonsense and everyday as ‘love’ and the multiform (and often unpredictable) ways in which love’s affectual dimension is articulated.

\(^{150}\) For classic examples of this type of approach in the field of urban planning see William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (Washington DC: Conservation Foundation, 1980). Whyte pioneered the use of time-lapse photography in urban planning as part of a project determining what made a popular public space. More recently, Whyte’s work has enjoyed something of a reincarnation in the public-private world of retail in the form of the writings of best-selling, ‘retail guru’ Paco Underhill (a former student of Whyte in the 1970s), whose *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), outlines theories often concerned with walking speeds and practices, theories derived from the examination of thousands of hours of video footage of customer movements in stores.
Within the field of cultural studies there is one writer who has famously addressed the subject of walking as a form of social or cultural practice and his work provides an anchor for this chapter. I refer to Michel de Certeau whose pivotal cultural studies text, *The Practice of Everyday Life* was originally published in France in 1980 (and translated into English in 1984). Broadly speaking, Certeau’s study offers a quite different critique of modernity to the unorthodox Marxist approach of Benjamin discussed in my previous chapter. While Certeau certainly shares Benjamin’s interest in questions of consumption, his critique is distinguished by its particular treatment of the sphere of ‘the everyday’—a realm of action and experience that is both colonised by the disciplining imperatives of modernity, such as rationalisation and efficiency, and yet also opens up spaces of possibility in terms of the evasion of those colonising and panoptic nets of discipline. Central to Certeau’s inquiry into the everyday is an express interest in the ‘procedures’ or ‘arts of doing’ that organise common cultural practices such as walking, reading, cooking, talking and shopping. For Certeau, these practices—despite their belonging to the world of ‘consumption’—are figured as profoundly productive. Certeau’s work on this subject has been important to cultural studies because it marks a shift away from understanding the ‘everyday’ as merely an epiphenomenon of capitalism to dealing with the quotidian on its own terms. His study is also insightful, I would argue, in so far as it implicitly critiques the transcendent position taken by earlier critics in relation to the everyday.

*The Practice of Everyday Life* is essential to my overall study not only because it specifically discusses walking as a form of practice, but also because of its significant impact on the field of cultural studies (particularly in Australia and America). Meaghan Morris has recently commented that the theoretical reflections concentrated around Certeau’s work, particularly those concerned with walking as an act of enunciation (in his chapter on “Walking in the City”) and his closely related ‘strategies’/ ‘tactics’ distinctions, have in different guises ‘been one of the most influential models for cultural studies in recent years.’ In contrast to its reception in cultural studies, however, Certeau’s work seems to have had a relatively minor impact in the broader field of urban studies, most probably because of his

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151 Further citations will be given in the body of the text with the abbreviation ‘PE’ followed by the page number.
152 Meaghan Morris, *Too Soon Too Late* 110.
focus on the micro-spatial at the expense of the macro-spatial aspects of the city. By the conclusion of this chapter I will be able to suggest directions in which Certeau’s writing on walking might be developed in order to allow further dialogue between those two overlapping fields of inquiry.

In order to move towards that conclusion, I discuss the following questions in relation to the ‘anatomy of walking’ that Certeau provides in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. What are some of the specific intellectual traditions in France out of which Certeau’s writing on walking in the city emerges and how do these inform his work? Is his influential notion of ‘everyday resistance’ through practices like walking still a tenable one? How might Certeau’s account of walking be usefully supplemented or reoriented through engagements with other theories of walking and the relations between bodies, subjects, and cities? In order to address these questions this chapter is broken down into two sections, each addressing central problematics in Certeau’s work. The first section concerns the broader intellectual traditions within which Certeau formulates his account of walking in the city and how these frame his account. An examination of these traditions, I argue, reminds us that contemporary uses of Certeau need to be mindful of the specific context from which his work emerged. Bearing in mind that context, the second and longest section of the chapter proceeds to offer a reconsideration of Certeau’s theorisation of everyday walking by discussing it in relation to a number of contemporary cultural studies debates: in terms of the notion of everyday practice as ‘resistance’; in terms of the dialectical model of subject-body relations that informs Certeau’s account of ‘walking’; and finally in terms of the realm of affect.

I. From the tower to the street: intellectual traditions

*The Practice of Everyday Life* memorably introduces and elaborates pedestrian practices through an account of Certeau’s own experience of viewing Manhattan from the top of the World Trade Centre. While enjoying this popular

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153 While urban studies writers of various disciplinary hues have been interested in the social production of urban space and the everyday, their interest has mainly been stimulated this decade by the translation of the more ‘macro-spatial’ work of Henri Lefebvre, in particular his *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991). One recent exception to this trend can be found in an article by influential urban sociologist Rob Shields; see his ‘A Guide to Urban Representation and What to Do About It’ 227-252.
tourist view of New York, Certeau muses over the ‘erotics of knowledge’ that creates a ‘God-like’ spectator/reader whose pleasure derives from the scopic possession of the panoramic urban text below. For Certeau, to be lifted above the streets is to be transformed ‘into a voyeur,’ like Icarus above the water, for whom the ‘fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more’ (*PE* 92). What one views and constructs from this all-seeing viewpoint, he argues, is the *concept* city that is a product of ‘utopian and urbanistic discourse’ and which comes into being with the birth of Cartesian perspectivalism. According to Certeau, the *concept* city embodies a desire to create a rationally organised space: it is ‘simultaneously the machinery and hero of modernity’ (*PE* 95) that attempts to repress ‘all the physical, mental and political pollutions that would compromise it’ (*PE* 94). However, it seems that the ‘text’ being read by this elevated all-seeing eye is not a transparent one; according to Certeau there is a certain strangeness that ripples across and below the surface of the cityscape viewed as a ‘totality.’ To look from above is to create an out-of-focus blindspot that effectively masks the infinite diversity of the micro-practices of the city’s inhabitants: ‘It’s hard to be down when you’re up’ (*PE* 92) reads a sign that Certeau observes on the 110th floor. To zoom in on and bring into focus this blindspot one must ‘finally fall back into the dark space where crowds move back and forth’ (*PE* 92). To ‘fall’ like Icarus back down to the level of the labyrinth is to remember a lesson about intellectual hubris and the assumption that a single view from above offers the complete picture. Accordingly, Certeau takes his reader down to the level of the streets. Located in these streets, he writes, is the *fact* of the city, the urban environment that people experience in routine and everyday senses. This experiential city marks out a specific aporia in so far as it is home to a diverse range of individual practices that because of their scale relative to the city, escape the ‘imaginary totalisations’ produced by the all-seeing eye of the urban planner or cartographer.

Privileged among these street-level practices is walking, which, for Certeau, exemplifies the elementary experience of the city enjoyed by its ‘ordinary practitioners’ (*PE* 93). The footsteps of these ordinary practitioners, he argues,

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154 Such pollutions include, for example, ‘the stories and legends that haunt urban space like superfluous or additional inhabitants. They are the object of a witch-hunt, by the very logic of the techno-structure’ (*PE* 106).
are myriad, but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of these “real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city.” They are not localized; it is rather they that spatialize. (PE 97)

In this quotation, Certeau polemically asserts that the ‘real’ city actually consists of the infinitely varied, habitual and lived everyday practices of its inhabitants. The official notion of ‘the city’ is merely a “‘theoretical” (that is, visual) simulacrum, in short a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices’ (PE 93).

Certeau declares that his broader intellectual project is to bring to light the existence of these multifarious everyday practices which are foreign to the “geometrical” or “geographical” space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions. These practices of space refer to a specific form of operations (“ways of operating”), to “another spatiality” (an “anthropological,” poetic and mythic experience of space), and to an opaque and blind mobility characteristic of the bustling city. A migrational, or metaphorical, city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city. (PE 93)

It is the ‘rhetorical gestures’ of lived everyday urban practices like walking that produce a spatiality that is ‘other’ to that produced by the official institutions that organise and regulate the city. For Certeau, these ‘rhetorical gestures’ compose the network of an ‘anti-discipline’ and he thereby suggests a location for acts of agency within a society organised through structures of control. Certeau’s work is thus complementary to that of Michel Foucault, whose Discipline and Punish he cites in his introduction as providing an orientation for The Practice of Everyday Life (PE xiv-xv).155 The distinction he makes between Foucault’s and his own mode of

155 As Luce Giard comments in ‘Introduction to Volume 1: History of a Research Project’ in Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol’s The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2: Living and Cooking, ed. Luce Giard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) xx-xxi, Certeau was
analysis is that while Foucault works to elaborate the microtechnologies of various apparatuses of power, institutional and ‘discursive,’ Certeau is concerned with the quotidian ‘popular procedures’ that ‘manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them,’ or the ‘procedures and ruses of consumers [which] compose the network of an antidiscipline’ (PE xiv-xv). In other words, while Foucault’s work offers insights into the creation of an encompassing space of discipline enabled through the technical procedures distributing and applying certain forms of power, Certeau is concerned with the spatial practices that are both a ‘consequence’ and a ‘reciprocal’ of those procedures (PE 96). In this regard, his work is not so much a critique of Foucault as an elaboration organised around a radical shift in scale, from a macro to a micro-perspective, from institutional to subject-oriented analyses; in particular, Certeau’s work extends Foucault’s by further highlighting the productivity of micro-practices of power.

Certeau’s understanding of ‘the city’ attempts to move away from a focus on macro-systems of discipline and control to the ‘collection of singularities’ that mark the near-invisible micro-practices of users of the street. According to Certeau, this change is not only ‘theoretically’ appropriate but also historically accurate because the Concept-city is ‘decaying’ (PE 95). This shift further corresponds to a call in Certeau’s work for a change in the relationship between the academic observer and the city. Consider here the dominant intellectual paradigm, namely structuralism, that frames Certeau’s writing in the 1970s. While not directly referred to by Certeau, the influential contemporaneous work of urban sociologist Manuel Castells appears to cast a lengthy shadow here. Castell’s work, such as The Urban Question, first published in France in 1972, was at the vanguard of the ‘new urban sociology’ of the 1970s. In particular, Castells’ work was highly critical of a number of the central concepts of urban sociology (especially those derived from Georg Simmel and the Chicago school, whose investigations of city life focused on it as an exemplary site of the social chaos and disorganisation engendered by modernity). In contrast to those pioneering urban sociologists, Castells argued that the contemporary city was in fact highly organised and that the nature of this organisation should be urban sociology’s focus of inquiry. In particular, Castells’

profoundly influenced by Foucault’s work. However, it would be inaccurate to say that Certeau simply followed in Foucault’s footsteps; for instance, as Giard notes, Certeau was already using the vocabulary of ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics’ in an article he published in 1974 (the year before Discipline and Punish first appeared in France).

proposed the notion of ‘collective consumption’ as being the key to understanding the distinct function of late capitalist cities. ‘Collective consumption’, as Castell defined the term, was quite different to the meanings it carries in contemporary cultural studies (which are more akin to Certeau’s definition in *The Practice of Everyday Life*). To the vehemently anti-culturalist Castell, collective consumption ‘referred to forms of services collectively provided, usually by the state—mass housing, transport, [and] health facilities.’ Castells argued that these forms of collective consumption and their associated forms of urban protest, such as squatter’s and tenant’s movements, were forms of class struggle. Most importantly for my argument here however, Castell’s notion of ‘collective consumption’ temporarily reassured and revitalised urban sociology by providing it with a suitably ‘knowable’ object of scientific inquiry. For Certeau, however, the totality of practices of city users remains ‘indefinitely other’ to the gaze of both the urban planner and the structuralist critic, both of whom aspire to the god-like view implicit in the notion of *the* city as text. Certeau appears to dethrone the idea of ‘*the* city’ as some sort of representable and singular system. More broadly, Certeau’s account of walking and his accompanying critique of the view from the tower—the built edifice that announced modernity as well as a metaphor for the place of the academic—also suggests, as Meaghan Morris has observed, an allegory involving literally walking away from certain dominant models of structural theory. Accordingly, the urban critic has a much more limited and modest relationship to his or her object of inquiry.

It is important to recognise, then, that Certeau’s work is located within a particular moment of ‘crisis’ in intellectual authority, one that accompanied the shift away from structuralism toward what is commonly (if inadequately) described as poststructuralism. That crisis was further played out for Certeau in terms of his relation to the French tradition of enquiry into the everyday ‘founded’ by Henri Lefebvre. Kristin Ross argues that in the wake of the events of 1968, Certeau ‘reinvented’ Lefebvre’s concept of the everyday by arguing for a ‘new, more phenomenological quotidian [which] dispensed with Lefebvre’s emphasis on critique or transformation,’ instead celebrating the ‘homey practices’ of everyday

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158 See Meaghan Morris, ‘Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower,’ *New Formations* 11 (1990): 5-18, and also her *Too Soon Too Late* 131.
life. In other words, Certeau’s conceptualisation of the everyday moved away from the openly revolutionary ambitions of Lefebvre; as a perhaps overly pessimistic Ross comments, Certeau’s notion of the everyday ‘coincides with the actual order of things . . . without any illusion that it is about to change.’

It is somewhat indicative then, in this respect, that while Certeau states in a footnote to his introduction to *The Practice of Everyday Life*, that Lefebvre’s work on everyday life constitutes ‘a fundamental source’ (*PE* xv.n5), his argument is not framed within the Marxist intellectual tradition so vital to Lefebvre but, instead, takes it bearings from the theories of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu (a shift from the question of ‘revolution’ to the micro-technologies of practice and efficacy of structures). Also, unlike Lefebvre’s broad-sweeping examination of the everyday as a multitude of sub-systems connected to each other ‘not within a single system but at different levels of reality,’ Certeau is more modestly concerned with the operational specificities of just a few of those sub-systems, such as ‘walking.’

On the one hand, then, Certeau’s work represents an attempt to self-consciously break with the totalising social critiques of his predecessors. At the same time, however, his work is still a product of its intellectual moment and context—it clearly emerges from the intersection of a number of established trajectories of thought in urban sociology and studies into the everyday. For example, it is useful here to briefly note the crossover between Certeau’s conceptualisation of walking as a form of ‘resistance’ and the Situationist practice of the *dérive* that took its inspiration from Lefebvre’s writings (as discussed in my preface). While Certeau and the Situationists were both concerned with the ways in which an everyday practice, namely walking, could be ‘resistant’ and assign new meanings to a planned space with already established ‘official’ meanings, their respective intellectual locations either side of the great intellectual divide of 1968 means that today we quite correctly read their respective critical practices in fundamentally different ways. Similarly, when mobilising Certeau’s work now, scholars need to be wary of treating that work as a model that can straightforwardly be applied in regard to the contemporary city. As Margaret Morse has observed in relation to Certeau’s notion of walking as evasion, in contemporary cities;

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160 Ross, ‘French Quotidian’ 25.
Certeau’s very means of escape are now designed into the geometries of everyday life, and his figurative practices of enunciation (“making do,” “walking in the city,” or “reading as poaching”) are modeled in representation itself. Could de Certeau have imagined, as he wrote on walking as an evasive strategy of self-empowerment, that there would one day be video cassettes that demonstrate how to “power” walk?\textsuperscript{162}

Morse’s comments remind us then of the shifting historical meanings of terms like ‘the everyday’ used by Certeau and how this sphere’s increasingly technologically mediated nature might affect the notion of ‘resistance.’ Thus before being put into critical practice once again, Certeau’s work must therefore be reevaluated in respect of these new urban \textit{and} intellectual environments. Central among those new intellectual environments is the field of cultural studies. In my next section I argue that while Certeau’s writing on the everyday has been of great utility to cultural studies, the uses of his work have been relatively uncritical. This is not to suggest that Certeau is no longer intellectually useful, but to argue by example that mobilisations of his work should take on a more self-reflexive character.

\section*{II. Rethinking everyday practices}

\subsection*{i. Walking as resistance}

This section attempts to rethink the notion of everyday practice, specifically in relation to ‘walking in the city.’ It begins with an examination of Certeau’s conception of ‘resistance,’ the major theme around which Certeau’s work has been deployed by contemporary cultural studies practitioners. It also discusses the related issue of whether Certeau’s understandings of the operations of ‘power’ are relevant to the contemporary city. In this section I focus on Certeau’s conceptualisation of walking as an embodied form of spatial manipulation. One of the key contributions made by Certeau is his focus on everyday life as being constituted by complex sets of practices and, in particular, his notion of praxis as form of enunciation. Certeau’s central argument in terms of the enunciative nature of praxis is that space and place

\textsuperscript{162} Morse, ‘An Ontology of Everyday Distraction’ 195.
are not merely inert or neutral features of the built environment; instead, they must be activated by the ‘rhetorical’ practices of users and passers-by. He comments:

if it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements.  

*(PE 98)*

Thus for Certeau the rhetoric and performativity of walking ‘affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects etc., the trajectories it “speaks”’ *(PE 99)*. The walker’s selection, rejection, manipulation (and so on) of spatial elements—which are memorably described by Certeau as the ‘chorus of idle footsteps’—are further described by him in terms of formalised tropes (synecdoche, asyndeton). It is the ‘turns’ and ‘detours’ of the walker that transform place into space.

Certeau’s rhetoric of walking (the chorus of idle footsteps) moves towards a political dimension (the possibility of ‘transgressive’ acts), in his distinction between the vectors of power organising urban space; that is, between ‘strategies’ and ‘tactics.’ Certeau defines a *strategy* as

the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an “environment.” A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper (prope)* and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, “clienteles,” “targets,” or “objects” of research). Political, economic and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. *(PE xix)*

An example of a strategy might be that of a city park controlled by a local statutory authority. The park is a site officially circumscribed as a space for everyday leisure,
a haven from traffic where particular modes of walking based around the aesthetic consumption of ordered ‘nature’, or healthy recreation and exercise, or even displays of heterosexual romance (walking hand-in-hand), take place. In contrast, a tactic is a practice that insinuates itself ‘into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance’ (PE xix). In this sense, argues Certeau, tactics depend fundamentally on an ‘art of timing’ (in contrast to the ‘proper’ which is a victory of space over time). Tactics require users to be ‘on the watch for opportunities that must be seized “on the wing”’ (PE xix). An example of a tactic, then, would be the use of city parks and their paths as ‘unofficial’ homosexual beats, sites for cruising, a practice of walking (already an appropriation of an official style, namely the police on patrol) and use of a particular space that runs against its dominant and ‘proper’ heteronormative construction. For Certeau, ‘tactical’ appropriations of space like this are an instance of ‘resistance’ to an official order, a victory of the weak over the strong.

As I have suggested, the notion of ‘resistance’ has been a central concept in the cultural studies repertoire. In Culture: A Reformer’s Science, Tony Bennett comments that the term resistance ‘has received relatively little sustained theoretical attention, but has rather been taken on trust as “a good thing” and certainly “to be encouraged”’. He goes on to note that where some sort of theoretical antecedent or authorisation needs to be invoked to justify the focus on ‘resistance,’ it is most commonly supplied in recent cultural studies work with reference to Certeau’s The Practice of Everyday Life. However, following on from Meaghan Morris’ essay on ‘Banality in Cultural Studies,’ Bennett cautions that too straightforward a notion of resistance leads to ‘an automatic theory generating an automatic politics, both of which, according to Meaghan Morris, had become, by the late 1980s, the banal by-products of a minor industry sustained “somewhere in some English publisher’s vault” by “a master-disk from which thousands of versions of the same article about...”'

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164 Not exclusively in cultural studies of course. We should note, for instance, the ‘command metaphor’ status that this term has recently assumed in related fields of inquiry such as cultural geography. See, for instance, the recent collection Geographies of Resistance, ed. Michael Keith and Steve Pile (London: Routledge, 1997).
165 Tony Bennett, Culture: A Reformer’s Science (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1998).
166 Bennett, Culture 167.
167 Bennett, Culture 167. It should be noted here that Certeau did not introduce the term ‘resistance’ to cultural studies more generally. Resistance was in fact a central conceptual category in the early development of Birmingham-style cultural studies. See, in particular, the influential collection Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain, ed. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (London: Hutchinson, 1976).
pleasure, resistance, and the politics of consumption are being run off under different names with minor variations". According to Bennett, this blind acceptance of the concept of resistance has resulted in cultural studies becoming a discipline concerned with ‘tracking down resistances’ and, once it has found them, taking their side. This is not a call, however, to discard Certeau’s legacy which offers much of critical value; instead, as Bennett comments, it is a case of acknowledging that Certeau’s’ notion of resistance ‘has real limits which need to be respected.’

The most important of these limits stem from Certeau’s opposition between ‘the official’ and ‘the everyday,’ and his subsequently rigid differentiation between strategies and tactics. Social practices of walking, I would argue, rarely conform to this either/or model. It is never simply a case of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ or individual walkers versus the city authorities who seek to organise the movement and dispositions of bodies in urban space, as Certeau’s model implies. The following two examples illustrate my point. The first is that of the now common ‘alternative’ maps of the city available to particular social groups or ‘users’ of urban space; for example, the ‘Gay and Lesbian Melbourne’ map (Fig. 1) that highlights ‘gay-friendly’ areas and precincts in the city. One interesting aspect of this representation is its identification of specific streets and public spaces where same-sex couples might feel safe in engaging (among other activities) in that ‘everyday’ act of walking hand-in-hand down the street. Such an act is, of course, a political one and still likely to attract abuse in many Australian streets. It is ‘resistant’ in so far as it challenges heteronormative constructions of ‘appropriate’ behaviour in public space. However, the fact that these spaces of ‘resistance’ have to a certain extent been mapped and codified, in this by case by a commercial alliance, suggests the operation of a more complicated order of power that is articulated through practices that are neither strictly compliant nor resistant.

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168 Bennett, *Culture* 168.
169 Bennett, *Culture* 168.
170 Bennett, *Culture* 168.
Image removed for copyright reasons.

Fig. 1. ‘Gay and Lesbian Melbourne’
As a second example, consider the way in which the public space of the street is appropriated and a community formed through different kinds of protest marches, typically those which march on a relevant site in the central city area (e.g., parliament buildings or other government offices). Typically, these pre-planned events involve an appropriation of the entire street along the route of the march. The marchers participating are not contained by the pavement, they override traffic lights and ‘Cross Now’ signs at intersections along the route, and they challenge the sovereign right of the motorcar to dominate the space of the street. Yet can we really say, following Certeau, that this is an act of resistance of the same variant as that of gay couples walking (hand-in-hand) on the street? To equate all counter-official acts as practices of resistance is to flatten out the meaning of the term itself while erasing significant differences between social groups. Furthermore, it also ignores the way in which the anti-establishment actions of street walkers are mediated by a myriad of intermediary or civic institutions, all bearing very different relationships with hegemonic culture. How, for example, does the culture of unions to some degree mediate the dispositions and behaviour of its members in protest marches? The general point to be made here, as Bennett comments, is that

individual’s itineraries are plotted and organised through and by their affiliations to a myriad of organisations whose operations are conducted at a sub-panoptic level: sporting clubs and associations, firms, charities, cultural societies and organisations, religious institutions, neighbourhoods. If we are to understand how cities are used by ordinary people in their everyday lives, we need to pay attention to the differentiated ways in which their relations to urban space are organised by the urban trajectories, maps and itineraries that arise from their differential relations to a range of economic, social and cultural associations and forms of life.\textsuperscript{171}

Accordingly, if we focus on the ways in which civic forms of culture ‘structure’ everyday acts, then the act of ‘queering’ the street discussed in my first example is not ‘purely’ an act of unfettered resistance but, rather, is organised or given form both through its relation to official, heterosexual culture \textit{and} through gay and lesbian community groups and businesses and their alternative mappings of urban space.

\textsuperscript{171} Bennett \textit{Culture} 180-181.
Hence, for Bennett the creative walker championed by Certeau may in fact ‘merely be following another order or, indeed, instituting such an order.’

An aporia exists then within current formulations of resistance in cultural studies and that aporia is derived from Certeau’s characterisation of practices of resistance through the binarised terms of official/everyday culture and strategies/tactics. As Jeremy Ahearne argues, while Certeau does identify the existence of a politically charged space of process or *cultural work* located ‘between, say, political, pedagogical and urban programmes and what different people “make of” these programmes,’ he is only able to vaguely hint at the complex intersection of power relations that structure such a space of process.

Power in *The Practice of Everyday Life* tends to be depicted in a top-down fashion with the oppressed ‘man in the street’ pitted against the powers-that-be. As John Frow observes, Certeau’s employment of figures such as ‘the ordinary man . . . walking in countless thousands on the streets’ (*PE* v) and ‘the people’ problematically elides any discussion of probable ‘struggles and rivalries *between* the groups comprising “the people”.’ As well, Certeau’s account does not recognise the possibility that there might be ‘complicity in and acceptance of domination,’ on the part of the people.

As a corrective to reducing practices of walking such as parades, window shopping or tourist trails to an either/or model of resistance versus compliance, I want to endorse Bennett’s call, which draws on the terminology of postmodern anthropology, for ‘a fuller and richer cartography of the spaces between total compliance and resistance, one which, in preventing these from functioning as bipolar opposites, will allow, in Geertz’s terms, a “thicker” description of the complex flows of culture which result from its inscription in differentiated and uneven relations of power.’ Instead of simply relying on the binary distinctions implied by Certeau’s schema, between the pre-mapped strategies of urban disciplinary structures and practices, and the freedoms enjoyed by the everyday walker, I want to suggest that cultural studies analyses might be more usefully

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172 Bennett, *Culture* 181.
175 Frow 56.
176 Bennett, *Culture* 169.
oriented toward producing a ‘thick description’ of the complex manner in which bodies, power, mobility and urban forms intersect within the contemporary city. This ‘thick description,’ however, must not simply function as a ‘labelling exercise’—here is one form of power, there is some resistance. Instead, such a mode of cultural description (as found in Part Two of this thesis) should also attempt to chart the relative ‘textures’ and ‘effectivities’ of the different power relationships under scrutiny.

As part of this process of reorienting cultural studies’ discussions of ‘resistance,’ more consideration must be given to the multiple forms, (re)production and flows of power that organise social relations. What sort of model of power, however, might usefully supplement Certeau’s account of everyday practices? I would suggest that the post-Gramscian cultural studies work around the related methodological notion of ‘articulation theory’ offers a particularly useful way of conceptualising the power-effects of everyday practices. Lawrence Grossberg has offered a neat summation of this methodology:

The concept of articulation provides a useful starting point for describing the process of forging connections between practices and effects, as well as of enabling practices to have different, often unpredicted effects. Articulation links this practice to that effect, this text to that meaning, this meaning to that reality, this experience to those politics. And these links are themselves articulated to larger structures. 177

Importantly, though, we need to recognise the contingency of these moments of joining or articulation. In this sense, there is no such thing as an intrinsically oppressive practice or a resistant act: it is the nature of these acts’ articulation to social formations and sites which finally determines their social effects. For example, the presence of crowds marching in the street and disrupting the circulation of motor vehicle traffic is not automatically ‘resistant’ in any sense but might produce anti-hegemonic effects through its articulation (through the mode of the protest march) to particular political struggles. What are the broader conditions

177 Lawrence Grossberg, We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture (New York: Routledge, 1992) 54.
and mechanisms—the critic needs to ask—that organise and give shape to this particular articulation?

The concept of articulation thus allows a reformulation of Certeau’s characterisation of the power differentials organising the relations between everyday ‘users’ of the street and their various institutional ‘others.’ It allows me to move beyond those strains of cultural studies that too simplistically deploy markers such as ‘resistant,’ ‘oppressive’ and so on, in relation to particular practices. As I have indicated in this section, the notion of articulation offers a means of avoiding the pitfalls of ‘essentialising’ Certeau’s account of walking. In other words, while Certeau eloquently demonstrates how everyday walking can indeed be ‘resistant’ it does not automatically follow on that we should read into his work a claim that all walking practices are somehow intrinsically resistant. As part of this process of not essentialising walking in an either/or, resistant/complicit framework, we need to consider the various mediations that allow certain cultural practices like walking to articulate complex, perhaps even contradictory, effects. In my next section I argue that this notion of articulation can help frame understandings of the relationship between walking as a bodily technique and walking as a mode of enunciation of a particular form of subjectivity. For such a distinction will, I argue, allow us to produce a more nuanced account of the multiple walking practices that take place in the city (including, for example, drifting, marching, touring, windowshopping) than Certeau’s model of ‘walking in the city.’ In particular, I want to suggest that (echoing Bennett’s gesture towards Geertz) a particular mode of ethnographic analysis taking its cue from the work of Marcel Mauss on bodily techniques can usefully supplement Certeau. Furthermore, a shift towards ethnographic description is not so much a rejection of Certeau’s account but a clarification and extension of his stated desire to investigate the practices responsible for ‘an “anthropological,” poetic and mythic experience of space’ (PE 93).

ii. Techniques of walking

In The Practice of Everyday Life, Certeau concludes his discussion and elaboration of the enunciative nature of walking as a practice with an unexpected and curious change of tack. He argues that the spatial enunciation produced through
walking is a repetition, ‘in diverse metaphors,’ of the originary experience of the child’s separation from the mother’s body. In making this claim Certeau reminds the reader of both Freud’s paradigmatic fort/da analysis as well as Lacan’s famous account of the ‘mirror stage’(PE 108-9). As cultural geographer Steve Pile acknowledges in his recent commentary on Certeau, one framed within the context of a psychoanalytically informed account of the dialectics between the subject, society and space, this ending to Certeau’s chapter initially seems both ‘bizarre (we are not led to expect this conclusion) and troubling (space is once again feminised).’ Pile concludes that while Certeau provides a useful partial account of aspects of the psychodynamics of place that essentially follows in the specialised footsteps of the flâneur he can’t, however, account for other practices of walking such as the patrols of police and soldiers or routines such as going to work, picking up children from school, and shopping. In contrast to Pile, I think that Certeau’s notion of praxis as enunciation is still helpful in terms of analysing those other forms of walking; however, I concur with Pile that Certeau’s conclusion is troubling, but for different reasons (primarily concerned with its reliance on a psychoanalytic model) and in this section I want to suggest a ‘tactic’ for dealing with that problem through reference to the work of the anthropologist Marcel Mauss as discussed by the cultural theorist Ian Hunter.

In particular, I want to argue that one of the main problems arising from Certeau’s work is that it is limited by its reliance on what Ian Hunter has identified as a ‘fundamentally aesthetic or dialectical style of analysis [in respect of mind-body relations]’ which informs cultural studies more generally. My purpose in the following section of analysis is not an attempt at a sustained engagement with

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180 Pile 228.

that contentious thesis. Instead, by using elements of Hunter’s polemical commentary as something of a springboard, I want to suggest how aspects of Certeau’s account of ‘walking in the city’ might usefully be refigured through an engagement with a more descriptive anthropological mode of analysis; in particular, the work of Marcel Mauss and his discussion of cultural assemblages of mind-body techniques.

In brief, Hunter’s argument is that despite its claim to be offering a new approach to culture, one that is concerned with a certain emancipatory gesture (frequently realised through its turn to the body as a site of resistance to the shackles of reason and rationality), cultural studies merely refigures a particular mode of dialectical analysis that, as he shows, stretches back to Hegel. At the heart of that extremely durable tradition is the positing of a single, dialectically informed relation between the body and the formation of the subject (or the social). Of relevance here are the three features that Hunter identifies as arising from this dialectical relation between subject and body. These can be summarised as 1) the insistent unification of the mind (subjectivity) and the body; 2) the production of a notion of a single general relation between “body” and “subjectivity” in which ‘the mind’s will to control bodily desire (repression), and the body’s impulse for polymorphous satisfaction (perverse desire), reach an optimal reconciliation in the form of the controlled satisfaction of desire (sublimation)’; 3) the establishment of a social role for the intellectual through this dialectical relation—one concerned with giving voice ‘to the dumb resistance of the body.’

Certeau’s account of walking in the city is, I want to argue, fundamentally based on the Hegelian premises outlined by Hunter. Certeau’s account assumes ‘a general dialectical relation between attributes that might . . . be identified as bodily or mental’ thereby setting up a universal relationship between the body and subjectivity, the body and society. These assumptions emerge in particular in the way Certeau repeatedly figures the walking body existing in a singular, psychoanalytic relationship to subjectivity. The discourse of psychoanalysis, argues Hunter, is one of the most powerful recent universalisations of the mind-body

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182 Hunter 176. As Hunter goes on to note, he is not deliberately invoking the work of Freud here; but rather describing a tradition in which Freud’s work is one exemplary instance.  
183 Hunter 176.  
184 Hunter 182.
dialectic as it problematically takes for granted an identification of desire with the body and the unconscious. Precisely this type of psychoanalytic framework is strongly endorsed by Certeau in the conclusion to ‘Walking in the City;’ however, it is also signalled earlier in the chapter in Certeau’s description (citing Benveniste) of the movements or ‘figures’ employed in the rhetoric of walking which characterise ‘both a “symbolic order of the unconscious” and “certain typical processes of subjectivity manifested in discourse”’ (PE 102). Accordingly, for Certeau,

To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place . . . a universe of rented spaces haunted by a nowhere or by dreamed-of spaces. (PE 103)

It is easy enough to think of pleasurable walking practices that exemplify this poetic and highly romantic sense of being unconsciously taken where one’s footsteps lead (for instance, a Sunday afternoon walk in an unfamiliar district of the city in which one lives). On the other hand, it also seems to be an unnecessarily limiting framework; in other words, the metaphors of ‘absence’ and ‘presence’ are simply not that helpful when considering a range of more regimented or functional instances of walking that are not primarily concerned with identity production (e.g., the common everyday practice of going for a walk to ‘get some sun’ and ‘fresh air’ and generate some kind of feeling of corporeal well-being).

As Hunter argues, a useful corrective to the limits of the mind-body dialectic, as set up in Certeau’s psychoanalytically informed account of walking, is the work of the anthropologist Marcel Mauss and his notion of mind and body techniques. In his 1934 lecture, ‘Techniques of the Body,’ Mauss provides us with a starting point from which to consider the social processes of transmission and education in different modalities and culturally specific forms of walking. Mauss offers the following anecdote which he describes as a ‘kind of revelation’ that he had in a hospital in New York:

185 As Hunter notes, ‘the identification of desire with the body and the unconscious—that the dialectical theorists take for granted—is for Foucault the product of a historically specific technique of moral problematisation. Psychoanalysis is not so much a theory of this exercise in self-problematisation as a version of it(183).’
I wondered where previously I had seen girls walking as my nurses walked. I had the time to think about it. At last I realised that it was at the cinema. Returning to France I noticed how common this gait was, especially in Paris; the girls were French and they too were walking in this way. In fact, American walking fashions had begun to arrive over here, thanks to the cinema. This was an idea I could generalise. The position of the arms and hands while walking form a social idiosyncrasy, they are not simply a product of some purely individual, almost completely psychical arrangements and mechanisms. For example: I think I can also recognise a girl who has been raised in a convent. In general she will walk with her fists closed. And I can still remember my third-form teacher shouting at me: “Idiot! why do you walk around the whole time with your hands flapping wide open?” Thus there exists an education in walking, too.\footnote{Marcel Mauss, ‘Techniques of the Body,’ \textit{Economy and Society} 2:1 (1973): 72. Cf. Ross, \textit{Fast Cars, Clean Bodies}. In her introduction, Ross notes that Jacque Tati’s postwar films ‘make palpable a daily life that increasingly appeared to unfold in a space where objects tended to dictate to people their gestures and movements—gestures that had not yet congealed into any degree of rote familiarity, and that for the most part had to be learned from watching American films(5).’}

Mauss’ anecdote points to the fact that the most basic and transparent of bodily actions and dispositions (for instance, walking, spitting, gazing, resting etc.) have no neutral or ‘natural’ form but are always culturally and socially produced, often through mimetic processes.\footnote{This anecdote offers a further interesting portent, in so far as it anticipates the transmission and dispersion of habitual ‘American’ cultural practices in post-second world war France, a process later summarised in the catchphrase coined by Henri Lefebvre and the Situationists: ‘the colonization of everyday life.’ See Ross’ ‘French Quotidian’ 21-22, and her \textit{Fast Cars, Clean Bodies}.}

The ‘bodily techniques’ that Mauss identifies as belonging to a particular realm of education and training (a realm like that inhabited by Certeau’s everyday practices—neither within nor outside the bounds of rational knowledge), are then linked to different technologies of the self, or subjectivity. These techniques of the self were explored by Mauss in his essay, ‘A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self.’\footnote{Marcel Mauss, ‘A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self,’ \textit{The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History}, ed. M. Carrithers, S. Collins, S. Lukes (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1985) 1-25.} Hunter argues that Mauss’ anthropological historicisation of the notion of the\textit{ person} (produced through cultural institutions), and crucially distinguished from the\textit{ individual} (the raw unstructured biological
entity), is in fact ‘a history of the emergence of the subject.’ Through his cross-cultural tracing of the historical development of the notion of self in Western cultures, Hunter implicitly argues that Mauss provides a useful framework within which to consider Foucault’s notion of ‘techniques of the self’, in which ‘individuals came to conceive of themselves as objects of their own ethical attention,’ particularly through the linking of personhood to the conscience and consciousness of individuals.

Mauss’ key point is that there are separate domains of socially transmitted techniques of ‘the body’ and ‘the self.’ These techniques are then assembled together in different social formations. Mauss did not, however, extend his work on this topic to detailed elaborations on specific formations or alliances between various mind and body techniques. As Hunter suggests, though, a plurality of possibilities is allowed by Mauss’ framework. This plurality indicates that while there are historically-specific alliances between mind and body techniques it is not the case that all such alliances (and hence Certeau’s model of walking), can be held to ‘be governed by a single goal or function: the formation of the subject.’ As Hunter argues, this presumption—that subject formation is the ultimate endpoint of techniques of the body—has been dominant in modern western cultures. One of the by-products of this reasoning has been a rigid differentiation of bodily and mental attributes in which the former are universally characterised as ‘unconscious, in the sense of lying beyond the reach of conscious knowledge, resisting its rationality through desire and the drives, and so on.’ So while dialectical body theory is useful in directing us towards the ways in which ‘our capacities and conducts are not governed by the canons of rational knowledge’ it is, as Hunter suggests, less helpful in attributing the ‘absence of such governance with the unconscious or the bodily drives.’ In contrast, Mauss’ work suggests that habitual bodily attributes like walking are not necessarily ‘unconscious’ bodily performances that must carry all the weight of that particular adjective. Instead, as Hunter notes, ‘they fall neither within nor beyond the reach of knowledge, because they belong to another department of existence,’ one identified as that of ‘training,’ a social process whose

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189 Hunter 180.
190 Hunter 181.
191 Hunter 182.
192 Hunter 183.
193 Hunter 183.
distinguishing trait is ‘not scientific circumspection but habitual virtuosity.’ And as Mauss argues, this habitual virtuosity is assembled through different forms of social authority and exhibits differences in terms of ‘societies, educations, proprieties and fashions.’

Mauss’s anti-Hegelian understanding of walking as a habitual practice, organised and transmitted through different forms of social authority, thereby suggests a useful corrective to Certeau’s more restricted dialectical understanding of the relation between the subject and the body. In Mauss’s formulation the body is a territory upon which a certain education and training might be inscribed; however, this education is somewhat different to the training of the subject famously analysed by Foucault (despite the frequent alliance of these two kinds of training in western cultures). Thus an analysis of practices of walking, I would suggest, must begin with a recognition that there is no ‘privileged interface between the body and subjectivity or the body and society’; rather, there are only specific cultural assemblages. Accordingly, we need to examine the ways in which different techniques of walking (dispositions of the body) are articulated with formations of subjectivity within particular urban contexts.

iii. Walking as a practice of affective investment

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194 Hunter 183.
195 Mauss, ‘Techniques of the Body’ 73. Mauss uses the notion of the ‘habitus’ to encapsulate this sense of socially transmitted techniques and dispositions. Certeau also makes reference to the notion of habitus, but principally in relation to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s more recent and somewhat different deployment of it. As Certeau argues, ‘the habitus’ is the missing link that allows Bourdieu to explain the gap between structures and practices or ‘dispositions.’ However, Certeau disputes Bourdieu’s overall characterisation of the process due to the privileged influence he accords to structures (over agents) in determining the social mobility of subjects (see PE 56-60)). What is important here, I would suggest, is not so much the question of the accuracy of Certeau’s critique but, instead, the consequences of his choosing to engage with Bourdieu as it shapes his work in such a way as to remain limited by what Hunter describes as ‘the exemplary moral structures of humanist sociology—between structure and agency, repression and resistance, rationality and being . . played out “at the interface where society meets human bodies”’ (Hunter 175). However, as my analysis (following Hunter) demonstrates, Mauss’ notion of assemblages suggests a means by which some of the limitations of a ‘structures’ versus ‘agent’-style analysis might be displaced in a deployment of Certeau’s work.

196 Hunter 183.
As suggested above, Mauss’ work enables us to think about practices of walking outside the logic of the knowing subject and the unconscious body; that is, he allows the corporeal dimension of walking to re-emerge through his account of ‘techniques of the body.’ In particular, Mauss directs us towards the socialised nature of the physical, ‘machinic’ aspects of walking that are the product of social education: ‘breathing, rhythm of the walk, swinging the fists, progression with the trunk in advance of the body or by advancing either side of the body alternately . . . Feet in or out. Extension of the leg.’ Yet as subjects we are often aware that the social practice of these techniques of walking are always accompanied by levels of ‘intensity’ (or lack thereof) depending on their context. In other words, practices of walking have a certain ‘texture,’ ‘attitude’ or ‘tone’ that is not discussed in Mauss’ account. This significant property of ‘intensity,’ which describes an awareness or feeling of a connection between the strolling body and the world, is best described through the theoretical notion of affect that I explore in the following section.

Firstly, however, I return to Certeau. Some elements of this affective aspect of walking are alluded to in his account, particularly in respect of his general characterisation of walking as a ludic practice, though as I will demonstrate they are problematically framed within a psychoanalytic, ‘symbolic’ or meaning-oriented paradigm. In particular, Certeau’s structural, linguistic model characterises the city as a text while the everyday (and the body of the walker) is implicitly associated with the pre-symbolic. Consider, for instance, Certeau’s characterisation of the dynamic relationship between the practices of individual walkers and the ‘official’ urban landscape and discourse with which they interact. He argues that the bodies of walkers ‘follow the thicks and thins of an urban “text” they write without being able to read’ (PE 93). Walking in this sense is a process of multiple bodily inscriptions of ‘the city’ where the networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other (PE 93).

197 Mauss, ‘Techniques of the Body’ 82.
Here Certeau simultaneously draws upon and differentiates himself from Roland Barthes’ seminal lecture on ‘Semiology and the Urban,’ given in Naples in 1967.\textsuperscript{198} Barthes tentatively suggested in this lecture that

the best model for the semantic study of the city will be provided, I believe, at least in the beginning, by the phrase of discourse. And here we rediscover victor [sic] Hugo’s old intuition: the city is writing. He who moves about the city, e.g., the user of the city (what we all are), is a kind of reader who, following his obligations and his movements, appropriates fragments of the utterance in order to actualize them in secret.\textsuperscript{199}

The similarities between Barthes and Certeau’s are apparent in the shared notion of inhabitants ‘writing’ (through appropriation) the ‘text’ of the city. Yet, as I noted earlier, Certeau also implicitly critiques the kind of structuralist approach suggested by Barthes in so far as he maintains that the totality of these fragments or utterances actualized by city users remains ‘indefinitely other’ to the structuralist critic, for there is ‘an unlimited diversity’(\textit{PE} 99) to these enunciatory operations. According to Certeau, these fragments belong to another domain of knowledge, that of ‘the everyday,’ a realm that evades incorporation within the official, ‘scientific’ paradigm that Barthes’ essay seeks to clarify.\textsuperscript{200} Certeau thus posits a more localised and modest approach that focuses on describing some the enunciative figures or actions of walking that are deployed by walkers in an infinite variety of combinations (see \textit{PE} 100-102).

The question is, however, does Certeau’s reliance on linguistic metaphors to describe those embodied actions of the walker ironically result in a decorporealization of the relation between walker and city? Almost, but not completely, as can be seen in his delimiting of the three characteristics of the rhetoric of walking which distinguish it from the urban spatial system within which it takes place. Those characteristics are ‘the present, the discrete, the “phatic”’(\textit{PE} 98). The \textit{present} and the \textit{discrete} unambiguously describe semiotic/enunciative


\textsuperscript{199} Barthes 95.

\textsuperscript{200} At one point in this lecture, Barthes describes semiology as a providing a ‘new scientific energy’ (97) with which the metaphors of ‘reading’ and ‘writing’ the city might be formally codified.
operations in the form of the choices made by the walker, his or her rhetorical flourishes, which effectively ‘privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements’ (PE 98); that is to make them mean something or, alternatively, mean ‘nothing’ by condemning ‘certain places to inertia or disappearance’ (PE 99). At the same time as walking performs these semantic operations, however, Certeau argues that it also creates a ‘mobile organicity in the environment, a sequence of phatic topoi’ (PE 99).

In other words, the rhetoric of walking frequently involves departures from, or interruptions to, fixed paths and proper places: these departures and interruptions are moments when walking ‘gambols, goes on all fours, dances’ (PE 99) ensuring a continuity of communication in the spatial story that connects a ‘here’ and ‘there,’ but not the production of ‘meaning’ in the strictest sense.

The other point at which Certeau suggestively edges towards a non-semiotic dimension of walking is in his discussion of the relation of memory to spatial practice. Initially, that discussion of memory is framed within narratological and semiotic terms; that is, walking is a signifying practice that enables narrative entries and exits, opportunities ‘for going away and coming back’ (PE 106), an opening up of space ‘to something different’ (PE 107), a personal story. The memories of walkers thus haunt the official order and make it habitable: “Here, there used to be a bakery.” “That’s where old lady Dupuis used to live” (PE 108). However, in his concluding paragraph to this particular discussion the body makes a surprising reappearance when Certeau further comments that,

Places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body. “I feel good here”: the well-being under-expressed in the language it appears in like a fleeting glimmer is a spatial practice. (PE 108)

In this passage, then, Certeau moves toward a recognition of the importance of bodily experiences of ‘pain or pleasure’ as being fundamental to walking. However, his concluding comparison of this process to its linguistic recording through the phrase ‘I feel good here’ is an unnecessary gloss—what seems important here is that Certeau recognises that the ‘embodied’ experiences or effects produced through
practices of walking can’t necessarily be read through a straightforward semiotic framework.

The notion of ‘feeling good’ in a place or through a particular practice of walking can, in fact, be discussed another way; that is, through the notion of affect. Affect allows a displacement of some of the problematic binary oppositions—mind/body, conscious/unconscious, symbolic/pre-symbolic—that otherwise organise Certeau’s work. Brian Massumi, in particular, has offered a particularly engaging account of the concept and operations of affect that I will briefly draw upon here.\textsuperscript{201} The realm or presence of affect, according to Massumi, can be discerned in the gap between content and effect that marks cultural practices (while Massumi refers to the example of image reception in his article, I would argue that his argument is equally applicable to other social practices like walking).\textsuperscript{202} While part of the function of images, for example, is to carry a certain ‘content’ in terms of their indexing to conventional meanings in a socio-linguistic structure (which Massumi calls their quality), they are also marked by the strength or duration of that effect (what Massumi refers to as their intensity or ‘affect’). For Massumi, this property of intensity is not semiotically or semantically ordered. Intensity ‘is embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin—at the surface of the body, at its interface with things.’\textsuperscript{203} Furthermore, he convincingly argues that there is no fixed ‘correspondence or conformity between quality and intensity.’\textsuperscript{204} Instead, the relationship between quality and affect might be more usefully described in terms of ‘resonation or interference, amplification or dampening.’\textsuperscript{205} As Massumi notes, there is much to gain from ‘integrating the dimension of intensity into cultural theory.’\textsuperscript{206}

Consider, for example, the collective act of the crowd walking through city streets to or from a sports match at a local stadium. This type of walking mobilises particular semiotic orders that are articulated to different ideological meanings; for

\textsuperscript{202} Massumi 84.
\textsuperscript{204} Massumi 85.
\textsuperscript{205} Massumi 86.
\textsuperscript{206} Massumi 87.
example, the display of certain sporting paraphernalia (scarves, hats and jumpers in club colour on walkers’ bodies) enables the production of various ‘community’ identities that are organised around particular mythologies. However, the cultural force carried by those signifiers as they are literally ‘paraded’ in the streets is not simply an effect of its visual display and attendant semiotic meanings. Certainly, on the one hand, these walkers are enacting a semiotic transformation (in Certeau’s sense), of ‘place’ into a particular space. Yet there is something more happening here. For as David Crouch observes, one of the primary effects produced through this particular walking practice may in fact be to ‘drown out’ the usual semiotic messages produced through buildings passed and the layout of the streets traversed:

It is the presence and movement of bodies that assists the knowledge of a shared purpose and participation; and of a meaning that transforms the materiality of space itself. . . . In their presence and in their movement, the bodies of self and of others, identified with similar purpose, feeling and direction, are dissolved into an intention and an identity that overwhelms any other image the street may hold; shops, houses, traffic, as these become culturally deafened by the ritual of occupation.207

Within this context, comments Crouch, the body becomes a key barometer for assessing ‘the multidimensionality of events, their intensity, uncertainty.’208 In this particular ritual of occupation, the affective dimension of collective walking disproportionately amplifies and focuses what is a common city practice, crowds walking through streets to particular destinations.

It is worth noting here that while there is certainly often a series of emotions signified through the practice of walking to/from the stadium (anticipation, elation, disappointment, etc., depending on whether the walking takes place before or after the match, who has lost or won), these are secondary to affect. As Massumi argues, emotion ‘is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, . . . [i]t is intensity owned and recognized.’209 Yet to talk of affect in this way is not to suggest that it

208 Crouch 168.
209 Massumi 88.
belongs to some ‘pre-reflexive, romantically raw domain of primitive experiential richness.’ For Massumi, affect is not presocial but asocial because affect involves the brain and body conserving ‘the trace of past actions including a trace of their contexts . . . but out of mind and out of body understood as qualifiable interiorities, active and passive respectively, directive spirit and dumb matter.’ That is, affect is asocial because it is the storing and repetition of these past actions and contexts, their autonomic reactivation but not their completion. Or, even more precisely, as Greg Seigworth argues, affect is a useful term for designating a habitual ‘ongoing accumulation of everyday time and space’ that may at some point reach a certain ‘density’ or ‘is struck by a vibrancy that causes the collection to behave like an unsettled atmosphere: moving, now, toward a moment of condensation.’ (In my example of walking to the sports stadium, that intensity and accumulation opens up into both past, the ‘memory’ of past experiences of a similarly charged moment, and future, a heightened anticipation of multiple possible emotional outcomes).

Yet how can this difficult notion of affect be usefully deployed when analysing a social practice such as walking? Here, cultural studies critic Lawrence Grossberg’s work is helpful as he has produced perhaps one of the most sustained investigations into the role of affect in relation to popular practices. In particular, Grossberg has argued that the sensibilities of popular formations operate primarily on the plane of affect. In this respect, he observes that it ‘is possible that cultural practices may, in some circumstances, not operate through the production of meaning . . . Sometimes the production of meaning may be little more than a distraction.’ Popular practices, in other words, are often also, as he puts it, practices of affective investment. Some popular practices (like music or, as I am arguing, certain kinds of walking in the city) operate primarily as sites for the production of a certain intensity that can potentially have important ideological effects. Thus, despite the seemingly cliched nature of the urban protest march, say, the simple act of a group of people walking together in a public city street can still help produce startling ideological effects (consider, for example, the disproportionate ideological weight carried by the ‘marching season’ in Northern Ireland). This is where the notion of articulation becomes vital. More generally,
then, as Grossberg observes, the ‘dominance of the affective dimension does not mean that such popular formations do not also involve relations of ideology and pleasure, materiality and economics. Daily life always involves the inseparable articulation of these domains; it can only be understood as the complex relations among these.’

**Conclusion: mind-body-city**

The need to recognise daily life as an inseparable articulation of multiple domains has been highlighted by Simon During who comments that,

Most relevantly, within a discipline [cultural studies] that has globalized itself through affirming otherness, it is important to remember the obvious point that everyday life is not everywhere the same, despite those modernizing effects of uniformity that Lefebvre was obsessed by. Think about walking in the city: doesn’t it make a difference if one walks in Paris, down-town Detroit, Melbourne, Mexico City, or Hong Kong just for starters? And, in each of these places, does a woman have the same experience as a man, a gay as a straight, a young person as an old one? The everyday, too, is produced and experienced at the intersection of many fields by embodied individuals.

During’s comments here are useful because they foreground the importance of the role of ‘difference’ in terms of particular bodies-subjects and specific urban locations in discussing everyday practices like walking. However, there is still a somewhat problematic implicit notion here of cities existing *prior* to the embodied subjects who walk and manipulate them, of the urban as an already-formed territory, a fixed context that offers different experiences for its multiple inhabitants.

Likewise, Certeau’s account of walking places all of its emphases on the actions, choices and ‘turns’ of the embodied walker who seems to act (for the most part) on a quite static urban territory. Yet isn’t the relationship between body-

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214 Grossberg 83. See, for example, Massumi’s discussion of Ronald Reagan’s ability to produce ideological effects through non-ideological (affective) means, 101-102.

subject and city more of a two-way process? As a means of thinking through this issue in relation to walking—and of forging a model that both starts from and critically expands Certeau’s approach—I want to refer here to Elizabeth Grosz’s work on this topic and in particular her notion of the ‘interface.’ In ‘Bodies-Cities,’ Grosz persuasively argues for a ‘two-way linkage which could be defined as an interface’ between body and city; this notion of the interface helps her describe a ‘fundamentally disunified series of systems and interconnections, a series of disparate flows, energies, events or entities, and spaces, brought together or drawn apart in more or less temporary alignments.’ We witness here a ‘complex feedback relation’ between body and city which can not be assumed to form some unified whole:

The body and its environment, rather, produce each other as forms of the hyperreal, as modes of simulation which have overtaken and transformed whatever reality each may have had into the image of the other: the city is made and made over into the simulacrum of the body, and the body, in its turn, is transformed, “citified,” urbanized as a distinctively metropolitan body.

To accept such a framework is to move away more generally from a dialectic model where one term (body or city) is privileged over another and towards a notion of contingent and contextual assemblies. Grosz’s ‘interface’ thus offers a way of thinking about mind/body/city relations which isn’t ‘symptomatic’ or limited to a psychoanalytic framework (in the same way as Certeau), but, instead, is based on the more flexible notion of assemblage. Furthermore, Grosz directs us here towards the idea that ‘there is no natural or ideal environment for the body, no “perfect” city judged in terms of the body’s health and well-being. If bodies are not culturally pregiven, built environments cannot alienate the very bodies they produce.’ This is not to say, as Grosz also observes, that the rapid transformation of an environment might result in bodies inscribed in a particular cultural milieu experiencing a sense of ‘dislocation’ within a changed context. This, as we saw in my first chapter, was

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217 Grosz 242.
218 This is, of course, somewhat ironic given that Grosz is probably most widely known for her feminist re-readings of Lacan.
219 Grosz 249.
the experience Benjamin charted in his history of the flâneur (the title of Benjamin’s study, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, captures this temporal disjuncture between individual and city). Finally, as we will see in my sixth and final chapter on the ‘architecture of entertainment’ found at Melbourne’s Crown Casino Complex—and as Grosz notes in her article—one of the most significant reformulations of the urban environments and corresponding cultural changes in the body are taking place around the ‘replacement of geographical space with the screen interface’ of electronic communications technologies. As she comments, ‘the continuing mediation of interpersonal relations by terminals, screens, and keyboards, will increasingly affect/infect the minutiae of everyday life and corporeal existence.’

Grosz’s formulation, however, remains somewhat abstract and distant from concrete experience unless situated in specific sites, times and places. In my next chapter I bring together During’s reminder about the importance of ‘difference’ and Grosz’s notion of the interface through a reading of the work of the feminist cultural critic, Meaghan Morris, and her discussion of cultural practices and their relations to contemporary urban environments. For Morris’ work is particularly instructive in its attention to the particularities and politics of location, both in the sense of intellectual traditions and in terms of local histories of particular practices. Her work, I argue, also offers a useful way of framing the intersections between the spectacular and the ordinary in the contemporary Australian city and cultural landscape, intersections that I examine more closely in the second part of my thesis. Furthermore, it allows me to consider some of the largely unexplored convergences between the traditions of work exemplified by Benjamin and Certeau, and how they might be extended to provide insights into more specific contemporary cultural practices of walking and the extraordinary everyday.

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220 Grosz 251.
221 Grosz 251.
3. MEAGHAN MORRIS:
Criticism at the interface

Introduction

In this third and final chapter on ‘orientations’ to the extraordinary everyday, I discuss the work of Meaghan Morris, a practitioner in the field of contemporary feminist cultural studies. Morris’ writings, I argue, provide us with a rich resource for thinking about the temporalities, spaces and practices of everyday culture and how we might critically examine them. To date, Morris has not received the kind of critical attention enjoyed by Benjamin and Certeau; although, arguably, her work has impacted on an equally diverse range of disciplines and areas of inquiry. While this chapter does not purport to provide a comprehensive account of Morris’ writings, it does offer a sustained discussion of themes that can be found across her work, particularly the work in the area of ‘the everyday.’ Of particular relevance here is Morris’ conscious positioning of herself as a feminist cultural critic. This rhetorical stance is important because it allows Morris to sketch out a critical position that both draws upon, and is other to, the traditions of Benjamin and Certeau discussed in the previous two chapters. While my own project is not explicitly a feminist one per se, Morris’ writings are nevertheless vital in inspiring my consideration of the multiple inflections of difference (in respect of gender, forms of knowledge, national traditions and so on) that inform the territory of ‘everyday life.’

The chapter is structured as follows. The first section begins with an analysis of the questions of critical method raised by Morris in her discussion of one of the most common sites of contemporary urbanity—the shopping centre. Sites of consumption like shopping centres have been an important touchstone for recent analyses of the everyday and owe much to Walter Benjamin’s work on modernity,

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the arcade, and the figure of the flâneur. But is the critical stance represented by the flâneur (or even the flâneuse) appropriate in the context of studies of contemporary shopping centres? I argue that Morris offers us a mode of critical engagement that refigures the metaphor of flânerie in order to take account of fractured contemporary subjectivities and changing relations between the public and private spheres. Following this discussion of the mode(s) of engagement between critic and object, the second section of this chapter revisits Certeau and his notion of the ordinary and everyday. Here I discuss Morris’ critique of Certeau’s figure of the ‘ordinary man,’ as well as her figure of the ‘ordinary woman,’ and the issues raised in relation to the privileged social location of the intellectual. Then I raise questions about the specifically French location of Certeau’s work—what happens, for instance, when Certeau’s figure of the walker rubs up against a different history of the national everyday as it does in the context of Morris’ (and my) Australian work? Having reevaluated via Morris the critical methods on offer in both Benjamin and Certeau’s work, in the third section I move on to a consideration of what kind of ‘object’ of study the extraordinary everyday might be for cultural studies. I approach this question through a discussion of Morris’ argument that theorists should not reify particular urban sites as exemplary symptoms of a general state of culture. I focus on her argument that cultural studies should instead be concerned with the broader social and historical contexts from which these instances of the extraordinary everyday emerge. One of the ‘contexts’ that plays a particularly important role in contemporary urban culture, especially in Australia, is that of tourism. Accordingly, in the fourth section I discuss touring and travel—as it is played out in Morris’ work—as useful tropes for exploring the experience of walking, mobility and inhabitation in the contemporary city. Finally, I discuss Morris’ essay on the Sydney Tower, using her complex analysis as a way of both elucidating her unique and pivotal contribution to the study of the everyday and drawing together the various arguments presented in the first part of the thesis.
I. ‘At the crossroads of magic and empiricism’: modes of criticism  
-A reply to Benjamin

In many cities if you keep walking, like Certeau, away from central city towers, you will eventually arrive at the suburb, with its strong connotations of ‘home’ and its distinctive built forms like the shopping centre. As urban landscapes designed primarily for automobiles, twentieth-century suburbs are therefore largely antagonistic towards walkers. However, suburban sites are still useful for thinking about pedestrian practices. As Morris comments:

If the history of suburban space is to some extent a history of pedestrian displacement, then walking, because of its tense, disproportionate relationship to suburban cultural forms, is a useful way to think about how to do something, as a feminist cultural critic, with those forms.²²³

Not only is the suburban shopping centre a useful place for thinking about walking, it also offers a site for considering the critical legacy of Benjamin in the late twentieth century. While it exists in a radically different (sub)urban context, the shopping centre is, nonetheless, an obvious descendent of the arcades which so intrigued Benjamin. In this section I want to address Morris’ critical location in relation to the work of Benjamin, focussing especially on her article, ‘Things to do with Shopping Centres’ (1988). In particular, I want to argue that while Morris’ work demonstrates significant affinities with Benjamin, her approach also provides a strong critique of the epistemological universalism of his flâneur, his mode of ‘enchantment’ with the everyday, and his location within a European, bourgeois scholarly tradition.

In ‘Things to do with Shopping Centres’ Morris’ primary aim is to carry out a reading of the cultural production of ‘woman,’ in this case as consumer at the mall and, at the same time, to consider ‘women’s “cultural production” of modernity.’²²⁴ This essay forms part of a larger feminist project involving what Morris describes as a study of the ‘management of change’ at certain sites of cultural production—

²²³ Morris, Too Soon Too Late 66. Too Soon Too Late was published in 1998 and incorporates (while sometimes rewriting and updating) a number of the earlier essays, such as ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres,’ that I shall be citing in this chapter.
shopping centres, highways, motels, a tourist-telecommunication’s tower—sites that involve everyday practices performed by women. In particular, her analysis of shopping centres is concerned with ‘the ways in which particular centres strive to become “special,” for better or for worse, in the everyday lives of women in local communities.’

For Morris, shopping centres are ‘overwhelmingly and constitutively paradoxical.’ On the one hand they invoke the kind of monumentality and immediacy associated with any large built form. On the other hand they are indeterminate spaces—their identities are dependent on and produced by the heterogeneous crowds who make use of them. Accordingly, Morris notes, academic analyses of shopping centres have tended to be caught between two poles. Both responses are concerned with an exploration of the ‘common sensations, perceptions and emotional states’ which might be experienced in these spaces of spectacle. At one pole, the theorist—in the tradition of the sociology of consumerism—battles against negative or delirious perceptions ‘in order to make a place from which to speak other than that of the fascinated describer,’ while at the other pole the theorist adopts a pose in which she is ‘ostentatiously absorbed in her own absorption in it, qua celebrant or [sic] “popular culture”.

Morris sees a precedent for this split approach in Benjamin’s writings and in the critiques of his work made by Adorno. Specifically, Adorno commented that Benjamin’s work was located at the bewitched “‘crossroads of magic and positivism.” According to Morris, cultural studies has shown a particular affinity with the ‘magical’ or celebratory mode of criticism, associated here with Benjamin’s work on Baudelaire. In its current manifestation, she observes, this mode of criticism is very much concerned with the processes of active appropriation and transformation that characterise ‘everyday life’ and with an ‘appreciation’ of the ‘democratic “potential” of the way people live through (not “alongside”) culture.’ While Morris endorses this as a general critical orientation she also notes the

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225 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 195.
226 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 195.
227 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 196.
228 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 196. Here Morris is specifically referring to the work of Birmingham-school cultural studies writer, Iain Chambers, and his Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience (London: Methuen, 1986).
229 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 196.
230 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 196.
limitations inherent in such an approach due to its dependence on the critical strategy of ‘wide-eyed presentation’ that, according to Adorno, characterised Benjamin’s work. In particular, she argues that the complex social processes at work in the realm of the everyday make it doubtful that one approach—whether it is critical and ‘transcendent’ or celebratory and ‘engaged’—is sufficient to understand those processes.

However, Benjamin’s take on the city was certainly more complex than Adorno’s critique allowed. For while Benjamin sought to experience the delirium of everyday city life, he also drew on the concerns of the sociology of consumerism in so far as he attempted to find a space from which to speak outside of that delirious state. The stance offered through the figure of the flâneur, in other words, was still premised on the notion of a certain kind of critical transcendence. Benjamin’s empiricism derived from his belief that objective meanings were embedded within the world of things. The flâneur, however, could only access those meanings through a mode of distraction and by surrendering himself to the commodity’s siren-call. In this sense, Benjamin, as Gilloch points out, frequently displayed a sense of ambivalence in respect of the city and its distinct modern phenomena: ‘the great cities of modern European culture were both beautiful and bestial, a source of exhilaration and hope on the one hand and of revulsion and despair on the other.’

Likewise, Morris is interested in the critic’s ambivalent relation to the world of urban commodity culture, albeit in a rather more self-reflexive sense than Benjamin. Morris comments for instance that rather than ‘insisting on a “wide-eyed” amazement at the performance of the everyday ... a feminist analysis of shopping centres will insist initially upon ambivalence about its objects rather than a simple astonishment “before” them.’ Her sense of ambivalence here is a multifaceted one. In particular, it is linked to her argument that everyday consumer culture is not simply a landscape that induces modes of ‘intoxication’ but that it can also produce modes of experience better described in terms of banality, paranoia and scepticism. Following on from this, and with some qualifications, Morris also suggests that the metaphor of the pedestrian in the mall is still useful in regard to readings of contemporary practices of identity and place. Here the ambiguous figure

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232 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 196-197.
of the female *flâneur* or *flâneuse* again plays a role, albeit a thoroughly problematised one. As Morris notes at one point, if her essay had a subtitle then it would have been ‘Pedestrian Notes on Modernity.’ At the same time, Morris points out that she is not proposing the possibility of a contemporary *flâneuse* because the term is historically anachronistic. Its anachronism, she argues, lies in the dissolution of public and private spheres ‘on the botanized asphalt of shoppingtown today.’ As my discussion of Benjamin, Friedberg and Bruno’s work indicates, however, that dissolution was enacted much earlier in the form of the nineteenth-century department store. What Morris is pointing to here is the role of the contemporary shopping centre as the latest stop on a repetitive *domestic circuit* that continues to narrativise the place of ‘women’ in modernity.

Morris’ critique of the way in which elements of Benjamin or, as I like to call it, the territory of the ‘extraordinary’ has been taken up, is made most incisively near the end of the essay. Here Morris isolates a part of Terry Eagleton’s summary of Benjamin’s work on the *flâneur*: ‘the commodity disports itself with all comers without its halo slipping . . . Serializing its consumers, it nevertheless makes intimate *ad hominem* address to each.’ This, then, is a characterisation of the commodity as embodying the extraordinary. As Morris points out, such a scenario is one found in many upmarket, recently restored ‘neo-arcades’; however it doesn’t necessarily describe the context within which commodities are situated in suburban shopping centres. Where, asks Morris, ‘is the intimate *ad hominem* address from a raincoat at Big W . . . [t]he commodities in a discount house boast no halo, no aura. On the contrary, they promote a lived aesthetic of the serial, the machinic, the mass-reproduced.’ Radical culture critics, says Morris, should not fall back so easily upon ‘the classic image of European bourgeois luxury to articulate theories of sexual and economic exchange.’ In other words, both the extraordinary *and* the banal inhabit and mark out the territory of the everyday. Instead of having to choose between ‘magic’ (a wide-eyed, mystical approach) and ‘empiricism,’ or a view of the urban as either enchanted or strictly banal, Morris thus proposes a third position that tries to dislodge the logic of binarism, a position based around ambivalence. Ambivalence, Morris suggests, ‘allows a thinking of relations between contradictory

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233 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 201.
234 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 221.
235 Terry Eagleton cited in Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 221.
236 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 222.
237 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 222.
states’ that, importantly for feminism, does not eliminate ‘discontent with “the everyday” and with wide-eyed definitions of the everyday as “the way things are”’.  

Despite Morris’ implicit criticism of Benjamin’s flâneur there are nevertheless important critical affinities between the two in terms of Benjamin’s interest in the disruptive possibilities of distraction and Morris’ conception of the everyday as marked by ambivalence and contradiction. In particular, both stem from a political project that sees the everyday as socially produced and therefore open to counter-discourses and contestation. However, rather than privileging the critical stance of the flâneur, Morris embarks on a self-reflexive critique of her own multiple ‘roles’ as a ‘pedestrian’ in the broadest possible sense, thereby performing a recomposition of the scene of flânerie. Her ‘pedestrian theorising’ at the shopping centre takes on various forms—sometimes she is the ‘cruising grammarian,’ sometimes the cultural ethnographer, at other times the shopper on a mission or even the casual tourist. Rather than reifying one particular perspective or critical practice, the multiple pleasures and processes simultaneously at work at a site such as the shopping centre suggest instead the need for a multiplicity of practices or modes of engagement which are linked together by Morris through the metaphor of ‘walking.’ Instead of adopting ‘the discursive position of externalised visitor/observer, or ethnographer/celebrant,’ Morris confines her study to the history of shopping centres she has inhabited in an ‘other than analytical mode,’ as ‘consumer, window-shopper, tourist, or as escapee from a passing mood.’ However, her analysis is not simply premised upon an experiential methodology. In a move that once again echoes Benjamin, Morris analyses the gap between the mode of personal reminiscence (as in Benjamin’s writing on his Berlin childhood) and the more ‘structural’ considerations of formalist-associated architectural criticism. For Morris, a feminist study of shopping centres ‘should occupy this user/designer, memory/aesthetics gap, not, of course, to “close” or “bridge” it, but to dislocate the relationship between the poles that create it, and so dissolve their imaginary autonomy.’

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238 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 197. Also compare with Steve Pile’s comments on the ambivalence of the flâneur in The Body and the City 230.
239 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 207.
240 Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 206.
II. ‘The shimmering ideal of just walking down the street’
- A reply to Certeau

In reconsidering the role of Benjamin’s methodologies in relation to typical everyday sites such as the shopping centre, Morris also provides a link to Certeau. That link is made apparent in her discussion of the problems raised by sociological approaches to these sites, in particular the sociological construction of what she calls the ‘ordinary woman.’ This construction has obvious resonances with Certeau’s ‘ordinary man,’ a figure who first appears in the dedication to *The Practice of Everyday Life*: ‘To the ordinary man. To a common hero, an ubiquitous character, walking in countless thousands on the streets. In invoking here at the outset of my narratives the absent figure who provides both their beginning and their necessity, I inquire into the desire whose impossible object he represents.’ In particular, Morris’ work questions Certeau’s depiction of the ‘ordinary man’. She mobilises the figure of the ‘ordinary woman’ as a response to the gender-blindness of Certeau’s construction, using this as a starting point to consider how we might talk about the category of the ordinary in a way that is relevant to both feminist projects and broader urban inquiries.

Morris argues that any discursive mobilisation of the figure of the ‘ordinary woman,’ whether in sociological studies or popular discourse, is imbricated in relations of power. In a key passage in ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres,’ she notes how any snapshot of the ‘ordinary woman’ (her example is an anonymous woman carrying a child and pushing a stroller taken from a surveillance camera) is necessarily limited in terms of what it can tell us about the practices, identity and experience of the woman pictured. Interpretations of these kind of images—in this case the image comes from a social policy report—tell us more about the various cultural assumptions held by the observers than the actual subject under scrutiny. Morris argues that one way of dealing with this necessarily mediated process is to construct one’s object of study not as that ‘ordinary woman’ per se, but, instead, to situate the analysis within a ‘history of the positioning of women as objects of knowledges, indeed as targets for the manoeuvres of retailers, planners, developers, sociologists, market researchers and so on.’ Such a Foucauldian-style

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241 Certeau v.
history would also necessitate a study of the ways in which the object (the ‘ordinary woman’) evades these discourses; that is, a ‘study of women’s creativity and cultural “production” as a practice of transforming imposed constraints.’

Morris’ problematisation and re-reading of the use of the ‘ordinary man’ in Certeau’s work and in that of a broader sociological tradition is not simply limited to the important task of thinking about the inadequacies of such approaches for a specifically feminist project. It is also concerned with how Certeau’s work and the tradition of inquiry into ‘the everyday’ that it emerges from might be used and translated in a very particular Australian setting. As Morris observes, not enough attention has yet been paid to the problems that follow from wheeling in the abstract aesthetic vocabulary of European modernism to theorize in Australia what that modernism (as Marshall Berman has shown) has always taken to be “the practice of everyday life” and that was historically invested here with once radical, now reactionary, nationalist populist values.

According to Morris, then, the ‘ordinary’ has its own particular ‘heroic’ history in the Australian context—as she puts it, [f]or at least a century in Australia . . . theologians of social democracy have seen the white male working-class Ordinary as the luminous truth of the Popular that shines through the Everyday.” In the remainder of this section, and as a way of further thinking through her relationship to Certeau’s work, I will discuss Morris’ commentary on this local context, in her wide ranging essay ‘On the Beach.’

For Morris, the ‘shimmering ideal’ of the ordinary in Australia has been positioned both as an object of the critical theorist’s gaze and as a political trope that has been mobilised in both progressive and reactionary ways. Morris’ critique of the Australian ‘ordinary’ in its various guises, I would argue, throws into question some

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244 At the same time, as she notes in Too Soon Too Late, the question of whom one is speaking too is important here. For Morris, it ‘cannot be to the imaginary Ordinary Woman that professional feminisms do keep projecting (72).’

245 [Her emphasis]. Morris, Too Soon Too Late 108-109.

246 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 108.

247 See Meaghan Morris, Ecstasy and Economics: American Essays for John Forbes (Rose Bay, NSW: Empress, 1992) 85-130. ‘On the Beach’ is also included as a chapter in Too Soon Too Late 93-119 and my references cite this version.
of the more utopian and universalist dimensions of Certeau’s walker (in particular, his assumptions about ‘resistance.’) Her essay is organised around a series of competing images of the Australian ordinary taken from a diverse range of critics, writers and artists such as Donald Horne, Les Murray, Stephen Knight, Juan Davila, John Fiske, Bob Hodge and Graeme Turner, Mudrooroo Nyoongahand and John Forbes. Here I want to focus on her reading of two poems about walking, one by Murray, the other by Forbes.

Through an examination of an individual poem by each of these writers, Morris constructs a reading that moves between what she describes as two quite different texts that ‘make a spectacle of the “historic national Ordinary”’. The first is a poem by the de facto Australian poet laureate and self-proclaimed conservative, Les Murray, called ‘An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow’ from his collection, *The Vernacular Republic: Poems 1961-1981*. As Morris notes, this poem is about ‘an epiphany transfiguring an anonymous man in Martin Place [now a pedestrian mall in Sydney] with a fit of cosmic weeping. His weeping brings the city to a halt; when it is over, “he simply walks” through the crowd and away.’ While Murray’s man may not be a *flâneur* per se, he certainly shares some of that characters inherently modernist orientations. Like Murray’s weeping man the *flâneur* is also a figure that marks out the heroic national ordinary as one embodied within the presumed universal subjectivity of the white male. Of particular note here, then, is that Murray’s individual man embodies the ability to transform the banality of urban experience through the act of weeping. Here the ordinary becomes redeemed and transformed through an extraordinary practice. Moreover, the ordinary becomes in itself a sort of hallowed ground that helps define Australian experience. However, the actions of Murray’s ordinary man are, for Morris, exclusionary in so far as the Australian ‘scene’ is one that elides relations between the public realm of the street and ‘home,’ extending a masculinist tradition that reduces ordinary culture to the exploits of the heroic, anonymous ‘man in the street.’

Morris compares Murray’s ode to ‘ordinary’ Australian experience with a poem composed by the late John Forbes. ‘On the Beach: A Bicentennial

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248 Morris, *Too Soon Too Late* 94.
250 Morris, *Too Soon Too Late* 107.
Poem’ (1988) begins thus: ‘astonished / trade union delegates / watch a man behead a chicken / in Martin Place—isn’t there / a poem about this / & the shimmering ideal / of just walking down the street? ...’

Here, in Forbes’ poem, the act of beheading a chicken, which in the context of rural or even suburban, backyard Australian life might have once been considered ‘ordinary,’ becomes transgressive when transposed to the setting of the city street. Like Murray’s poem, however, Forbes still locates the action of the Australian ordinary in the masculine-coded public space of the street. At the same time, of course, the poem also operates in an historically self-aware register, referring to the tradition of the Ordinary ‘bequeathed’ by poets like Murray in ‘An Absolute Ordinary Rainbow.’ Most importantly for Morris, the difference between the two poems is that Forbes’ evocation of the ‘historic national ordinary’ offers its specific critique and reinscription as a series of questions rather than a prescription (a la Murray): ‘... not being religious / we bet on how many full circles / the headless chook will complete/ & won’t this do for a formal / model of Australia, not / too far-fetched, not too cute?’

As in Certeau, both Forbes and Murray construct the everyday as a site of ‘extraordinary’ acts of redemption, transgression and resistance. However, neither Murray nor Forbes indicate a mode in which ‘the everyday’ might be conceived of as a site of engagement with official culture (in Forbes’ poem, for example, the ‘astonished’ trade union union delegates simply ‘watch’ the events unfolding). In other words, the ordinary does not always have to stand in opposition to official culture but is frequently in ‘dialogue’ with it. Just because everyday practices take place on a micro-scale outside of the direct gaze of Certeau’s tower, that doesn’t mean they are always necessarily engaged in heroic, evasive manoeuvres. As Morris notes, Certeau’s work should not simply be read by contemporary critics in terms of the ‘shimmering ideal’ of praxis as evasion/enunciation, but should also allow for a conception of practice as ‘cohesive, dialogic, [and] referential.’

The tower—a metaphor for the ‘official’ enunciation of the everyday—is, in this sense, contra Certeau, inextricably linked to the unofficial or vernacular everyday. Furthermore, as Morris notes, a definitive feature of the recent Australian

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251 John Forbes cited in Morris, Too Soon Too Late 93.
252 Forbes cited in Morris, Too Soon Too Late 93.
253 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 110.
social landscape is that ‘the everyday’ and ‘the ordinary’ has explicitly become, ‘in the name of “culture,”’ an object of bureaucratic fantasy, policy desire, and media hype, as well as a subject of seemingly unlimited cultural production.’ Also, Morris pays particular attention to the ways in which the ‘ordinary’ is mobilised in other discourses such as those of economics. For example, in the wake of the late 1980s Australian economic recession, media moguls such as Rupert Murdoch argued that one way to save the Australian economy was to ‘change the culture.’ What Murdoch meant, argues Morris (drawing on similar media statements by high profile corporate heads and bureaucrats), was that ‘Australia’s biggest economic problem is the lazy, hedonist, uncompetitive, beach-bound, lotus-eating ethos of the Ordinary people.’ The point here is that it is not just the philosopher (as Lefebvre would have it), or the urban planner (as in Certeau), that constructs the ‘ordinary Australian’ as ‘other’ and an evasive object, but, instead, that construction is to be found frequently in economic and governmental discourse disseminated through local and national media. Accordingly, for Morris, cultural studies in Australia can usefully organise its identity around a history of interventions or reading practices that are all in engaged in some way with contesting images of policy: not simply images of what “policy” is or ought to be, but with its failures and absurdities; with how people live its operations and unforeseen consequences, and then with the multiple mediations and refractions of their own responses; with how they formulate initiatives of their own; with how all this living “exceeds” (to wheel in a useful term) the demands and desires of the policy imaginary. So they are all concerned with culture and government in a very broad sense.

This image of the governmentalised Australian everyday reminds us of the problems associated with universalising theoretical models such as Certeau’s. Furthermore, it also suggests that cultural studies—whether in Australia or elsewhere—needs to consider carefully its own relation to the discourse of the extraordinary everyday.

254 Morris, *Too Soon Too Late* 117.
255 Murdoch cited in Morris, *Too Soon Too Late* 115. Also see Frow and Morris vii-xv.
256 Morris, *Too Soon Too Late* 115.
258 Morris, *Too Soon Too Late* 118.
III. Change the object: from ‘theory’ to context

A central concern raised by Morris—and that runs through my thesis—concerns how the extraordinary everyday is constructed as an object of analysis in a critical imaginary. Aside from questions of social location and power, this is a particularly prescient question for cultural studies given that the temporality of academic criticism is generally quite different to that of forms of popular culture (for example, the media or the city). In ‘Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower,’ Morris offers an anecdote concerning change and history that is relayed through a narrative concerning her attempts to write about the building of the tower. On her first visit to the tower in the early 1980s, Morris is struck by interior displays that produce a racialised narrative for local residents and international visitors alike linking tourism and the place-history of Sydney. When revisiting the Tower towards the end of 1980s, however, Morris discovers that the initial displays that she viewed have been replaced by a representation that contains no narrative of place but, rather, simply presents ‘an itinerary of [touristic] movements about to be performed’ thus effectively foregoing any address to Sydney residents in favour of one addressed to international tourists. Accordingly, Morris wonders what the critic can do when ‘caught analyzing an object that has ceased to exist or that everyone else has forgotten.’

Morris argues that one common response to this disjunctural between academic time and that of the everyday object of analysis, which features regularly in much recent urban-related cultural studies work, is to ‘resort to one of those “great schematic and secondary sweeps through time” that allow us to recast our methodological problems in more manageable forms as symptoms of a broader cultural “logic,”’ social “condition,” or epochal “moment.” In this way the problem is displaced by focussing away from the empirical specificities of particular sites. Through such a strategy, Morris argues, ‘problems of method become occasions for rehearsing blockbuster theories of History.’ Morris is here referring to the type of critical work performed so dazzlingly by writers like the Marxist

259 Morris, ‘Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower’ 12.
260 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 3.
261 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 2.
262 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 2.
cultural critic, Fredric Jameson and, in particular, his account of postmodernism/postmodernity. This part of Jameson’s work has exerted a major influence on the ways in which cultural studies and other scholars write about ‘new’ types of everyday urban spaces and sites.

Two seminal and thematically overlapping articles, published in the early 1980s, witnessed Fredric Jameson taking his readers on a foot journey through the newly emergent urbanscape of postmodernity. Producing the kind of blockbuster theory of history referred to by Morris, key sections of Jameson’s influential account of postmodernity are written as a walking tour through the public (downtown streets) and private (the Bonaventure hotel) city spaces of Los Angeles—the ‘archetypal’ postmodern metropolis. In a theoretical move that echoes Benjamin’s use of the nineteenth-century form of the arcade, Jameson casts the interior of the Bonaventure as representative of the disorienting cultural ‘hyperspaces’ of postmodernism. In the lobby of the Bonaventure, Jameson finds it difficult to describe his experience: ‘what happens when you get there is something else, which I can only try to characterise as milling confusion, something like the vengeance this space takes on those who still seek to walk through it.’ According to Jameson, the hyperspatial nature of the hotel’s interior transcends the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself thus mirroring the general dislocation of postmodernity.

However, while the urban landscape that Jameson ‘finds’ on his journey is one characterised by spatial confusion, chaos and instability, he is able to bring it together under the methodological rubric of ‘cognitive mapping.’ As one critic puts it, Jameson performs a tightrope act and ‘boldly assumes the high-altitude vantage point of the synoptic totaliser.’ That figure of the tightrope walker is useful here for understanding Jameson’s relationship to his object of study and I would argue that it also sets up a relationship between Jameson’s walker and the

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264 Jameson, ‘Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism’ 83.
modernist flâneur. Like the Baudelairean flâneur, Jameson constructs his own relationship with the city as one between a viewer and an urban panorama, a relationship that allows him to critically map a broader landscape of postmodernity from the privileged position of the transcendent observer. More specifically, and as Morris suggests, Jameson resorts to ordering the disparate everyday phenomena he finds in the city under an extraordinary periodising concept, namely postmodernism. For Jameson, the formal features of postmodernism are in many ways an expression of the ‘deeper logic’ of a new historical phase in the development of capital, which (following on from the economist, Mandel) he calls ‘late capitalism.’

The problem with Jameson’s reading, which sees this built site as a symptom of History, is that it foregoes a consideration of the local specificities and empirical realities of the Los Angeles urban environment. The fortress-like Bonventure makes more sense, for example, when also considered in light of the distinctive spatial segregation of Los Angeles, a context which is missing from Jameson’s analysis.267 In other words, Jameson elides any significant consideration of the Bonaventure’s fortress-like construction and disorienting interior in terms of its strategy of exclusion which echoes Los Angeles’ broader architectural apartheid. As Philip Cooke has observed ‘[t]he post-modernist towers [of the Bonaventure] are, in such a context, fortresses protecting the new rich from the new poor whom they nevertheless need, but at arms’ length. Thus the hyperspaces to which access by pedestrians is all but impossible become comprehensible.’268

As John Frow and Meaghan Morris have argued, forms like the mall do not provide some ‘quintessential insight into the organisation of an epoch or a culture,’ nor do they stand as ‘an essence or emblem of the postmodern condition.’269 This is not, however, a denial of the importance of the mall as one of a number of crucial


cultural sites in the landscape of the postmodern everyday; instead, as Frow and Morris suggest, the mall might be more productively thought of as a complex and contingent site which ‘disparate structures meet in and flow through.’\(^{270}\) To analyse these structures it is necessary to utilise a range of interwoven discourses (economic, political, gender, aesthetic, ethnographic, policy, sociological). At the heart of such a multivalent approach is a recognition of the slippery nature of the urban site as an ‘object’ of study and the problematic reductionism that can occur when an urban form is reified. Thus Morris’ preference in her work is to mobilise a different sense of history that is ‘specific to the study of forms of practice’\(^{271}\) that take place at these kinds of sites, and which thereby prolongs ‘the life of the ephemeral item or “case”’.\(^{272}\) In this sense, it seems less useful to declare that a particular kind of space and environment like the Bonaventure enshrines a new era and mode of being just on the basis of the experience of a member of the knowledge class and, instead, to ask how the production of such sites might both encourage new (heterogeneous) forms of practice for different groups (guests, tourists, workers).

As Morris has stated elsewhere, a further way of dealing with urban objects and sites ‘is to refuse to be “sucked in” . . . by “singularity.” This is one reason for studying several “eventful” places in a particular tourist economy: examining, for example, the relation between their different relative rates of renovation or dereliction, as well as a distinctive present, and a local past, in each.’\(^{273}\) Furthermore, Morris’ work breaks with the kind of theory that treats built forms as preexisting, ‘given’ spaces, arguing that her project is not so much one that involves historically generalising forms of the shopping centre but is concerned instead with ‘how particular centres produce and maintain . . . “a unique sense of place” - in other terms, a myth of identity.’\(^{274}\)

Of course, such a mode of analysis also runs the risk of being accused of a certain type of myopia. In particular, an excessive focus on the local can marginalise the impact of broader cultural and economic trends and the historical persistence of structures of domination. In his most recent work, *Thirdspace* (1996),

\(^{270}\) Frow and Morris xvi.

\(^{271}\) [Her emphasis]. Morris, *Too Soon Too Late* 23.

\(^{272}\) Morris, *Too Soon Too Late* 3.

\(^{273}\) [Her emphasis]. Morris, ‘Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower’ 15.

\(^{274}\) Morris, ‘Things to Do With Shopping Centres’ 194.
Edward Soja has sounded a polemical warning about an over-reliance on such a methodology:

There is a growing tendency in postmodern critical urban studies to overprivilege the local—the body, the streetscape, psychogeographies, erotic subjectivities, the microworlds of everyday life and intimate community—at the expense of understanding the city-as-a-whole, or what Lefebvre described as the "urban reality". Macrospatial perspectives are too often labeled taboo by those attuned to flânerie, by critics who see in the view from on high only a dominating masculinist voyeurism, and by what might be called vulgarist voluntarists romancing the unconstrainable powers and intentions of human agency against any form of structural analysis or determination. In chapter 9 I try to "third" this debate by exploring an-Other way to approach the micro-macro, local-global, agency-structure oppositions, drawing from both spheres as best I can while pointing toward new directions that transcend any simple additive combination or strict either/or choice.275

I would argue that while it is attuned to the local, Morris’ writing is also an exemplary demonstration of such a process of ‘thirding’ at work. Put another way, what is particularly useful about her work is that is offers a thoughtful and self-reflexive interface between the flows of everyday culture at the micro-level and the broader trends and tendencies diagnosed in the more abstract realm of cultural theory. For Morris, cultural studies as a disciplinary practice ‘entails a flexible relation both to history and to the sweeping claims, spatial as well as temporal, circulating as theory.’276 Morris’ answer to the problem of the theorist’s relation to the urban ‘object’ of inquiry, then, is that the ‘object’ itself whether constructed as the ‘local’ or as an allegory of a larger process is always already located within a broader discursive context. The ‘object’ is never a singular site, event, or moment but is always located at a conjuncture of different discourses or contexts which are re-produced in cultural criticism—the question is how those frames, locations and flows are made to appear.

275 Soja, Thirdspace 21.
276 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 7.
IV. ‘Life as a tourist object’ in Australia: new modes of everyday experience

Where does tourism end and leisure or culture or hobbying and strolling begin?

—Chris Rojek and John Urry

In this next section I want to further explore the way in which Morris’ work suggests a ‘third’ approach to urban sites—one which marks a shift from the object to the context. I discuss Morris’ focus on tourism not just as a way of explicating a certain methodology but also a way of setting the stage for the case studies that follow, each of which interfaces in important ways with the discursive structures of tourism. This section argues that modern tourism in particular is one of the modes that makes contemporary everyday urban experience distinct. As Morris has argued:

The study of tourism may provide a better ground for rethinking the conditions of social action today than an immediate critical revision of the history of sociological theory. . . wherever tourism is an economic strategy as well a money-making activity, and wherever it is a policy of state, a process of social and cultural change is initiated which involves transforming not only the ‘physical’ (in other words, the lived) environment of ‘toured’ communities, and the intimate details of the practice of everyday life, but also the series of relations by which cultural identity (and therefore, difference) is constituted for both the tourist and the toured in any given context.  

As a way of further interrogating the notion of a contextual approach to the urban site I will proceed by unpacking this polemical statement and further thinking about the range of social relations tourism can momentarily bring together. To do so it will be helpful to examine the historical context of the development of tourism, and the recent academic interest in the subject, particularly given that it has become such a central mode of being in contemporary society.

As Jennifer Craik has noted, ‘tourism has become the indicative industry of postmodern lifestyles and post-capitalist economies.’ 279 Or, as Morris puts it, tourism is ‘a paradigm[atic] economic strategy.’ 280 Specifically, in her recent book *Too Soon Too Late*, she argues that the increasing centrality of ‘tourism’ has been one of the key changes in Australia over the period she studies (1972-1995). Rather than discussing everyday urban sites in isolation, her work is in this sense concerned with what she describes as the ‘cultural products of Development’ within the ‘real-estate/tourism/leisure-industrial complex.’ 281 In Australia, the official recognition of the importance of the tourism industry to the country’s economy has been recently marked by what Morris describes as a ‘wider [government] process of “reconstructing Australia”’ 282 in terms of both industry development and its self-image. This shift is reasonably well-documented (from an economic perspective), however, less attention has been paid to the issue of how those experiencing these changes have responded to and engaged with such a widespread shift at the level of everyday life.

To understand the other side of the equation, in other words, ‘the cultural field in which . . . [tourism’s] operations, and its effects, can most immediately be studied,’ 283 we might turn to the spate of recent writing on tourism and, in particular, the general expansion of academic interest in ‘the mobility of peoples, cultures and objects.’ 284 A number of key social scientists have argued that, ‘during organised [or industrial] capitalism, tourism and culture were relatively distinct social practices in both time and space . . . . Tourism as practice and discourse involved clear specification in time (the week and the fortnight) and space (the specialised resorts and spas).’ 285 The arrival of the *flâneur*’s perceptive attitude and mode of being in the world marks a shift in this separation. As Siegfried Kracauer, a friend and contemporary of Benjamin noted in his discussion of Berlin’s Linden Arcade, it was a ‘meaningful coincidence,’ that two travel agencies flanked its entrance. 286 Also to

279 Jennifer Craik, ‘The Culture of Tourism,’ *Touring Cultures* 114.
280 [Her emphasis]. Morris, ‘Life as a Tourist Object in Australia’ 180.
281 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 8.
282 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 8.
283 Morris, ‘Life as a Tourist Object’ 180.
284 Rojek and Urry 1.
285 Rojek and Urry 3.
be found in the Linden Arcade was the World Panorama with its images of foreign lands that offered a proto-touristic experience: ‘Behind the peepholes, which are as close as one’s own window frames, cities and mountains glide by. They look more like faces than travel highlights.’ With the onset of modernity, then, tourism and everyday culture became increasingly entwined. In other words, modern tourism was a series of practices and a site at which, pace Buck-Morss, the mobilised gaze of the flâneur was dispersed becoming democratised and commodified. As Anne Friedberg notes, the mobilised gaze was first successfully packaged and sold to the British, nineteenth-century middle class by the entrepreneur, Thomas Cook, who began organising tours in 1841. Central to the ‘tour’ was a commodified packaging of sights in a narrative sequence. Tourism, like the cinematic technologies that would follow it, transformed the subject’s relation to the everyday. As Friedberg summarises:

Tourism produces an escape from boundaries, it legitimates the transgression of one’s static, stable, or fixed location. The tourist simultaneously embodies both a position of presence and absence, of here and elsewhere, of avowing one’s curiosity and disavowing one’s daily life.

Touring, in this formulation, is a practice in which the tourist attempts to evade the confines of the everyday through an ‘engagement with Otherness.’ Or, as Kracauer remarked in the 1920s, ‘travel is becoming the incomparable occasion to be somewhere other than the very place one habitually is.’

However, in the contemporary postmodern city dealt with in Morris’ writings, the proliferation of modes, practices and sites of virtual mobility mean that the everyday and its exotic other are increasingly difficult to distinguish. As Rojek and Urry argue, for example, that in contemporary society ‘[t]ourism and culture now plainly overlap and there is no clear frontier between the two.’ However, Rojek and Urry’s understanding of tourism remains firmly rooted in a sense of travel as ‘other’ to home, dwelling, and the everyday. In contrast, Morris understands

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287 Kracauer, ‘Farewell to the Linden Arcade’ 340.
288 Friedberg 59.
289 Friedberg 59.
290 Craik 114.
292 Rojek and Urry 3.
tourism as a series of practices embedded in the everyday. Morris describes her overall project as one which involves an analysis of ‘representations of time, space and movement . . . at work in the related touristic practices of shopping, driving, sightseeing, using museums, malls, motels and theme parks, carried out in particular places [Morris’s emphasis].’ One of Morris’ most complex and suggestive essays, ‘At Henry Parkes Motel’ (1988) provides us with a particularly rich insight into how tourism has become such a fundamental part of not just contemporary culture but everyday life. She does so in a discussion of the time-space of the motel, which for her provides a way of thinking through some of the complex relations between travel/home, theory/tourism and the implicit gendering of such divisions. At the same time, her work is not only concerned with the production of tourist places through institutional discourses, but, is also interested in the local meanings and the unofficial stories that circulate among users of these places (as gossip, myth, or opinion).

In ‘At Henry Parkes Motel,’ Morris observes the tendency for self-conscious theorists of postmodern experience (such as Paul Fussell, Jean Baudrillard, and Paul Virilio) to characterise travel and its sites of habitation—such as the motel—as demolishing ‘sense regimes of place, locale, and history,’ and memorialising ‘only movement, speed, and perpetual circulation.’ At the same time motels, like shopping centres, attempt to make themselves a permanent fixture, an attractive place to stop and rest a while. Her essay then is finely balanced around the tension between the fact that on the one hand the motel is defined by its seriality and familiarity (Morris uses Venturi’s statement that ‘[a] motel is a motel anywhere . . .’ as an epigraph); and, on the other, each motel is particular and different.

For Morris, motels also offer a paradox for a feminist cultural studies. While motels are stopping points on heroic masculinist voyages in theory, they have also had ‘liberating effects in the history of women’s mobility,’ extending the boundaries

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293 Morris, ‘Life as a Tourist Object in Australia’ 178.
294 Morris, ‘Life as a Tourist Object in Australia’ 173. Also see Meaghan Morris, ‘Panorama: The Live, The Dead and The Living,’ Island in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australian Culture, ed. Paul Foss (Leichhardt, NSW: Pluto, 1988) 160-187, where she discusses media representations of the Australian Bicentenary. One of the key points she makes in this essay is that such representations, ‘“Nationalism” becomes, not a quest for identity or repertoire of myths, but “our” willingness to redesign everyday life as a landscape for rigorous tourists (182).’
295 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 33.
of ‘home’ and domestic space. Motels offer a haven to single, female travellers or ‘promise decreased bother to women on holiday with their families.’ Motels are also ‘sites of placement for domestic, affective and sexual labor; paid as well as unpaid.’

In what sense, then asks Morris, might they be rewritten as ‘transit-place[s]’ for women to use? One of her answers is to consider closely the paradoxical function of the motel as ‘a place of escape yet a home-away-from-home.’ Motels in this sense are sites where relations of ‘dwelling’ and ‘mobility’ meet. For Morris, the motel is useful in order to ‘frame and displace, without effacing, the association of men with travel and women with home that organizes so many Australian “legends,” in academic as well as popular and recycled touristic forms.’

That is, it offers a way of theorising a more inclusive feminist project that sees the sphere of ‘home’ as both an important site of the containment of women, but also as a site of mobility and potential empowerment. By placing into question the gendered borders between home and mobility Morris’ work opens up the possibility of a feminist ‘activism’ or politics of the ‘toured.’

Here Morris’ project intersects with that of James Clifford. Like Morris, Clifford is not so concerned with charting a contemporary convergence between culture and travel but in arguing for an understanding of ‘[c]ulture as travel.’ His work, emerging out of a discourse of postcolonial and postmodern ethnography, has foregrounded the notion of ‘cultures’ as always, in a sense, travelling and producing from this movement a practice of ‘dwelling.’ In Clifford’s usage, then, the two terms are bound in an inseparable relationship: cultures and their constituents are characterised by their travel-in-dwelling and their dwelling-in-travel. This is not a call, however, to simply run riot with a metaphor of travel as has occurred in much contemporary cultural criticism. As Chris Healy observes, myriad versions of this travel metaphor

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296 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 32.
297 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 32.
298 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 32.
299 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 32.
300 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 32.
301 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 37.
302 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 41.
seem to have proliferated exponentially . . . so that the postmodern subject is inevitable in-between, in-transit, constantly mobile and surfing waves of data; she is constituted by global flows, a border-crosser, nomad, wanderer, diasporic, exile on permanent detour, a migrant returning, a trekker, a drifter, an itinerant, a road-runner, an (involuntary) vagrant.\textsuperscript{306}

For Clifford, the nexus of travel and dwelling is much less ‘theoretical’ than some of the above terms and can be located instead in the messy business of ‘specific histories, tactics, [and] everyday practices of dwelling \textit{and} traveling [his emphasis].\textsuperscript{307} This is not to say, comments Clifford, ‘that everyone is -or should be-traveling, or cosmopolitan, or deterritorialized.’\textsuperscript{308} For Clifford, a comparative cultural studies approach to travel is useful because

of its historical taintedness, its associations with gendered, racial bodies, class privilege, specific means of conveyance, beaten paths, agents, frontiers, documents, and the like. I prefer it to more apparently neutral, and “theoretical,” terms, such as “displacement,” which can make the drawing of equivalences across different historical experiences too easy. (The postcolonial/postmodern equation, for example.)\textsuperscript{309}

Clifford thus explicates a politics of mobility here that strongly resonates with Morris’ work and the cultural studies approach I have adopted in this thesis. From Morris I want to borrow the sense that everyday culture has always been about relative modes of mobility, that different social groups are less or more able to performs acts of travel depending on the broader context of their historical and spatial location. Tourism, then, becomes a new way of conceptualising the politics of the everyday—where the ‘ordinary’ is figured as a site of both exotic, extraordinary ‘otherness’ and of banality, sameness and familiarity. This theme is a recurrent one in my thesis and is captured in particular by the apparently paradoxical trope of the extraordinary everyday.

\textsuperscript{307} Clifford, ‘Traveling Cultures’ 108.
\textsuperscript{308} Clifford, ‘Traveling Cultures’ 108.
\textsuperscript{309} Clifford, ‘Traveling Cultures’ 110.
V. Conclusion: critical practice at the interface—place, face, space

As a figure who both draws upon and updates the work of Benjamin and Certeau, Morris’ writings offer a particularly productive exploration of the territory of the everyday within the context of contemporary society. Her writings offer us an orientation to the everyday that is equally wary of what Seigworth describes as the ‘three deadly sins of everyday critique’: firstly, mysticism (as in the ‘wide-eyed presentation of reality’ or a simplistic mode of astonishment); secondly, hagiography (as in the heroic tradition of great Australian Ordinary); and, finally, displacement (as in the grand historical versions of urban theorising).\footnote{Seigworth 254.} The attention Morris pays to both the ‘enchanting’ and banal modes of urban practice supports the notion of the everyday that underpins this thesis; that is, the extraordinary everyday. If, as Gregory Seigworth (following Grossberg) comments, the everyday is ‘a historically produced plane of existence with its own specific configuration of practices and unequal distribution of resources,’\footnote{Seigworth 245.} then by using the term the ‘extraordinary everyday’ I want to signal the emergence of a new historical configuration of the everyday that is reliant on a self-reflexive sense of its own construction of the everyday, and secondly, achieves this effect through spectacularised and intense affective productions of ‘the ordinary.’ However, to argue that the extraordinary everyday revolves around the production of a particular sense of enchantment through spectacle and affect does not involve positioning it as transcendent. Instead, the extraordinary is seen as precisely that, extra-ordinary, as arising from and embedded in discourses of ordinary, everyday life.

In this conclusion to the first section of my thesis, I want to end with a meditation on, and discussion of, an image from Morris’ work. This image simultaneously gestures to the difficulties involved in reformulating Benjamin and Certeau’s work for a contemporary setting and points to the methodological framework underlying the second part of my thesis in which I discuss three specific
At the same time, it also offers an opportunity to think about the critical dimensions of popular practices and criticism at the interface between the extraordinary and the everyday. The image comes from Morris’ lengthy and complex essay, ‘Great Moments in Social Climbing: King Kong and the Human Fly,’ which broadly discusses myths and social practices linked to the changing downtown Sydney skyline of the 1980s. While drawing on and engaging with an impressive range of critical discourses, the essay offers a particularly thoughtful—though not uncritical—deployment of Certeau’s work; specifically, Morris is interested in both his notion of popular resistance as an art of timing and practice and his idea of praxis as the process of turning place into space. Furthermore, Morris’ essay is instructive because it is partly a reflection on the question of critical practice; that is, on what particular critical tools (‘popular’ or ‘academic’) are appropriate to analysing the corporate architecture of central Sydney. What she attempts to do in this article is to construct an interface between ‘academic theory’ (Deleuze and Guattari, Certeau, Venturi, Baudrillard) and ‘popular criticism’ (real estate advertisements, pop psychology, popular film, local protest ‘stunts’). Thus Morris assiduously avoids privileging either domain and

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demonstrates the intellectual productivity that can occur through the staging of an encounter between the two.

In the final section of her essay Morris focuses on a moment of ‘popular criticism’ in 1987 when a climber, Chris Hilton, scaled the aforementioned Sydney Tower (Fig. 2) while dressed in the costume of the Marvel comic hero ‘The Human Fly’. Hilton recorded this event in the form of a self-produced film, *A Spire*, that was later screened by a public broadcaster, the ABC, as part of a national television series (entitled *I Can’t Stop Now*) about people with obsessions. Hilton’s motivation for climbing the tower was his concern with the rampant degree of development that had been occurring in Sydney through the 1980s: ‘I thought it would be a nice image to climb, that people would get a kick out of seeing someone scale down the tallest building in Sydney to a human scale-just one individual, under their own power, bringing down a massive building which sets itself up as being huge, and impenetrable, and intimidating.’\(^{313}\) In her essay, Morris is interested in analysing Hilton’s act as a particular form of social criticism, ‘a critique of entrepreneurial space,’\(^{314}\) arising out of the sphere of the popular.

Rather than offering a banal, popular psychoanalytic reading that mocks the tower’s phallic symbolism Morris draws upon Deleuze and Guattari’s work on ‘faciality’ as a means of understanding this piece of social criticism.\(^{315}\) Morris argues that Hilton achieves his ‘scaling down’ of the tower through a face-to-face encounter. What is so productive about Morris’s shift from a psychoanalytic framework to questions of the city face/faciality/facade is the way in which it allows rich connections to be drawn between a number of aspects of postmodern theory, particularly work on spectacle, simulation, the hyper-real, the body, and the production of the city. How, then, does this face-to-face encounter occur? Morris offers us this reading of Hilton’s climb in *A Spire*:

As a visual element . . . the Human Fly effect-emphasized by the use of a telescopic lens and the editing of long shots and close-ups-has far from


\(^{314}\) Morris, *Great Moments in Social Climbing* 32.

\(^{315}\) The first section of Morris’ essay ponders the denial by a Sydney developer, John Bond, that his building of a tower was partly an ‘ego thing’ (6-10). Morris argues that pop-psychology critiques of this sort ‘miss the point about wealth and power’ because in Australia a mythology of egalitarianism implies ‘a policing of appearances (“levelling”) without a politics of reform(10).’
casual consequences. Sydney Tower first appears in the film as the usual postcard “phallus” rearing above the city. Then as the climb proceeds, slowly but surely the Tower becomes a face. After figuring as a distant urban peak, the turret turns into a surface, its flat windows and thinly grooved walls becoming an extension of the cliff-face surfaces that were used to prepare for the climb . . . Dressed as the Human Fly, he [Hilton] visibly becomes not a Marvelous superhero who can rival the phallic spire, but (especially in long shot) something quite familiar and “natural” to Australians—an insect crawling on its face.\(^{316}\)

While Morris doesn’t use the word, I think that both the passage above and a number of important corresponding themes in her essay help demonstrates the critical mobility of the concept of the interface. That is, Morris’s reading of A Spire points to the way in which the body-subject, by acting upon the city, both shifts the meanings of the city and its relation to the body.

Perhaps the most ‘stunning’ moment of A Spire, however, is its unconventional conclusion. Although variously observed by a security guard and a number of astonished witnesses during his amazing nine-hour climb, Hilton finds upon his arrival at the top of the tower that there is absolutely no-one waiting to arrest or question him. Then, as Morris notes, after waiting around for fifteen minutes,

[w]hat happens is completely banal: he walks out of the building, his ropes in his bag, and saunters away up the street. An interview ends the story: “So I just walked sort of nonchalantly off, I was feeling quite calm, I wasn’t feeling agitated, so I just strolled as if I owned the place and caught a taxi in Pitt St.”\(^{317}\)

Hilton’s strolling in the streets of Sydney, post-climb, here is in one sense text-book Certeau: the walker transforms place into a space of their own. However, the context of this stroll offers a rejoinder to a number of the binaries that structure Certeau’s account for Hilton doesn’t ‘walk away from the tower’ (both literally and

\(^{316}\) Morris, ‘Great Moments in Social Climbing’ 43-44.  
^{317} Morris, ‘Great Moments in Social Climbing’ 47.
as a material representation of power) in the same way as Certeau. To the contrary, Hilton’s ‘stunt’ (and film) neatly sutures tower and street to make a critical point. His practice of popular criticism was one that, according to Morris, made an important statement ‘about the kind of wealth and power invested in urban towers’ by making a spectacle out of that very commentary.  

Moreover, in contrast to Certeau, as Morris observes, Hilton *transforms* the cultural significance of the tower (which is both a site of spectacle on the city skyline as well as a place where one can enjoy the ‘extraordinary’ touristic view of the city as text from the revolving deck) by including it in an ‘ordinary journey.’ This transformation is perfectly expressed in Hilton’s nonchalant post-climb walk. While the climb could be simply read as a ‘larrikin’ act, Morris persuasively argues that this ‘stunt’ was also a piece of popular criticism enacted through the process of Hilton making a film about making a spectacle of himself. This criticism was enabled through the introduction of social analysis into the genre of the ‘boys-own’ adventure. As Morris observes, the narrative of the climb as put together in the film undermines the expectations of the boys-own adventure genre that we might expect in relation to such a story. Instead, *A Spire* gives equal weight to images of preparation and discussion (the method of the climb as well as the ethics of such an act) that take place at ‘home’ and other city sites. Morris’s point here is to provide an illustration of an instance of popular culture which works to disrupt the insistent binary of the voyage/home. For Morris, Hilton’s climb up the Sydney Tower enacts a disruption of the ‘modalities of power which produce the segregation of public space and private space, of Culture and Nature, of adventure and home.’  

At the same time, I would argue, Hilton and Morris’s critiques also open up to critical scrutiny a rich space between the extraordinary and the everyday, an interface that the following three chapters of my thesis examine in richer detail.

In summary, then, I have been concerned in the first part of this thesis with the possibilities of the trope of walking as a way of fashioning a genealogy or prehistory of the extraordinary everyday. This realm of the everyday arises in conjunction with the birth of new ways of knowing and experiencing the modern

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319 Pile 223. It is worth noting that in Morris’ reading of *A Spire* she observes that there are two different filmic accounts of Hilton’s climb, the second of which includes narrative additions that function to inscribe the adventure/home modality.
city which Benjamin explored through the figure of the flâneur. At the same time, like Certeau, I have also explored the complexity of a seemingly simple, everyday practices—in this case, walking—and how it encompasses a range of relations between ‘resistance’ and appropriation, official and unofficial techniques and dispositions. And from Morris I have taken the thoroughly postmodern sensibility of the social critic who is not positioned above or outside of the everyday but at an interface between the sites, practices, and meanings of the urban everyday. My discussion of three extraordinary everyday interfaces in the second part of my thesis is organised by and further explores the concepts and methodologies that I have explored in the first part. In particular, I am interested how a particular everyday practice, walking, is produced or becomes extraordinary in the context of the sites and events examined. I have chosen these particular sites and events — the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade, the Another View walking trail, and the Crown Entertainment Complex—partly because they articulate a sense of the complexity of the ‘ordinary’ of which Morris’s writing so frequently reminds us. Furthermore, they are strongly attuned to possibilities of difference—walking can become exaggerated as in the street march, a marker of difference in terms of ‘walkabout,’ or a highly virtualised mobility. Finally, these practices also function in quite different ways to reterritorialise aspects of the ‘face’ of the city and direct us to the complex processes by which different modes of everyday being in place are articulated. In what senses do they modify, challenge and/or confirm the modes of mobility, dwelling, perception, and experience identified by Benjamin, Certeau, and Morris as crucial to our understanding of the contemporary city?
PART TWO

INTERFACES
4. EXAGGERATED WALKING
The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade

It's difficult to describe those times now, because we've seen the Mardi Gras on TV and it all seems so big and brilliant, but it wasn't always like that. There was a time when its brilliant colours were just beginning to shine. I pinpoint that moment when Allan and Peter Tully walked down Oxford Street: Tully, the visionary, the master, and Obi-Wan character; Allan, the neophyte, youthful and fresh, and all of us marching. A community striding out to claim its identity, to be visible, to be what it is, and just to be. Walking down Oxford Street, proud.

Someone is actually wearing a T-shirt that says "Gay and Proud". And one's heart swells in this ordinary act of walking. Together.

-William Yang

What does exaggeration . . . exaggerate?
—Susan Stewart

Prologue

It’s mid-afternoon and I am flying from Melbourne to Sydney on the Saturday of the annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade. To pass the time on the plane I’m reading Roberto Da Matta’s evocative description of Brazilian Carnival in which he notes how ‘the actual process of going to the city centre is festive (and highly conscious), with people singing, dancing, and beating samba rhythms in the buses and trains’ thus transforming the space of everyday transit into the space of carnival. On board my flight the passengers are more restrained. Is anyone else going to Mardi Gras? After we land, however, a simultaneously extraordinary and trivial moment occurs when the banalities of the usual arrival patter (‘please remain seated until the fasten seatbelts sign is turned off . . .’) are concluded by the captain wishing us all a ‘Happy Mardi Gras.’

As the shuttle bus brings me in from the airport to my Kings Cross hotel we happen to drive along Oxford Street, Sydney’s ‘gay mile’ and part of tonight’s

321 Stewart xi.
parade route. This street, like a select number of others around the globe, is marked by its history of queer practices. The pavements of such streets are 'wandered by a multitude of pilgrims and adventurers: Old Compton Street in London, Canal Street in Manchester, Christopher Street in New York, Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles'.

Today, the 'pilgrims' are out in force and the palpable sense of excitement in Oxford Street invades the bus's air-conditioning system and threatens to physically halt us there (Figs. 3 and 4). Bodies spill out of hip cafes and over sidewalk barriers onto the streets; old friends embrace and catch up with each other while checking out this year's visitors. There simply isn't enough sidewalk to accommodate everyone and a collective desire to take over the street seems to be only just kept in check.

It is still hot and muggy at six o'clock in the evening but a threatened downpour doesn't eventuate: the almost tangible will of the city for a spectacular party seems too strong even for the weather. The crowds are already swelling along Liverpool, Oxford, and Flinders Streets. It is two hours before the parade yet the locals and regulars in-the-know are already securely ensconced in their favourite viewing positions along the seemingly endless parade route. Territory is casually marked out with an assortment of mini-deck chairs, blankets and eskies and a kind of 'inverted picnic' takes place on the asphalt and its small green oases. Among the prime viewing and eating spots is the elevated fringe of pleasant Hyde Park on Liverpool Street, which overlooks the starting point of the parade, and is also the site of an Anzac War Memorial. In two months from now, returned servicemen and women will march here past a crowd of 100,000. They begin at Martin Place, move down George Street, then onto Bathurst Street and finish at the park. On this night, however, a ceremonial city space that annually commemorates the sacrifices of war is easily transformed into a home for a festive celebration of the city's queer community.

The size of the gathering crowd is daunting and remains insistently out of reach of my experiential grasp. At street level you can only get a partial sense of the

323 David Bell and John Binnie, 'Theatres of Cruelty, Rivers of Desire: The Erotics of the Street,' Images of the Street 132.
324 Da Matta 223.
Fig. 3 Pre-parade walking in Oxford Street

Image removed for copyright reasons.

Fig. 4 Preparing for the parade

Image removed for copyright reasons.
size of the gathering (there is no way of getting a visual fix on the size of the crowd as you might in a large sports stadium). It becomes tiring and vaguely disorienting to walk further along the route to where there might be an unclaimed viewpoint; indeed, such a space is impossible to locate and it feels like the ‘valley of flesh’ that makes up the parade route stretches on into infinity. I’m no longer simply a spectator in the crowd—instead, I am strangely aware of being one tiny node in an immense collective mass spreading from the inner city outwards. With the veiled and gradually sinking sun still quite intense, I suddenly realise that the choice of which side of the road to view from is quite important. Annoyingly, however, the seemingly never-ending ‘great wall’ of the barriers that separate the crowd from the parade route ensure that you can only cross the street at specific points regulated by friendly but purposeful parade marshals in standard-issue white coats. At one of these crossings a determined band of Christian protesters (praying for rain and redemption) endure the scepticism of the crowd and the more focused taunts of the cross-dressing ‘Sisters’ of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence who provide lighthearted pre-parade entertainment.

Above the street, hundreds of parties are taking place on balconies overhanging the parade route. Balloons the colours of the rainbow adorn these balconies and on the north-east corner of Whitlam Square, ten stories up, a gigantic thirty-foot inflated penis and testicles perilously sways back and forth with the help of both the wind and its festive owners. A glimpse of the nearby central city skyline reveals that even the Sydney Tower has been included in the festivities: during this week pink lighting illuminates its supporting cables and surfaces at night, prompting the sleazy effect of looking up a giant, see-through dress.

I settle on a vantage point for watching the parade and supervise some milk crates for a Vietnamese-Australian teenager and some of his friends in exchange for a temporarily better view and a plastic cup of wine. Then, finally, like medieval trumpets, the deafening roar and ride-by of at least two-hundred motorcycle-riding-lesbians (or ‘dykes on bikes’ as they are popularly known) officially ‘herald’ the beginning of the parade. After a further brief wait it all begins, not with a visual cue, but with the extraordinary shock of the ‘Mexican wave’ of excitement that races from the tightly packed bodies of those at the beginning of the parade route.

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who get the first glimpse of the preliminary walking groups and floats. The next few hours leaves me, like Eric Michaels in 1988, struggling to describe: ‘[i]t was so vast, so diverse, so, so ultra, even compared to previous years ... No longer just a gay parade, it has become a theatrical event gay people perform as an offering to the city at large.’

When Michaels wrote of the parade ten years ago it was estimated to have been seen by more than one hundred thousand spectators. Tonight, by eight o’clock, approximately seven hundred thousand people will either be pressing in on the barriers that mark out the parade route or watching from available roofs, balconies and other overhangs along the parade route as a staggering assortment of 274 floats and walking groups move past us all (Fig. 5). The next morning some images from the parade remain etched in my mind, others are lost in the sheer volume of moments. Back in Melbourne, a few days later, I watch the highlights on television and experience an odd disjuncture. On the one hand, I pick up on parts of the parade that I can’t believe I missed. At the same time, this second viewing feels different, more routinised and everyday—a very different kind of urban experience ... How can we begin to describe this event?

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Fig. 5

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326 Michaels 4.
Introduction

This chapter focuses on the street parade as extraordinary everyday culture. The street parade is especially relevant to my thesis because it derives much of its effectivity from self-conscious and collective performances of walking, such as marching or processing, that attempt to transform the everyday practice of ‘walking down the street’ into something extraordinary. In particular, I want to argue that parades are instances of what we might usefully describe as exaggerated modes of walking. That is, the specialised forms of walking performed in parades draw attention to the movement of the body, to modes of display and mobility that articulate a particular ‘politics of walking.’ Simultaneously, the parade as a whole is an exaggerated manifestation of the public life of the city as it produces its various effects from the orchestrated, spectacular display of moving bodies in the highly visible and symbolic civic territory of the street.

In this chapter, the parade that I focus upon is the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. While the Mardi Gras encompasses a diverse range of events, moods, participants, audiences and cultural performances celebrating gay and lesbian identity—including public lectures, book launches, a fair, ceremonies of remembrance, an arts festival and a dance party—the parade is the centrepiece of its mobilisation as an annual, ‘public’ ritual. Sydney’s Mardi Gras parade is, I argue, a particularly instructive example of extraordinary everyday culture in its exemplary use of the street for the production of mass spectacle. At the same time, the parade is also an example of extraordinary everyday culture in its magnification, interrogation and resignifying of everyday practices, rituals and objects. In particular, the parade employs different techniques of exaggeration in order to highlight the socially constructed nature of the everyday with particular reference to normative forms of sexuality and gender. The parade also makes a strong political statement about the rights of marginalised social groups to use ‘public space’ and their relation to the practices that constitute the ‘ordinary’ in the city.

Despite the apparent ‘specificity’ of the parade in relation to its queer constituency, Mardi Gras also strikes a chord at the level of the production of what I

328 Simply referred to as ‘Mardi Gras’ hereafter.
referred to in my previous chapter as the Australian national ‘ordinary.’ While not enjoying the historical longevity or geographical reach of Anzac Day (which is commemorated via annual parades and services in all Australian cities and most of its towns), and ostensibly representing a ‘minority’ community, Mardi Gras does carry immense symbolic weight as reflected in the significant amount of public discourse that surrounds the event. It is notorious, as Gay Hawkins has observed, ‘for lingering in popular memory even amongst those who have never witnessed [it] ... let alone participated.’ In this sense, Mardi Gras has firmly established itself within the Australian national imaginary.

In more recent times, Mardi Gras’ nationalist credentials have derived, as Fiona Nicoll has observed, out of its claims to be a unique international event and, in particular, its touristic self-representation as ‘an indigenous modern Australian festival.’ In 1998 (the largest parade so far in terms of participants and spectators), Mardi Gras generated an estimated $AUD 99 million for Sydney’s economy thereby lending weight to the claim that the Mardi Gras had the largest economic impact of any sporting or cultural event regularly held in Australia. A survey in 1998 noted that the event attracted 5,190 visitors from overseas and 7,300 from interstate suggesting that Mardi Gras has become an important tourist

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329 Anzac Day, which commemorates the military engagements and sacrifices of Australians and New Zealanders, is ritually marked each year on the 25th April through memorial services and parades held in cities and towns throughout both countries. While attendance and participation have tended to fluctuate dramatically over the eighty-year history of the parades, and the symbolic content and connotations of the parade have been subject to sustained attacks and contestation from various quarters, they continue to enjoy substantial public support and are currently experiencing something of a regrowth in popularity after a waning in interest in the 1970s and 80s. In 1998, for instance, an estimated 15,000 veterans doggedly marched in Melbourne in spite of inclement weather, while in Sydney over 100,000 onlookers watched on as 20,000 ex-service men and women paraded through the city’s central streets. The day’s ceremonies received extensive ‘live’ media coverage from the national public broadcaster, the ABC. Further critical work, unfortunately outside of the scope of this thesis, remains to be done on the connections and relations between Anzac Day and Mardi Gras. A number of media articles have cursorily noted the connections. See, for instance, Gabriel Carey, ‘The Sum of Us,’ Australian Good Weekend Magazine 25 Mar. 1995: 30-32. From a cultural studies/theory point of view, however, this point of intersection is surprisingly underexplored with the exception of the Fiona Nicoll’s insightful From Diggers to Drag-Queens: Configurations of Twentieth Century Australian Nationalist Subjectivity, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1997: 170-194.


331 Internet publicity for the 1997 Mardi Gras cited in Nicoll 181.

332 Andrew Hornery, ‘How $99 Million Was Spent With Gay Abandon,’ Sydney Morning Herald 3 Aug. 1998, 1. Also see Peter Murphy and Sophie Watson, Surface City: Sydney at the Millenium (Annadale, NSW: Pluto Press, 1997). Comparing Mardi Gras to all other major cultural festivals and sporting events in Australia, Murphy and Watson note that in 1993 Mardi Gras ‘had the greatest impact on the Australian economy, despite almost no public subsidy’(39), though it attracted less international visitors than some of these other events (who spent less per capita).
Dennis Altman has observed that not ‘only large numbers of people fly in from North America, but I have seen advertisements for it in mainstream newspapers in Malaysia, aimed at “the family” market.’ More generally speaking, a measure of the parade’s importance to the city is encapsulated in previous Mardi Gras president Susan Harben’s observation of the disturbing temptation to speak of the ‘Sydney’ rather than ‘Gay and Lesbian’ Mardi Gras. However, despite its demonstrable economic value and the ways in which it is packaged as an important local and international tourist attraction, the staging of Mardi Gras continues to be strongly contested by vocal sections of the Australian community. The reasons for that contestation, I would argue, reside in Mardi Gras’ explicit and implicit, radical ‘nationalist’ aspirations. On the one hand, the parade is self-consciously concerned with articulating the radical notion of a ‘queer nation.’ At the same time the parade refuses to construct this notion of a ‘queer nation’ in isolation from the idea of the ‘Australian nation.’

The ground upon which Mardi Gras’ contestation of the national take place has, however, shifted dramatically in another way over the course of the more recent history of the parade—specifically, in the wake of its broadcast to a television audience (Mardi Gras and Anzac are the only parades in Australia that receive their own specific, regular annual coverage outside of the ‘news’ format). Not only does this point to the important role of the media in the constitution of a national imaginary, in the context of this thesis it also raises interesting questions about (virtualised) modes of experience of ‘public’ city life and the street, the nature of community, and their relations to the ‘domestic’ sphere. Thus the contemporary Mardi Gras parade is both a located street performance and a dispersed media event, and therefore offers a useful conjunction at which to consider changes in the experience of the urban in a shift from an industrial to post-industrial age. This connection seems doubly relevant when we consider that the parade as we know it

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334 Dennis Altman, ‘It Began by Accident,’ *Mardi Gras!: True Stories* 8.
335 Harben cited in Altman, ‘It Began By Accident’ 9.
336 For instance, in 1994, also the International Year of the Family, the theme of the parade was ‘We are family.’ As Murphy and Watson note (in a chapter co-written with Iain Bruce), this attempt to extend the definition of family was ‘deeply unsettling to social conservatives and brought protests in newspapers and chat shows’(69). It also caused fissures to appear among members of the conservative federal opposition. The most recent (2000) parade was perhaps predictably denounced in a joint statement by Sydney’s Anglican and Catholic archbishops. See Damien Murphy, ‘Church Leaders Slam Mardi Gras,’ *Age* 24 Feb. 2000: 1.
today bears a close relationship to modernity and the form of the city itself. Accordingly, my chapter begins by selectively mapping out the history of that relationship. In the following section I briefly outline Susan Stewart’s genealogical account of the parade form and her theoretically useful notion of ‘exaggeration,’ supplementing it in the process with references to some of the more recent work on parades and the related form of carnival. After establishing this framework I then offer three differently focussed yet inter-connected readings of the parade. The first traces the broader ‘proliferation’ of the parade over its twenty-two years paying particular attention to the route marched and the changing relations between spectators and participants. In contrast, the second perspective on the parade is more closely concerned with the self-reflexive techniques of walking employed by the participants and argues that these practices, which are the product of a camp aesthetic, articulate a unique politics of the everyday. My final reading is one which is oriented around the recent televising of the parade and questions of how this process of proliferation creates a different kind of parade event that forces us to reconsider questions of the street and the spectacle, intimacy and affect, and the kinds of public politics that the commodification of the parade might produce.

I. Theorising the parade: on exaggeration and the gigantic in the city

One writer who has attempted to theorise and construct a genealogy of the parade as a type of narrative genre is Susan Stewart. In her introduction to On Longing (1993), Stewart offers this description of her broader project:

This essay centers on certain metaphors that arise whenever we talk about the relationship of language to experience or, more specifically, whenever we talk about the relation of narrative to its objects. These metaphors . . . form the focus of the discussion in this work as I ask: How can we describe something? What relation does description bear to ideology and the very invention of that “something”? and, analogously, What does exaggeration, as a mode of signification, exaggerate? Narrative is seen in this essay as a structure of desire, a structure that both invents and distances its object and
thereby inscribes again and again the gap between signifier and signified that is the place of generation for the symbolic.\textsuperscript{337}

While Stewart’s essay ranges over a number of forms of exaggeration (including ‘the miniature,’ ‘the souvenir,’ and ‘the collection’), it is her discussion of ‘the gigantic’ that is most relevant to my discussion. In particular, Stewart provides an ambitious and insightful historicisation of the metaphor of the gigantic in which she speculates on the emergence of related civic forms such as the parade and carnival and their development within the context of capitalism. In this section I summarise and draw upon that genealogy and metaphor in order to construct a theoretical framework that will then enable me to historically contextualise the relationships between participants, spectators, and the city that inform my analysis of the Sydney Mardi Gras.

According to Stewart, the emergence of western capitalism and its most distinct material manifestation—the modern city—precipitates a shift in the location of the metaphor of the gigantic away from its pre-industrial location in the landscape.\textsuperscript{338} Elements of that displacement, suggests Stewart, are identified by Mikhail Bakhtin in his influential study of Rabelais where he observes that ‘the gigantic figure, as part of the popular imagery of the grotesque, moved from its ascription to the landscape to the festive carnival world’\textsuperscript{339} associated with agrarian economies. The gigantic thus becomes associated with markets, fairs and feasts, and functions as a ‘symbol of surplus and licentiousness, of overabundance and unlimited consumption.’\textsuperscript{340} It is placed in the market, ‘the centre of local civic identity,’\textsuperscript{341} and also the site where commodity relations are first publicly articulated. In Rabelais and his World, Mikhail Bakhtin argued that the ritual forms of medieval carnival, based on laughter, were ‘sharply distinct from the serious official ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials. They offered

\textsuperscript{337} Stewart ix.
\textsuperscript{338} As Stewart notes, ‘traditionally the body has served as our primary mode of understanding and perceiving scale’(101) and thus any investigation of this mode of exaggeration must begin there. It is through the body that we perceive and narrativise the exteriority of both the natural landscape and, later, the city. As evidence for this assertion, Stewart cites descriptions of landscape that originate in pre-industrial times and notes their common feature of metaphors of the body writ large: ‘the mouth of the river, the foot-hills, the fingers of the lake (71).’ These linguistic metaphors are further complemented by folk-tales in which features of the landscape are attributed to the actions of giants.
\textsuperscript{339} Stewart 80.
\textsuperscript{340} Stewart 80.
\textsuperscript{341} Stewart 80.
a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapoltical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside of officialdom. Medieval carnival, in this sense, enacted a critique of the dominant social and political order from below through its transgressive practices—in particular the parody and inversion of sacred rituals and respectable norms. In the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras we witness elements of a modern continuation of this carnivalesque tradition through the deliberate exaggeration of official, everyday institutions. For example, one entry that has appeared in several parades is the massed formation of ‘The Lesbian Brides’ who wear a combination of white hats and veils, white bras, long white gloves and billowing silk skirts. Through these outfits the brides exaggerate and eroticise the traditionally demure wedding dress. At the same time they invert the ‘sacred,’ everyday heterosexual institution of marriage in order to draw attention to the lack of equivalent legal rights enjoyed by women in same-sex relationships.

Returning to Stewart’s genealogy and her reading of Bakhtin, she notes that there is a significant bifurcation of the gigantic as modern nation-states begin to emerge, and urban centres become important nodes where commodities flow to and from (as well as places amenable to the creation of public spectacle):

With the development of the bourgeoisie, the marketplace, and the life of towns, we see the gigantic, as part of the grotesque, split into sacred and secular aspects. The gigantic is appropriated by the state and its institutions and put on parade with great seriousness, not as representative of the material life of the body, but as a symbol of the abstract social formations making up life in the city. On the other hand, the gigantic continues its secular life in the submerged world of the carnival grotesque; its celebrations of licentiousness and lived bodily reality are truly the underbelly of official life.

Bakhtin’s project was one primarily concerned with charting the displacement and survival of that particular medieval (and very public) tradition of ‘the carnival

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344 Stewart 81.
grotesque’ within forms of literature which circulate in the then newly privatised bourgeois and compartmentalised space of the domestic. Thus while the tradition of the carnivalesque lived on, according to Bakhtin it was displaced and transformed by its movement into other cultural forms. A number of literary, anthropology, and cultural studies scholars, inspired and influenced by the translation of Rabelais and His World into English in 1968, have produced various arguments concerned with locating a politically-charged continuation of the carnivalesque amongst the forms and sites of literature and popular culture. Back on the public street, according to Bakhtin, ‘the state encroached upon festive life and turned it into a parade . . . [and the] carnival spirit with its freedom, its utopian character oriented toward the future, was gradually transformed into a mere holiday mood.’ Thus Bakhtin set ups a series of relations and a distinction between the festival (which becomes privatised) and the parade (which is public and official).

There has been a significant amount of scholarly inquiry into the ‘official’ appropriation of the gigantic and construction of a public culture as described by Stewart. In terms of parades that are strongly ‘secular’ in orientation, and that are symbolic of the ‘abstract social formations’ inhabiting the city (in contrast to the military parades put on by the state), we might turn here to some of the valuable recent work of urban historians. Mary Ryan, for example, has argued that the nineteenth-century secular parade as ‘a species of procession’ was an American invention which adapted the term from that of a military muster to ‘encompass civic and ceremonial purposes.’ The American parade was distinguished, she argues, by three features: firstly, the division of the parade into clearly separate marching

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346 Bakhtin 33. Also see Stallybrass and White 176-177, where they detail some of the nineteenth-century European carnivals dismantled or appropriated by the state.

347 Mary Ryan, ‘The American Parade: Representations of the Nineteenth-Century Social Order,’ The New Cultural History, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) 132. While this configuration of the parade may, as Ryan argues, have produced a form unique to the context of the nineteenth-century American city, it seems likely that it was strongly rooted in older cultural forms and locations. Indeed, as Peter Goheen notes in his study of parading in Victoria Toronto such events were already an ‘old, adaptable and well-understood form,’ part of the cultural baggage brought by immigrants to North America, and used to mark a broad variety of occasions such as ‘funerals, political victories, religious holy days, military celebrations, visits by distinguished figures, sporting events and commemorations by sodalities.’ See Peter G. Goheen ‘Parading: A Lively Tradition in Early Victorian Toronto,’ Ideology and Landscape in Historical Perspective: Essays on the Meanings of Some Places in the Past, ed. Alan R. H. Baker and Gideon Biger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 330-351.
units; secondly, the participation of a significant proportion of local residents; and, lastly, the absence of a destination—or, put another way, the fact that marchers did not set off ‘to place an offering to a patron saint, profess fealty to a leader, or enact a civic pageant’ but simply wound their way around the most important thoroughfares of the city in order to be seen by the citizens gathered along the way. In other words, participants marched in order to make a specific and otherwise invisible community group visible to the wider urban population. Mardi Gras includes some of these features but not others. On the one hand, one of its primary purposes is to make visible an otherwise ‘invisible’ local and national social formation—the gay and lesbian community—in a ceremonial display in the streets. At the same time, however, as I discuss in more detail in the following section, the parade does have a specific and highly symbolic route (along Oxford Street) which culminates in its arrival at the showgrounds, the site of the enormously popular post-parade dance party.

Also of relevance here are the observations of Australian scholar, Andrew Brown-May who has noted that the more commonly referred to nineteenth-century ‘processions’ (rather than ‘parades’), that took place in the streets of Australian cities like Melbourne, exhibited many similarities to their American counterparts in terms of their ‘patterns of behaviour’. While implicitly acknowledging the slipperiness and overlap of terms used to describe secular street processions, Brown-May also offers the following tantalising morsel—the Australian procession of the time, he notes, ‘was often called a “demonstration.”’ However, for Brown-May the term lacks ‘the element of protest that the word connotes in the late twentieth century.’ This is a richly suggestive aside, for despite Brown-May’s sensible warning against too easily transposing present-day semantics onto the past, it offers an irresistible whiff of the seeds of a unique local history of ‘celebratory protests’ of which Mardi Gras, as I observe later, is the most successful culmination yet. At a more general level, it points to the inherent interrelatedness and adaptability of terms such as ‘parade,’ ‘demonstration,’ and ‘procession,’ and some of the difficulties in trying to delineate them as either ‘official’ or ‘non-official.’

348 Ryan 134.
350 Brown-May 173.
351 Brown-May 173.
Contemporary urban parades are no longer the ‘characteristic genre’ of civic ceremony that they were in nineteenth century; nonetheless, they remain vital ‘sites’ for scholars with an interest in the relations between tradition, spectacle, and the everyday stories people tell about themselves. In considering contemporary parades, however, there is one final element in the historical development of the gigantic outlined by Stewart that needs to be noted here. That development is linked to the ‘creation of public spectacle’ in the modern city. Spectacle, Stewart argues, not only manifests itself in civic forms such as the parade, but is subject to an ongoing process of abstraction that mirrors the reification inherent in the exchange economy of western capitalism and modernity. Stewart cites Debord’s account of the ‘society of the spectacle’ as a description of how the gigantic shifts from city-events like parades to the commodity form itself. In the continuing importance of the Mardi Gras for the Sydney economy and its more recent regular broadcast via commercial and cable television we witness the parade itself in one of its manifestations transformed into a ‘giant’ commodity. In summary then, for Stewart the gigantic undergoes a radical transition ‘from the separated, yet participatory, time of carnival and its inversions, to the distanced and open-ended historical time of the parade and its official narrative, to the distances and closed sphere of consumer time, where the gigantic is displaced from the human to the commodity itself.’

As my discussion of Stewart’s genealogy of the parade form has suggested, elements of a number of different traditions—carnival, the official procession, and the demonstration—contribute to the unique form of the Mardi Gras. In this sense, I would argue, it is not so much a delineation of particular forms that is useful in ‘locating’ Mardi Gras—its unique blending of a number of traditions throws a precise and teleologically-driven genealogy into question. Instead, it is the metaphor of exaggeration which provides a useful way of linking these variations of street marching that are present at Mardi Gras. Here, then, we can return to the question posed by Stewart in the introduction to this section: ‘What does exaggeration ... exaggerate?’ For Stewart, the answer to this question is framed through a consideration of the effects of signification. For her, the gigantic is a specifically linguistic metaphor and, therefore, always ideologically constructed. As she notes, ‘[l]anguage gives form to our experience, providing through narrative a

352 [Her emphasis]. Stewart 84.
353 Stewart 85.
sense of closure and providing through abstraction an illusion of transcendence.\textsuperscript{354} However, my own approach extends Stewart’s account in so far as that, while I agree that city parades are cultural narratives producing a range of significations that perform various types of ideological work, they also have effects that are not easily understood in semiotic terms but might more usefully be approached through a complementary consideration of affect and ritual.

Consider the ‘Madam Butterfly’ entry in the 1998 Mardi Gras parade (Fig. 6). This entry consisted of a single individual in a black, one-piece body suit sporting enormous two-metre high, elaborately constructed, black and gold butterfly wings. (This costume was so large and heavy when originally built for the 1997 parade that the entrant found she could not carry it over the length of the parade route and subsequently had to redesign it for the following year’s event). On the one hand, this entry offered a number of semiotic possibilities. For example, a commentator in the televised version of the parade (obviously reading from prepared material presumably sourced from the entrant) informed viewers that the outfit represented ‘the love of opera by so many gay and lesbian people in Sydney.’\textsuperscript{355} Another possible reading of the choice of the motif of the giant butterfly was that of the general parade theme of ‘coming out,’ of a self previously hidden in the everyday world now having its moment of emergence and public display. At the same time, however, I would argue that \textit{pace} Stewart while parade entries such as Madam Butterfly might produce ideologically structured meanings in relation to constructions of sexual identity, such meanings are not always available to, or necessarily taken up by, spectators (or the cultural critic). Just as important in this case, is the ritual act of making a spectacle of oneself and the body through the mode of the gigantic, on this one particular day of the year. Put another way, there is clearly a difference between talking about modes of exaggeration as ‘textual’ tactics and talking about them as a variety of affective and ritual, embodied practices.

\textsuperscript{354} Stewart 13.
I argue in this chapter that we need to consider parades—and the bodies that participate in them—in a contextual framework, as a particular kind of ‘affective apparatus’\(^{356}\) enacted through the ritual of walking up the street. Lily Kong and Brenda Yeoh have argued in a recent analysis of National Day parades in Singapore for a distinction between the ritual of the parade and ‘ritual’ in an everyday sense—they ‘are less concerned with the ordinary and everyday than with the spectacular and episodic.’\(^{357}\) In contrast, I would suggest that the Mardi Gras prompts us, in fact, to consider the intersections between the two. Somewhat paradoxically, then, while the parade may be a temporary occurrence (happening just a once-a-year), it simultaneously draws attention to the importance of the repetitive rhythms and rituals of everyday experience.\(^{358}\) Specifically, it highlights the restricted ways in which we can display our bodies in the space of the street on an everyday basis.

What I suggest in this chapter is that the complex process of exaggeration ends up drawing attention to the possibilities of changing the everyday rather than attempting to ‘transcend’ it. Thus within the context of the postmodern city, the

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\(^{356}\) I take this term from Lawrence Grossberg. See, in particular, his *We Gotta Get Out of This Place* 79-87 and ‘The Indifference of Television, or, Mapping TV’s Popular (Affective) Economy’ in *Dancing in Spite of Myself* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997) 125-144.


\(^{358}\) A further way in which this relation between the everyday and the extraordinary is marked out is through the labour and processes involved in the organisation and production of many of the parade costumes and floats. While only brought out for display on one night of the year, these costumes and floats are the result of hours of ritual and repetitive labour performed in the home or in the parade organisation’s giant workshop.
spectacular and episodic is frequently entwined with the banal and everyday (for example, a flamboyant parade that becomes the arresting focus for city life can also be just another program within a busy television schedule). In this regard, this chapter argues that the Mardi Gras parade is not so much a point of separation between the extraordinary and the everyday but the site of an interface between the two. I further suggest that this parade offers moments and spaces in which configurations of the everyday become highly visible, contested, and sometimes redefined through the very process of their spectacularisation.

II. Becoming giant: ‘From riot to (r)evolution’

In this next section I offer a brief account of the history of Mardi Gras that traces the path from its fairly humble beginnings through to its subsequent evolution into Australia’s largest single annual parade (in terms of participants and spectators). Aspects of the genealogy of the parade form outlined in my previous section are drawn upon in order to analyse key shifts in the form, effects, and experience of Mardi Gras. I’m particularly concerned here with how the proliferation of the parade has impacted on the relationships between participants and spectators. More specifically, what are some of the consequences of the gradual imposition of physical and symbolic barriers between parade participants and spectators? What kind of experience of the extraordinary everyday do these divisions produce?

The first Mardi Gras parade took place on 24 June 1978 and was one of a series of Sydney events that responded to an international call for a show of gay solidarity in response to the ninth anniversary of the New York Stonewall Riots of 27 June 1969. As one of the early organisers commented:

The Mardi Gras sort of grew out of an idea we had when we saw the big gay rights marches in America. The marches in America had more of a festival atmosphere and we were discussing this one night at my house and a friend of mine, Ron Austin, said, well why don’t we have a mardi gras? It seemed a strange idea and I said to him, well let’s go along to the Stonewall Committee that organises the Stonewall celebrations and see how they feel
about it. We did that and they said, if you want to organise a mardi gras on
the night of the Stonewall celebration, well you can.\textsuperscript{359}

According to Graham Carbery’s history of the Mardi Gras, many of the participants
in that inaugural event were initially quite sceptical about dressing up for a night
parade in the middle of a bracing Sydney winter (in 1981 the parade was shifted to
summer (\textit{Fig.} 7) thus not only distancing it from the International Gay Pride Week
but permitting, as Michaels’ observes, ‘much more revealing and risque
costumes’\textsuperscript{360}). The idea of a night event and consequent fears of the possibility of
homophobic violence probably fuelled this scepticism (to this day Sydney’s Mardi
Gras remains globally unique among the wider spectrum of major gay pride marches
and parades in taking place at night). Furthermore, a number of members of the
organising committee found the idea of a parade not ‘political’ enough. The
resulting ‘Day of International Gay Solidarity’ on 24 June 1978 subsequently had
two quite separate ‘street’ components: the first of these was a morning march of
about 500 participants that started at Sydney Town Hall (followed by a forum at
Paddington Town Hall); and then, later in the evening, a parade with costumes and
music took place—it left Taylor Square at 10.30pm and attracted somewhere
between 1,000 and 2,000 people.\textsuperscript{361} Thus the march and the parade, one held during
the day and the other at night, were clearly separated and reflected a tension between
those in the organising committee with more ‘political’ aims and those who just
wanted to ‘celebrate’ gay identity. Two different modes of marching in the street,
then, would fulfil supposedly distinct purposes. The distinction between a ‘political’
and ‘celebratory’ mode of walking in public space was not, of course, sustainable,
and the comments of one of the

\textsuperscript{360} Michaels 4.
\textsuperscript{361} Carbery 11.
Image removed for copyright reasons.

Fig. 7 The first summer Mardi Gras parade (1981)
organisers in a national newspaper reveals the political motivations clearly informing the night parade: ‘There will be a Mardi Gras for homosexuals in Sydney tonight. We (are doing this because) we are an invisible minority. You can see a black, but you can’t see a homosexual (which is why) a public demonstration of our homosexuality is necessary.’\textsuperscript{362} To march or walk in the streets in this extraordinary fashion, then, was a way of making apparent an otherwise publicly ‘invisible’ homosexuality. Thus instead of homosexuality being thought of as safely confined to ‘invisible’ and specifically marked private spaces (gay households, bars, saunas, etc.), its \textit{everyday} presence in the public sphere of the street would become (temporarily) apparent to the wider community.

The use of the street as a site at which to make such a public declaration of a non-heteronormative sexuality was understandably regarded with some ambivalence by participants in that first Mardi Gras:

So you had these two feelings: on one hand, feeling very good about having claimed ownership of the street for the first time, and on the other, feeling that there was no cooperation with the state, or with the law, because there was contempt for us, that we dared to be there, and that we dared to do this.\textsuperscript{363}

The parade route, which took in a rough loop of streets in the Darlinghurst area, was planned in advance and permission obtained from an essentially hostile police force.\textsuperscript{364} However, the actual parade route on the night deviated from the planned one and when the Hyde Park endpoint was reached, police confiscated the first and only float in that parade, a truck with a public address system. According to several accounts, those parading past Darlinghurst’s gay bars and clubs encouraged spectators to join them with cries of ‘Out of the bars and into the streets.’\textsuperscript{365} In other words, there was a deliberate attempt to suspend or transgress the boundary between the public space of the street, rigidly coded as heterosexual, and the predominantly private spaces to which homosexuality had largely been confined. Thus the inaugural Mardi Gras not only exhibited characteristics of the protest march

\textsuperscript{363} Cited in Overington 6.6.
\textsuperscript{364} Carbery 11.
\textsuperscript{365} Carbery 12.
favoured by the new social movements in the sixties and seventies (with the addition of some costumes) but it also echoed to a degree the older form of the religious or carnival procession, where the mass of bodies moving through the streets has a nucleus which can be joined or left at any time.\footnote{Da Matta 218-219.}

In the 1978 parade, following the confiscation of the public address system at Hyde Park, the marchers then walked east along Williams Street to El Alamein Fountain in Kings Cross where violent confrontations with the police took place and 53 people were arrested and taken to Darlinghurst Police Station. The police paddy wagons containing those arrested were then followed by about 300 marchers on foot. Those arrests were followed by a period of various actions including the largest gay rights march held in Australia at the time.\footnote{Carbery 14.} The reasons why that initial Mardi Gras erupted into violence are difficult to discern. Some accounts express puzzlement at the turn of events given the ‘street experience’ of the participants. As one observer noted, ‘in the main, the Oxford Street marchers were people who’d been weaned on the anti-Vietnam demos and pro-abortion rallies, feminism and student rallies. But this was supposed to be fun, a night when it didn’t really matter who you were if you were prepared to step out of the ghetto of the gay bars and onto the street.’\footnote{Amanda Wilson, ‘Did Oxford Street Move for You?,’ \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 02 March 1998: 11.} In contrast, other accounts contest this notion and claim that a lot of the participants had never in fact been involved in marches before and it was in fact their inexperience in dealing with the police that led them to disregard the original instructions to disperse at Hyde park which eventually led to the Kings Cross arrests.\footnote{Overington 6.6}

More useful than this question of ‘why’ the march erupted into violence, perhaps, is a consideration of the route walked. Notably, the parade these days does not take place in the central city streets of Sydney (as do other sorts of parades such as those celebrating national sporting successes) but, instead traverses a route located in and around what is known as ‘the established gay male commercial and residential district’ of Oxford Street and the adjoining suburbs of Darlinghurst, Surrey Hills and Paddington.\footnote{Lawrence Knopp, ‘Sexuality and Urban Space: Gay Male Identity Politics in the United States, The United Kingdom, and Australia,’ \textit{Cities of Difference}, ed. Ruth Fincher and Jane M. Jacobs (New York: Peter Lang, 2000): 125.} In 1978, the year of the first Sydney Mardi Gras
Parade, approximately fifty per cent of the recognised gay venues in Sydney were located in and around Oxford Street.\textsuperscript{371} The early Mardi Gras parades moved through this area marked by a concentration in gay and gay-friendly businesses and residences—the symbolic ‘home’ of Sydney gay culture—but also deliberately passed along the more central thoroughfare of George Street, an important hub of cinemas and fast-food outlets, in order to encounter those just leaving films around 11pm. The attempt to occupy this particular street space was not completely successful in so far as the police ensured that these early parades were ‘channelled down one side of the street as if to declare that it would not be allowed to disrupt city life.’\textsuperscript{372} Perhaps the most significant change in the parade route occurred in 1985 when it was decided not to take in George Street. Many of the participants and organisers expressed ambivalence about this potential ghetto-ising of the parade particularly given that at this time the mainstream media was still ignoring the event. Explaining the need for this new route, the parade coordinator commented that,

\begin{quote}
We don’t have sufficient marshals to control the parade and the crowds of spectators that have developed when we start the parade at the corner of George and Bathurst Streets. We have had enormous problems trying to get the parade through the crowd, and we don’t have police assistance for that. They merely stop the traffic, they don’t help us in controlling the crowd.\textsuperscript{373}
\end{quote}

Thus the parade still exhibited an unruly and processional character, like the demonstration, in which the boundaries between participant and spectator were permeable. While the early function of the marshals, as is still common today for many kinds of street demonstrations, was to prevent conflicts with the police, it had evolved by the time of the 1985 parade, as Carbery comments, into ensuring the passage of ‘parade participants and spectators (over 30,000) through the traffic’\textsuperscript{374}—in a sense, the parade had become ‘self-policing.’ Thus, an important consequence of the measures taken to ensure that reasonably continuous flow of the parade through the crowds of spectators—physically and symbolically enabled by the lining

\textsuperscript{372} Murphy and Watson (with Bruce) 75.
\textsuperscript{373} Cited in Carbery 71.
\textsuperscript{374} Carbery 71.
of the parade route with metal barriers and hundreds of volunteer marshals—is a strict division and distancing of participants (‘them’) from spectators (‘us’).

While no scholars have suggested a direct causal link between the two events, it does seem a significant coincidence that the same year in which the parade route was changed away from George Street and became more centred in the ‘home’ of the gay community was also the time at which the public consciousness of HIV/AIDS and media homophobia reached a peak. As Carbery notes, from ‘mid-1983 onwards there had been many newspaper articles speculating on the extent of the spread of AIDS to the blood supply, and the worst of these depicted “innocent” victims having caught AIDS through blood transfusions from “promiscuous homosexuals.”’

While there were a number of calls to ban the 1985 Mardi Gras—and the Royal Agricultural Society (RAS), which ran the site of the post-parade party, the Sydney Showground, had tried to cancel the Mardi Gras Organisation’s booking at late notice—it nevertheless successfully went ahead. In fact, as Marsh and Galbraith note, Mardi Gras subsequently helped to ‘define the response to AIDS’ through its provision of a forum for ‘public education and community participation.’ In this sense, the AIDS epidemic also provided the Mardi Gras with a renewed sense of political purpose that shifted in its focus from questions of public visibility to community health issues. This shift is registered in the contemporary parade in the number of floats regularly entered by HIV/AIDS support organisations.

Significantly, in 1998, the parade celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary under the banner ‘From riot to (r)evolution.’ This title and theme captured the fact that in the process of that ‘evolution’ Mardi Gras has gone from being a significant but relatively small street riot to the largest single annual parade in Australia. It also indicated a shift in the form of the parade as it had become more popular. What are some of the consequences of this extraordinary increase in the size of the parade?

Writing in 1988, Eric Michaels argued that the parade lacked a sense of risk and challenge due to the rigidly entrenched boundaries between ‘street/walkway; revellers/audience; us/them. Probably these boundaries are necessary to permit Mr. and Mrs. Suburbia to be spectators at a gay event comfortably.’ At the same time,

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375 Carbery 72.
376 Marsh and Galbraith 307-308.
377 Michaels 7.
Michaels saw the seeds of a more transgressive social space and moment emerging following the completion of the parade: ‘But with the last/final? float, the line collapsed, and for a remarkable protracted moment, all boundaries, social as well as spatial, were up for grabs.’ While Michaels analysis is plausible, it appeared to me in 1998 that once the last float had passed the majority of spectators simply scurried back to their cars and to public transport or to find a taxi. In contrast, I would suggest that it was the pre-parade moment, those expectant few hours when the crowd gathers and waits for the sun to go down, that was the moment of the transgressive frisson that Michaels’ identifies. At this time the sense of anticipation reaches its highest level. This is the moment of proximity when sparsely-clad participants in the parade trying to get to their assembly points brush past spectators on the sidewalk and when the possibility of a non-heteronormative public space materialises. It is also the moment when drag artists promenade along the parade route and verbally engage sections of the crowd in dialogues and thus refuse to be simply positioned as objects of spectacle.

Most importantly, however, in terms of Michaels’ identification of the significant physical boundaries in place between ‘street/walkway; revellers/audience; us/them’ are the ways in which the parade’s representations of ‘everyday life’ (sometimes exaggerated and othertimes not) cut across and counter this division and give the predominantly heterosexual crowd some sense of a possible belonging ‘in’ the parade, on the other side of the barrier. For instance, among the glamorous drag artists and ‘clones’ making their way along the parade route there are a number of more obviously coded ‘ordinary’ types (distinguished as such through their choice of unspectacular, everyday ‘costume’). Some of these ‘ordinary’ types represent non-stereotypical gay and lesbian identities while others may be heterosexual supporters of gays and lesbians. Examples of these groups in the 1998 parade included PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), members of the Democrats (a political party), and AngGays (Anglican Gays). While these participants may in one sense be marked by the banners they carry in order to identify their group affiliations, their presence in the parade nevertheless resonates most strongly through their spectacularisation of the anonymous and ‘ordinary.’ The politics of spectacle at work in this aspect of the parade is thus one featuring ‘reflections’ of an extraordinary range of social formations present in

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378 Michaels 7.
contemporary Australian society. As Dennis Altman has observed, ‘[w]hile the cameras will linger on the drag queens, the dykes on bikes, the beautiful boys in leather, the Mardi Gras Parade is in fact a cross-section of Australian life: watch for the suburban mums supporting their children, the middle-aged men and women in gay religious and support groups, the Asian and other ethnic community floats.’

This is not to deny of course that many spectators may simply enjoy a voyeuristic relationship to the parade participants that simply reinforces homophobic prejudices; however, working within and against that spectacular relationship are ‘banal’ entries that potentially destabilise any simple divisions between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and thereby complicate Michaels’ distinction between spectators and participants, the extraordinary and the everyday.

What links the ordinarily and extraordinarily costumed participants together (Fig. 8 and 9) in a common purpose in particular is, of course, the recognition of the effects that can be produced through what William Yang describes in the epigraph to this section as the ‘ordinary act of walking.’ Despite the enormous range and number of entries in the parade—which, following Seebohm, can be divided into walking groups, floats (generally made up of performers on trucks) and others (difficult to classify entries such as individuals)—the performance of the parade still draws its power from the simple progression of collective footsteps that invoke ‘the everyday.’ In the Mardi Gras parade this everyday act of walking down the (heteronormative space of the) street is made giant or extraordinary and carries a political charge. However, while as I noted above the early Mardi Gras parades encouraged those on the sidewalk to simply join in the march, the proliferation of the parade has witnessed the emergence of a more performative and reflective approach to ways of ‘walking’ in the street. These techniques of walking—despite the physical barriers between participants and spectators—cannot be merely relegated to the categories of abstracted or alienated spectacle and are the subject of my next section. It is here that we might usefully consider the impact of practices and politics of camp witnessed in the marching practices of the contemporary Mardi Gras parade.

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379 Altman, ‘Mardi Gras Hits Middle Age,’ *Australian Weekend Review*, 1-2 March: 3.
Fig. 8 Ordinary costumes

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Fig. 9 Exaggerated costumes

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III. Camping up marching

I argue in this section that some of the more specific practices and techniques of walking witnessed during the Sydney Mardi Gras require us to consider the function of a camp sensibility in the parade and how it produces an interface between the everyday and the exaggerated. What are some of the political implications of this intersection especially given that camp is, in many of its manifestations, a tradition of spectacle which privileges the production of a sense of excess over straightforward signification? The Mardi Gras parade, I argue, offers evidence that contemporary strategies of urban spectacle—applied for instance to the walking body and around the notion of ‘the masses’—can simultaneously articulate different kinds of political effects, radical and conservative, and thus problematise the unitary theories frequently relied upon by contemporary city theorists.381

My discussion here specifically focuses on one of the exaggerated walking practices that features in Mardi Gras, and constitutes (on the basis of actual participants and frequency of group entries) arguably the most popular contemporary ‘genre’ of the parade. I refer here to the ‘marching boys,’ who first appeared in the 1989 parade and were created, according to the co-organiser of this entry and Art Director for that year’s Mardi Gras, as a parody of the marching girls that appear in American parades.382 That first group dressed in ‘mock tin soldier outfits’ and carried pom-poms.383 Yet while that initial appearance of the ‘marching boys’ is stylistically indebted to the secular, civic American parade, more recent manifestations of the ‘marching boys’ suggest a more complicated and interesting political lineage. Like the parade itself, the ‘marching boys’ have undergone an ‘evolution’ in terms of their popularity and practices and have become a unique feature. The more recent formations of ‘marching boys’ are generally comprised of

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381 Such theories tend to begin at the endpoint of Stewart’s trajectory; that is, with the commodification of the city as a marketable image or site of spectacle, meaning that issues of inequity and difference are simply glossed over in deference to the interests of ‘capital.’ See, for instance, David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* ch.4. and Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* ch.1.
383 Beard 121.
a surfeit of ‘beautiful’ male bodies—hairless and tanned, they glisten from the sweat of the intense workout they enjoy on performing their routines along the parade route. Usually sporting tight and high-cut shorts, often carrying pom-poms or flags, and displaying hyper-toned, muscular bodies, these groups have been described as the ‘shock-troops’ of public gay pride (Fig. 10). One minute they calmly march along the parade route at regulation martial pace—the next instance sees them breaking into entertaining and highly sexualised, combination marching-and-dance routines. A variety of different markers distinguish the large number of marching boys’ groups who have appeared in recent parades: for example, some are geographically marked (the 1998 parade featured a troop from New Zealand, a large contingent from Sydney, and a group from Melbourne); some are commercially sponsored such as ‘The Fabulous Flag-Flying Fags from Fit-X-Gym’; while others concentrate on particular themes—for instance, the ‘Marching Drags’ paid homage to the drag style of the Stonewall era while ‘Jack-off’ addressed the Republican issue through the imagery of the Australian flag. One contingent of marching boys was specifically comprised of participants who failed to gain entry into already established groups. Finally, while relatively outnumbered in comparison to male groups, there were also a number of female ‘marching boys’; for instance, the ‘Wet girls wave warriors—the lesbian surfers’ and the ‘Marching Xenas.’

What these marching boy and girl groups share is their performance of exaggerated walking through their promiscuous mixing of ‘official’ (military-cum-fascistic) and ‘unofficial’ (camp) techniques of marching. Beginning with the ‘official’ side of this mix, we witness an appropriation of those techniques of military marching and training intimately linked to the production of the soldier’s body. As Michel Foucault famously argued in *Discipline and Punish*, the soldier’s body is an historical product: its appearance, its form, and the way it moves, is symptomatic of wider changes in the organisation of power that are central to the emergence of the nation-state as the pivotal modern entity. Part of that training involves learning a technique of walking. Foucault quotes an eighteenth century ordinance specifying the detailed disposition of the body which the trainee acquires—the last element of this disposition involves the soldier learning ‘to march

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with a bold step, with knee and ham taught, on the points of the feet, which should face outwards.\textsuperscript{385} The marching boys participate in a similarly rigorous ‘everyday’ training regime as they spend months in city gyms training for the parade (see Fig. 11).

According to Foucault’s influential argument, it is this technique of disciplining of the body that offers a blueprint for the state’s exertion of power over its subjects. At the same time, the soldier’s body also represents a crucial image of the modern state. The image is that of the classical body which, as Mary Russo observes, is ‘monumental, static, closed, and sleek . . . [and corresponds] to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism.’\textsuperscript{386} The bodily image of the state (and, indeed, how it moves and marches) offers the cultural theorist a useful point of analysis. As Stallybrass and White observe (drawing on the seminal work of anthropologists such as Mary Douglas), ‘body-images “speak” social relations and values with a particular force.’\textsuperscript{387} Mardi Gras takes the ‘classical body’ of the state, as represented in the traditional masculinist form and movements of the marching soldier, as its object of speculation. In particular, I want to argue here that the marching boys are to some degree draw upon the imagery of the fascist body and parade even though, as we will see shortly, they articulate this imagery to a radically different political purpose through a tactic of parody and ‘camping up.’

The Fascist parades that took place in inter-war Italy are instructive here in both a particular and general sense because they suggest a dense intersection between the politics of spectacle, collective walking, the street, and nationalism. As Yvonne Ghirado has observed, despite the ubiquity of Fascist propaganda campaigns enacted through media such as newspapers and radio, or in books and parliamentary speeches, these remained secondary to activities and events in the street which sought to forge ‘a new, post-democratic collectivity and [to inscribe] . .. the public character of the new political formation into the urban realm.’\textsuperscript{388}

\textsuperscript{385} Michel Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison}, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House (Vintage Books Edition), 1979) 136. As Mauss observes in ‘Techniques of the Body,’ the training of soldiers to march is culturally specific. In particular, he cites an anecdote concerning the difficulties faced by a British regiment who tried to march to French trumpets and drums and had to abandon the attempt as they were unable to stay in step (72).


\textsuperscript{387} Stallybrass and White 10

particular, parades with their rituals of exaggerated walking functioned to constantly renew the mythology surrounding the Fascist debut on the pages of history; specifically, the march on Rome that took place on October 28, 1922.\textsuperscript{389}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image1.png}
\caption{Sydney Gay Mardi Gras Marching Boys’ entry (1998)}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image2.png}
\caption{Marching boys in training}
\end{figure}

Significantly, it wasn’t just members of the military services who paraded. Instead, the parades functioned in a sense to militarise (through uniforms and the practice of marching) many of the diverse social formations that made up city and national life: the fascist parades and reviews were institutionalised in a series of organisations for those from all walks of life. As Ghirado notes, children, factory workers, housewives, university students, and people of all ages participated through the formation of different institutionalised fascist organisations. In this sense, everyday social identities and formations were deliberately exaggerated through their temporary unification and display via the mass spectacle.

What relevance, then, do these older fascist parades have for today’s Mardi Gras? Here we might usefully turn to Benjamin’s dictum, summarised by Susan Buck-Morss, that ‘the out-of-date ruins of the recent past appear as residues of a dreamworld.’ While the dreamworld residues that fascinated Benjamin were those of the consumer utopia figured in the early Parisian shopping arcades, the ‘out-of-date ruins’ that are the focus of the marching boys in the Mardi Gras parade are those of the desire for a homogenous and rigidly unified ‘national ordinary.’ The marching boys utilise the failed dreams of fascism in order to expose the analogous fantasies brought into being in current desires for a homogenous Australian everyday. They insistently remind observers that such desires have failed and are clearly outmoded. At the same time, the marching boys’ engagement with this particular politics of mass spectacle is not simply a critique because it also marks out an attempt to rearticulate the utopian impulse or desire for a different kind of national ordinary. That attempt is organised through deployment of practices of ‘camping up.’

As noted above, the marching boys perform a promiscuous mix of official and unofficial techniques of walking. On the ‘unofficial’ side of the mix of walking techniques performed by the marching boys is a mode of exaggeration that springs from a camp aesthetics and politics. In her seminal essay on this subject, Susan Sontag notes that the essence of camp is ‘its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration [my emphasis].’ The marching boys’ ‘camping up’ and refiguring of the connotations of fascist parades and their marching practices can be read as a

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two-pronged strategy. One part of that strategy is related to the tradition of the carnivalesque and its ‘inversion’ of official forms of culture. In this case, militaristic marching is ‘camped up,’ made subject to what Sontag describes as ‘a mode of seduction—one which employs flamboyant mannerisms susceptible of a double interpretation’. At the same time, a further exaggerated technique of walking, ‘mincing,’ also becomes integrated within the parade at this point in order to allow that ‘double interpretation.’ Mincing can also be read as a ‘flamboyant’ mannerism, that is, as an extraordinarily sexualised technique of walking (though imbricated, of course, in a complicated, gendered history). While not wanting to trace out a history of ‘mincing’ as a particular technique of walking here, we might note that the hybrid style employed by the marching boys (marching + mincing) can be situated in terms of wider trajectories of constructions of the male body as an object of homosexual/homoerotic desire. In his fascinating account of ‘muscle culture,’ for instance, Peter McNeil argues that ‘unlike the 1970s, the 1980s reconciled both butch and camp, muscle and mincing.’ The marching boys thus represent a highly public manifestation of this particular moment in the construction of homosexual bodies.

What are some of the political implications underlying the blending of official (fascist) and unofficial (camp) walking techniques described above? Andrew Ross offers us a specific context for this mix when he observes that ‘camp, which was often posed as an embarrassment to post-Stonewall gay culture . . . becomes political all over again [post-AIDS], because camp contains an explicit commentary on feats of survival in a world dominated by the taste, interests and definitions of others.’ The marching boys, in this sense, mark out a kind of irony-tinged, gay ‘cult of youth’ that emerges post-AIDS. Yet for some participants this particular mode of politics is a source of ambivalence. As one gay writer who has since died from an AIDS-related illness commented in his final column on Mardi Gras: ‘I am tempted to get out there in my wheelchair, hitting Taylor Square at high speed with my whistle fully engorged to blow at our radiant gym-toned fascist marching boys.’ In this comment the spectacle of the marching boys generates an intense state of pride and arousal in the observer. At the same time, however, that

392 Sontag 110.
395 Cited in Dennis Altman, ‘Mardi Gras Hits Middle Age’: 3.
pride and arousal is coloured by a lament for a personal and collective ‘healthy’ body unaffected by HIV/AIDS.

I want to conclude this section with a cautionary note regarding the ambiguities opened up by the contemporary parade’s reliance on modes of spectacle and the impossibility of providing a conclusive reading of the politics at work in this blurring of official and unofficial forms of walking through a camp aesthetic. A widely discussed moment of the 1998 Mardi Gras is relevant here. Contrary to expectations, the biggest cheer of the night in this 20th anniversary parade did not go to ‘the ‘78ers’ (the ‘veterans’ who took part in the very first Mardi Gras). Instead, the biggest cheer of the night was given to a squad consisting of uniformed policemen and policewomen ‘on the beat’ who moved past the crowd in what was reported as a ‘specially-arranged formation march’ (Fig. 12). This semi-official police group appeared all the more extraordinary given that one of the most visually stunning entries given a prominent place earlier in the front of the parade was ‘Police cells’ (Fig. 13), a float that featured gagged and bound figures sitting on a platform of blue and white chequered blocks (a reference to older police uniforms), with rotating blue lights placed between their legs. Understandably, there was tremendous controversy about the official police representation in the march in 1998, although not so much on the part of the parade organisers as the police institution itself.

Why were the marching police so popular in this instance? After all, in terms of their uniform and style of marching they were comparatively ‘straight’ when considered in respect of other entries in the parade. That is to say, if there was a camp element to the police participation it was certainly in a different and more subtle register to that employed by the marching boys and girls. Was in fact the crowd’s celebration of the police participation an instance of what I described earlier (in a discussion of resistance and power in my second chapter), as a case of ‘complicity in and acceptance of domination’ on the part of the people. Consider here the parallel historical role of police ‘walking the beat’ as the official means of disciplining the everyday public.

397 The police inclusion in the parade occasioned a public fallout between the state’s deputy police commissioner who approved the participation and the then absent police commissioner who would not have. See Greg Bearup, ‘Rift Widens Between State’s Top Policemen,’ *Sydney Morning Herald* 27 August 1998: 1.
**Fig. 12** Official police entry (1998)

**Fig. 13** 'Police cells' entry (1998)
space of the street. Did the police’s participation in the parade thus signal the ultimate hegemonic co-option and official recognition of the parade?

An alternative interpretation is that the presence of the police within the parade signalled a further breakdown between participant and observer in a carnivalesque fashion. For as Stewart notes, the police traditionally feature in parades as the markers of a boundary between observer and the parade’s ‘moving face,’ a boundary, she further observes, ‘designed to perfect the parade’s spatial closure as much as to protect the parade from the interruptions of inversion or speech. We might say that the barricade is to the parade as the cover is to the book, providing integrity and an aura of completeness.’\(^{398}\) Whatever the interpretation, the role of the police represents the emergence of an ‘extraordinary everyday’ interface that problematises the lines drawn in Bakhtin’s influential distinction between the official and unofficial. That is, the extraordinary everyday nature of the police marching in the street marks the problematic nature of viewing the parade as fitting into an either/or, official versus carnivalesque, model of exaggerated walking.

While it is problematic to classify all the modes of walking appearing in the Mardi Gras as either subversive or hegemonic, ‘official’ or ‘unofficial’ there is certainly no doubting the parade’s highly organised nature. However, though much of its success can be attributed to the skills and efforts of its participants, it is also accurate to say that various institutions’ recognition of Mardi Gras’ value as an urban tourist commodity has contributed to its incredible popularity and its at least partial incorporation into hegemonic culture. As Lawrence Knopp observes, that recognition is manifest in Sydney in January when banners advertising the Mardi Gras, and placed at key tourist sites such as the Opera House and Circular Key, ‘prominently feature the names of corporate sponsors, which include sex establishments.’\(^{399}\) This question of the official/unofficial nature of the parade, and its status as a commodity to be consumed, has been further refigured by the relatively recent televising of the parade (since 1994) and the subsequent extension of its audience. The astute urban commentator Marshall Berman once noted that he ‘has come to see the street and the demonstration as primary symbols of modern life’\(^{400}\)—yet in a postmodern, televisual age we also need to ask just ‘where’ and

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\(^{398}\) Stewart 85.

\(^{399}\) Knopp 166.

\(^{400}\) Marshall Berman, ‘The Signs in the Street: A Response to Perry Anderson,’ *New Left Review* 144
‘what’ the street is, and what relationship it bears to the private and ‘domestic’? Accordingly, my next section considers some of the effects of this televisual quality of the parade and the kinds of politics and practices it produces.

IV. Televising the revolution

The increasing popularity of Mardi Gras as a unique urban spectacle has been accompanied by concerns that this success may overshadow the ‘political’ aims of the parade. Those doubts are, in a sense, intrinsic to the history of Mardi Gras and were, as I noted earlier in this chapter, part of the motivation for staging a separate day march and night parade in 1978. At issue here, and voiced in a number of accounts of Mardi Gras past and present, is the tension between on the one hand perceptions of the parade as a vehicle which allows and celebrates the social visibility of the gay and lesbian community, and, on the other hand, the parade as a pedagogical tool which might encourage a generally hostile, ‘straight’ public to be more tolerant of homosexuality and attendant issues such as HIV/AIDS. That ambivalence has taken new forms as the parade has become more established and popular—in particular, since 1994 when the parade first became more readily available to the Australian ‘public’ through the broadcasting of television highlights. In this section I consider the related issue of the tension between the traditional aims and protest strategies of ‘street-based’ or ‘grass roots’ new social movements and the televisual public sphere as a site of construction of a virtual urban community. For television now provides the primary means by which the parade is ‘watched’ and ‘experienced’ by Australians. What are some of the consequences of the televising of Mardi Gras? Does it mark a further abstraction of the parade from street spectacle to tele-commodity (in the sense referred to in Susan Stewart’s account of the progressive displacement of the gigantic)? Or can it still generate

401 See, for example, some of the survey comments on precisely this issue cited by Seebhom 214-215.
402 Gavin Harris in ‘Pervering on Perversity: A Nice Night in Front of the Tele,’ Media International Australia 78 (1995): 20, notes that the initial (and most controversial) broadcast of parade highlights in 1994 was watched by 1.7 million viewers. Around 600,000 people were estimated to have turned up to view the actual parade. A recent press release outlining the media coverage for the 2000 parade notes that the telecast this year will include a) a free-to-air broadcast on Channel 10; b) a live ‘pay-per-view’ broadcast for pay television subscribers (Foxtel, Optus and Austar), the first of its kind in Australia; c) and, finally, an internet broadcast. Unattributed, ‘Media Converge on Mardi Gras,’ 28 Jan. 2000 Official Web Site for the 2000 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, http://www.mardigras.com.au/2000/, accessed 9 February 2000.
what Michaels referred to ten years ago (in its pre-televisual moment) as ‘unexpected forms of public politics’? As Carbery notes, for much of its early history the Mardi Gras parade struggled to receive any positive attention from the mainstream media despite eventually attracting bigger crowds than those attending popular local sports matches and bringing traffic to a standstill for several hours in busy thoroughfares and large sections of the city. Newspaper reports of the first parade in 1978, for instance, were only concerned with publicly naming and stigmatising those arrested. The next significant moment of media interest in the parade occurred around 1984/85 as part of a wave of generally sensationalist and intensely homophobic coverage focussed upon the impact of AIDS—an infamous Sydney Morning Herald headline reporting on 1985’s parade, for instance, read ‘AIDS Victims Watch as the Parade Goes By.’ Regular television coverage of the parade highlights only began in 1994 when the ABC decided to broadcast a one hour highlights programme in the established ‘True Stories’ documentary slot which screened at 8.30pm on a Sunday night.

However, the resulting broadcast certainly could not be straightforwardly identified as a ‘documentary.’ As Samantha Searle notes, it dispensed with the standard conventions of this genre (most importantly, a ‘balanced view’ that might seek to ‘objectively’ discern the ideological underpinnings of the event being analysed). Instead, that first year’s coverage had more in common with the kind of ‘special events’ coverage reserved for special civic and community events. As Gavin Harris observes, ‘[d]istancing itself from the analytical/explorative qualities of (ethnographic) documentary, the [1994] broadcast sought to convince us that it was presenting an indexical trace of the referential event, a transcript of the ‘raw’ parade’s historic reality.’ At the same time, however, the mode of coverage

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403 Michaels 5.
404 Carbery 54-55.
405 See Carbery 72-75 and Seebohm 195. In 1986, Professor David Pennington, head of the AIDS Task Force set up by the national government, made a statement in which he advised sexual restraint on the part of those attending the post-parade party. More conservative opponents of Mardi Gras, seized upon Pennington’s comments as reason for the parade to be cancelled. The pressure of these generally sensationalist media reports further inspired the owner of the crucial post-parade party venue to try and cancel the Mardi Gras booking.
407 Harris 28.
chosen was relatively conservative in so far as it was influenced by the extraordinary hostility directed at the ABC when it announced its attention to screen highlights of the parade. Under the cloud of bomb threats, abusive phone calls and letters, and parliamentary pressure, David Hill, the then managing director of the ABC, was forced to reassure the public that ‘the program [would] not be gratuitous or exploitative.’ In other words a distanced and ‘sober’ (read pseudo-documentary) approach would inform the coverage. More broadly speaking, the unprecedented furore surrounding the decision to broadcast parade highlights—an attempt, in effect, to limit the dispersal of the parade from the city street to the tele-national realm—can also be interpreted as an implicit recognition of the role of the televisual sphere as a preeminent site of contemporary public culture that rivals the street.

The resulting ABC broadcast, however, revealed the difficulty of finding a suitable televisual style for this hybrid event which had no obvious Australian precedent in terms of the type of coverage it might be accorded. That lack strongly manifested itself in terms of its inability to convey the all-important, carnivalesque ‘mood’—or, to recall a term suggested in my previous chapter, ‘affective disposition’—of the event (which celebrated the existence of a queer community), and its preoccupation with the ‘form’ that celebration took (ie., a parade). An insightful and sardonic critique of the ABC’s coverage in the gay weekly newspaper, *The Sydney Star Observer* (SSO), which focussed on the ‘incredibly inane’ parade commentary, identified the obvious but nevertheless strange template for the coverage: ‘I felt I was watching an alternative version of the Anzac Day broadcast. “Here’s the 51st battalion, golly gosh, look at those men in their smart uniforms, there’s a few bankers and lawyers among that lot, what a diverse group they are.”’ Anzac Day is the only other parade in Australia to receive regular, ‘live’ television coverage and the solemn yet relaxed commentary that accompanies it helps convey an appropriate sense of considered reflection and remembrance of sacrifice. The reliance on such a mode of address for much of the first televised Mardi Gras, however, obviously jarred—for some supporters and conservative homophobes alike—with the celebratory nature of the parade. At the same time, however, the significant impact of HIV/AIDS on the gay and lesbian community and, consequently, the parade, suggests that such a mode of address is not entirely

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408 Hill cited in Harris 25.
409 Harris 25.
410 Cited in Carbery 195.
inappropriate—particularly in respect to the large remembrance section that has now become such an essential and established feature of the parade.

Overall, then, the television coverage of the parade is one which is different from, say, Anzac Day precisely because it must shift between a variety of contrasting affective dispositions.

Sensing the gap between ‘being there’ at the parade and experiencing it in front of the television set, the ABC broadcast adopted certain compensatory strategies (which generally hold true for all subsequent broadcasts of the parade) and these are usefully summed up by Harris:

Unable to replicate the vast crowd’s anonymity or mood, the communitas and the ludic “pleasures” of waiting, thronging, cheering and dispersing, the broadcasters set out to offer their functional equivalent. Aiming to be loyal to the parade’s intent, to explore its nature and to offer an “instant interpretation” of its ascribed meanings, the filmmakers had to develop an “aesthetics of compensation” for the lost presence of the carnivalesque. They attempted to resolve this with several strategies for an immediate, intimate and indexical representation of the parade.

In other words, this strategy of compensation aimed, as Harris observes, to ‘inject the parade’s lost aura into our homes.’

This strategy was made all the more necessary by the fact that these were pre-recorded ‘highlights’ of the event rather than a live broadcast, and therefore it wasn’t possible to rely on the conferral of ‘presence’ that live-to-air television conveys. One key element of this ‘aesthetics of compensation’ involved the insertion of gay and lesbian ‘human interest’ stories in the parade coverage. However, while these did produce a sense of ‘immediacy’ and ‘intimacy’ this was not necessarily in the same register as one might experience these qualities at the parade, and thus different effects that added to the viewer’s experience of the event ensued. As Samantha Searle argued, the insertion of participants’ stories frequently

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411 See Nicoll’s discussion of the deployment of Anzac rhetoric in respect of the victims of AIDS (190).
412 Harris 27-28.
413 Harris 29.
constitute ‘a shift in mode of address, indeed a shift in genre from parade to current affairs, from spectacle to human interest, from wigs and frocks to oppression and death.’ Thus while the television broadcast may have had a pedagogically oriented purpose (in which it primarily addressed an intended heterosexual audience possessing, as Harris notes, a ‘mostly scant knowledge of homosexual’s subjunctive voice and iconography’), its strategy of an ‘aesthetics of compensation’ produced surprising effects especially in its rendering of the extraordinariness of the parade as something ordinary, particularly through the telling of the everyday ‘coming out’ stories of some of its participants. This dialectical play between the extraordinary and the everyday has now become a staple of the parade’s coverage. For example, a particularly poignant example of this strategy was witnessed in the 1997 ABC broadcast of the parade in an interview with long-term parade participant, Ron Muncaster (famous for his elaborate costumes which have won the Best Costume prize at Mardi Gras nine times since its inception in 1984). Reflecting on the death of his partner from an AIDS-related illness shortly before the previous year’s parade, Muncaster comments on the significance of the remembrance section of the parade and how ‘when I walk up that street I remember all the people that I’ve walked up there with, that aren’t with us anymore and ... it’s like an Anzac Day thing.’ Here we see the ways in which this presentation strategy, though its mix of intimacy and everydayness (the story of an individual, the universal experience of the death of a loved one), offers a viewing position that runs counter to the process of distanciation inherent in the production of the parade spectacle.

A different way of thinking through the function and effects of the ‘aesthetics of compensation’ in the television coverage of the parade, and one that problematises figuring this strategy as simply the next evolutionary stage in a progressive history of the parade as a cultural form, is through older forms of collective street walking such as the procession and pilgrimage. In his fascinating account of various types of public walking in Brazil, Roberto Da Matta observes how religious processions function to sanctify the streets of residential and suburban neighbourhoods—in contrast to military parades, he notes, these processions tend to avoid the commercial centre, which is seen as ‘profane’ in terms of its competition

414 Searle 17.
415 Harris 27.
with the central tenets of faith.\textsuperscript{418} During these processions families throw open doors and windows to allow the sacred to move from the public space of the street into the domestic arena. Thus, in contrast to the pilgrimage, where the purpose of the walk is to arrive at the centre (the site marked by the saint), in the procession it is ‘the center (represented by the image of the saint) that[,] leaving its sacred niche, comes to encounter us.’\textsuperscript{419} The image of the saint is carried high on a litter and acts as a focus for the gaze of those walking in the procession. In this sense, argues Da Matta, the procession ‘overcomes the dichotomy of house and street.’\textsuperscript{420} Somewhat ironically, I would argue, it is the centrality of mass media to everyday life that has allowed Mardi Gras to function in a similar way to the processions that Da Matta discusses. The Mardi Gras march literally travels around the residential and commercial Darlinghurst ‘home’ of the Sydney gay and lesbian community; it then attempts to extend that ‘home’ via the media coverage provided in print and television—thus creating the space for an imagined national community. In this process the ‘live’ broadcasting of the parade and ceremonies produces a simulation of the experience of joining and/or leaving the diffuse crowd of walkers around the nucleus of the procession, an experience further enabled through the quick flick of the on/off button on the remote control. The extraordinary experience of the Mardi Gras parade is thus made ‘everyday’ (though only once-a-year) through its incorporation within domestic space. Anecdotal evidence also suggests the increasing popularity of living room-based, Mardi Gras parties outside of Sydney that take their cue from television coverage of the event and which further confirm the status of the Mardi Gras as an \textit{inter-domestic} form of communication.

Television coverage of the parade has, however, undergone further changes in recent years that require some acknowledgment and commenting upon. Most importantly, highlights of the recent parades (1998-2000) have been provided by a commercial broadcaster and have involved further changes to the programme format. Most prominent among these changes, I would argue, is the increasing discursive connections made in these broadcasts between the parade, the urban vitality of Sydney, and the city’s uniqueness (in terms of attractions) as a desirable national and global tourist destination. This was registered, for instance, in the frequent appearance and use of the logo for 1998’s Mardi Gras, an iconographic

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{418} Da Matta 217.
\textsuperscript{419} Da Matta 217.
\textsuperscript{420} Da Matta 217.
\end{footnotesize}
representation of the Sydney Opera House constructed out of pink triangles. An even more indicative sign of the parade’s construction of Sydney’s place-identity was apparent in the organisation of the parade commentary. The night’s anchorman, gay comic ‘Bob Down’ (Mark Trevorrow), provided linking commentary from inside a suitably camped-up studio set in a building overlooking the parade route. The coverage regularly crossed from Down to two street-level reporters (‘Maynard’ and ‘Miss Vanessa’), whose function was to channel the electricity of being there ‘in’ the parade to the viewer. While the sounds of the passing parade bubbled away in the background, Down also interviewed former parade participants and assorted international celebrities (including Kylie Minogue, Danni Minogue and Bono Vox from rock group, U2). Overwhelmingly, the main function of these celebrity interviews (many of whom were Australian stars based overseas who had ‘come back’ for the parade and/or to perform at the dance party that followed it) seemed to be to affirm the unique ‘international’ character —and therefore the economic status and tourist potential— of Mardi Gras and Sydney.

Mark Sussman’s analysis of New York’s 1991 ‘Operation Welcome Home’ ticker-tape parade for returning Gulf War veterans offers some useful insights into some of the broader connections between the promotion of place, television, and the parade form. Sussman notes that the New York parade was choreographed by Barnett Lipton and his company Eventures (who had also produced the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, a Republican National Convention, and the halftime spectacular at Super Bowl). Sussman comments that choreographers such as Lipton see contemporary parades ‘as a media-age performance genre, where live events are scripted for celebrity photo opportunities and commercial interruptions, yet retain vestiges of earlier public, mass celebrations when butchers slaughtered oxen as icons of remedies for social ills and infections.’ This description certainly appears to resonate in terms of the recent television coverage of Mardi Gras and its organisation around celebrity appearances. On the other hand, the Mardi Gras parade hasn’t been significantly affected by ‘scripting’ and ‘commercial interruptions’ in so far as its choreography remains driven by its smooth progressions through the street rather than the more stop-start

421 This icon does have an older history in the parade; for example, it featured as part of a parade entry in 1994.
422 Sussman 153.
423 Sussman 158.
temporality of television segments interspersed with commercials. It is also possible that as Mardi Gras becomes a more established annual tele-ritual (and less ‘shocking’ to homophobic viewers) it becomes more an acceptable everyday promotional or tourist object representing an aspect of Australia (even if for many viewers the particular everyday represented in the parade is a foreign country).

Certainly the more general conflation of Mardi Gras with the production of ‘Sydney’ as an object of tourist desire does suggest that the parade is being commodified as never before. For Stewart, following Debord, the creation of spectacle toward this purpose is marked by the logic of abstraction that lies at the heart of capitalism. Just as Marx identified the abstraction of social relations into the commodity form, for Stewart the parade correspondingly enacts a step away from the time of the body and its labor. The parade is the product of official discourse, the discourse of a history alienated from agrarian time. Unlike the carnivalistic pageant, where the crowd moves with the image, the image in the parade is exaggerated by the very distance placed between it and the viewer.\(^{424}\)

However, contrary to the Marxist logic employed by Stewart my analysis demonstrates that an important outcome of the commodification of Mardi Gras, particularly through its broadcast to a national audience, is a process of familiarisation and domestication—quite the opposite of distanciation. Mardi Gras thereby shows how radical politics and processes of commodification can, in this particular context, be successfully articulated.

**Conclusion**

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter in my examination of the history of the parade form, secular street marching practices are part of a tradition that grew out of the need of inhabitants to find ways of identifying and celebrating the formations of different kinds of communities among the crowds that inhabit the modern city. These practices revolved around a mutual recognition of ‘the street’ as the preeminent domain of public politics. Yet many of those specifically community-orientated parades have, as Australian historian Ken Inglis notes,\(^{424}\) Stewart 84-85.
‘atrophied or disappeared.’ In contrast, however, the Sydney Mardi Gras—a relative newcomer to the parade tradition—has emerged as one of the most popular contemporary celebrations of community and continues to grow at an astonishing rate. Part of that success is attributable to economic reasons, that is, the parade’s marketability as an exciting and unique tourist attraction that might draw visitors to Sydney for a variety of reasons (ranging, for instance, from the possibility of publicly celebrating a marginalised community to different forms of voyeurism). However, as I have suggested in this chapter, an equally important part of that success is attributable to the fact that a politics of spectacle continues to provide a powerful way of both performing a sense of community while at the same time engaging with—and attempting to transform—the exclusionary and repressive elements of everyday urban life.

Accordingly, in the latter mode, Mardi Gras as it has evolved over its twenty-two years has been marked by an extraordinary degree of diversity and hybridity both in terms of the various identities represented and the spectacular modes of walking employed in the parade. As I noted, Mardi Gras clearly draws upon Australian and non-Australian traditions of exaggerated walking such as the military march, carnival, and the religious procession. Arguably it has produced a unique Australian, hybrid form in the process. Dennis Altman has argued, for instance, that ‘along with union “green bans” on certain urban “development,”’ the Aboriginal Tent Embassy and feminist demonstrations against Anzac Day, Mardi Gras began as a particularly Australian form of celebratory protest. However, I would suggest that while the parade is uniquely ‘Australian,’ its hybridity and its constant evolution, rather than its adherence to ‘tradition,’ are what make it such a relevant and popular contemporary social form. One powerful example of this is the way that the parade has simultaneously become a form of media performance and has consciously played to issues of representation and spectacle. This evolution is marked within the parade itself through the development of exaggerated walking practices (such as those of the marching boys) that recognise both the extraordinary affective power of collective modes of walking which physically claim the space of the street and the symbolic potency of the images of those bodies moving in unison together. Of course, it could be said that these images merely replicate earlier fascist

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426 Altman, ‘Mardi Gras Hits Middle Age’: 3.
imagery; however, I argued that they signal a postmodern shift with the marching boys being a kind of rearticulated signifier that throws into question constructions of the nation as a homogeneous entity.

This broad evolution of the parade form further signals a shift in our understanding of the nature and everyday experience of public space and place. In particular, Mardi Gras’ prompts us to ask what has happened to ‘the street’ and what is at stake in this process of an evolution from the public protest of new social movement to a media-age performance genre? Susan Buck-Morss has offered this related argument:

The radical urban political movements of the 1970s failed, not because they were unable to take power in the cities, but because the power that counted was no longer there. The attempt to revitalize the city as a public sphere occurred just when power—economic, political and cultural—was entering the deteritorialized, global geography of cyberspace. As a structure of power, the connecting grid of urban space is being made obsolete by the “information highways” of electronic communication. . . . As actual cities disintegrate, the image of the city gains in market appeal. Like an echo of the call for social utopia, like a mirage of the existence of collective desire, the city-image enters the domestic landscape.  

While Buck-Morss’ rhetoric is overblown—that is, it seems somewhat over the top to claim that ‘actual cities’ are disintegrating—she does usefully direct us to the important role of television in mediating our experience of the contemporary city. While there may be a different kind of affective charge produced around actually attending the parade compared to watching it on television this is not to say that it is a somehow more commodified and therefore ‘inferior’ experience. Instead, it is to recognise that ‘Mardi Gras,’ a shifting formation of events, meanings, moods and experiences, has perhaps become one of those everyday televisial rituals (like, for example, Anzac Day or the Melbourne Cup) that construct an Australian national imaginary and different kind of public sphere. Mardi Gras also conclusively demonstrates that even in its most ritualised and spectacular moments, the ‘public’

428 It must compete, of course, with similar global broadcasts such as the Pope’s Christmas and Easter Service and the Queen’s address. See Harris 31.
space of the street is now inextricably linked to the everyday realm of the domestic through media technologies such as television.

While this chapter has been concerned with the form of the parade, and thus an instance of a large-scale reterritorialisation (through ritual exaggeration) of the heteronormative ‘face’ of the city, my next chapter explores micro-scale interventions based around ‘chance encounters’ in the street. Specifically, I consider the possibility of a momentary interface between the extraordinary and the everyday being produced through the simple walking practice of just ‘passing by’ and argue that these small-scale encounters are just as vital to cultural studies’ understandings of the urban experience as the more organised and monumental cultural practices and events discussed in this chapter.
5. AN/OTHER FACE OF THE POSTCOLONIAL CITY
Walking in the Contact Zone

For the face itself is a contingency, at the magical crossroads of mask and window to the soul, one of the better-kept secrets essential to everyday life.
— Michael Taussig

Introduction

During the second half of the nineteenth century, a number of local Aborigines who had been dispossessed from central city Melbourne settled at Coranderrk Station and helped turn it into a successful and prosperous farming community. Coranderrk was one of a number of mission stations/reserves that had been created in Victoria as part of colonial ‘protection’ and ‘assimilation’ schemes. As D.J. Mulvaney observes, it was also ‘close enough to Melbourne for interested overseas tourists to visit and to recall in their reminiscences. Many took their cameras or bought craftwork there.’ Mulvaney argues that it was perhaps the earliest example of a large Aboriginal community which accepted the realities of a lifeway and rules of conduct adapted to the European mode,’ while still asserting ‘its right to follow its own traditional decision making processes.’ As Diane Barwick puts it, the residents of Coranderrk were ‘not Europeans, nor yet “Aborigines.” They were members of specific clans, influenced by inherited rights and obligations, by the beliefs and conventions of their own society, and by their individual experience of the consequences of European intrusion.’

When the Board for the Protection of Aborigines dismissed Green in 1874

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429 Michael Taussig, Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999) 3.
430 Coranderrk is near Healesville, located on the suburban outskirts of contemporary Melbourne.
431 D.J. Mulvaney, Encounters in Place: Outsiders and Aboriginal Australians 1606-1985 (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1989) 146-147.
432 Mulvaney 147.
and installed a series of unpopular managers not disposed to self-management, the residents resisted and all the able-bodied men marched to Melbourne, not for the first time, to address politicians. The leader of the Coranderrk deputation was William Barak, the so-called ‘last headman of the Woiworung people.’ While the men at Coranderrk had formulated written petitions, these did not, as Penny Van Toorn observes, ‘obviate the need for face-to-face dialogue’ and accordingly the men walked the significant distance into Melbourne to take their concerns to parliament, the official ‘face’ of colonial power. Over a period of twenty-three years, between 1863 and 1886, and for varying reasons and purposes, Barak and a number of his fellow residents frequently made the journey to Melbourne as part of the continuing (uneven) negotiations between coloniser and colonised. Barwick’s description of the 1881 march captures the determination of those involved:

Barak’s last deputation had made the 42 mile [67 km] journey in 18 hours, walking through the night. None of them had the ten shilling coach fare, so they walked again. This journey was even slower, for Barak’s broken leg had healed badly, Bamfield was always crippled with rheumatism and other men were suffering from tuberculosis or hydatid tumours. They had eaten nothing for 24 hours by the time they reached the orchard owned by John Norris on the outskirts of Melbourne.

A writer in the local newspaper, The Argus, commented at the time that ‘[s]o many of the original owners of the soil have not been seen in the city for many years.’ The genuinely surprised tone of the newspaper piece marks the presence of these walkers as an extraordinary moment in the everyday life of the city. This was a rare public acknowledgment of the dispossession of local Aborigines and their erasure from the public memory if not the actual landscape of the city. The newspaper’s uncharacteristically sympathetic account of the ensuing meetings at parliament proved to be considerably embarrassing to the Board of Protection. Two parliamentary committees investigated and recommended the retention of Coranderrk and increased funding to all the reserves. However while the protest

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435 See Barwick 66, 128, 178, 249, 295.
436 Barwick 178.
437 Unattributed, Argus [Melbourne], 2 April 1881: Supplement 1.
438 Barwick 178.
was effective in the short term it was not successful in the longer scheme of things due to the introduction of the 1886 *Aborigines Protection Act*. This act declared that ‘only those deemed “full-bloods”, “half-castes” over 34 years and children were permitted to live on the reserves . . . [thus the] Act undermined the reserves, productive and unproductive alike, by removing the able-bodied and splitting families.439

Despite this lack of long-term success, the march led by Barak stands an important reminder of the frequently forgotten history of Aboriginal interventions within the continuing space of ‘contact’ that was the nineteenth-century central city. How though might we describe this march in terms of particular ‘techniques’ of walking discussed earlier in this thesis? On the one hand, it was a ‘demonstration’ in the sense that this term was used to characterise a number of street marches at the time in Melbourne.440 On the other, the indigenous walking technique of ‘the mob’ was also being employed here. Stephen Muecke describes ‘the mob’ as quite unlike the group form of marching but more akin to ‘drifting, like a swarm of bees or a flock of birds or a school of fish.’441 This is in contrast to the techniques of (implicitly white) walkers in a city street: ‘[t]hese people’s trajectories are constrained by the imperatives of individual motivation over short distances. Or seductive strolling as an apparatus of capture. They bump into one another; they race to be the first off the mark when the lights turn green; they tire easily, they can’t gather momentum as a group.’442 The march led by Barak thus represents a unique hybrid practice both ‘other to’, and simultaneously a product of, colonial modernity—‘the demonstration’ + the specifically Aboriginal practice of ‘the mob.’

The march led by Barak also constitutes a clear genealogical precursor for modes of protest still employed today such as the annual Victorian indigenous land rights march to the steps of Parliament. Contemporary indigenous protest marches in Melbourne’s streets continue to be arresting and spectacular occasions that are dispersed locally, like the Mardi Gras parade discussed in my previous chapter,

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440 See Brown-May 173.

441 Stephen Muecke, *No Road (Bitumen all the Way)* (Fremantle WA: Fremantle Arts Press, 1997) 196.

442 Muecke 196.
once-a-year via local newspaper and television images and reports. However, while these marches are important political statements they tend to overshadow a consideration of the more modest everyday (in)visibility of ‘Aboriginality’ in the central city, the more sedimented indigenous habitation of central city space, and its wide ranging forms and degrees of scale. One place at which attention has been purposefully drawn to this kind of ‘in/visibility’ is the base of the steps outside parliament. At this site a mosaic has been placed in the footpath (Figs. 14a and b). In the centre of the mosaic a rainbow serpent swallows its tail, while figures perform a corroboree around it. The tactical positioning of the mosaic signals that it is something more than an attractive decoration, something that forces the passerby to practice it. There is something almost magical about the way in which this relatively small and modest artwork presents itself (through its physical positioning) as in competition with the monumental classicist edifice of parliament itself. It is at once part of parliament and outside it. If you don’t walk around the mosaic (which because of its size requires an awkward evasion and sidestep), you have to walk over and on its bumpy surface. To do this precipitates a heightened experience of tactility, an abrupt change in the texture of the footpath that is out-of-the-ordinary in relation to the smooth paved surfaces that generally dominate our everyday pathways in urban space. Thus the tactility of the mosaic and its location in the pavement is vitally important to the kind of effects it might produce. For the many who pass by parliament inside their car or tram, the mosaic—if noticed at all—is liable to be registered as an undistinguished, fleeting patch of colour. This type of experience of the urban has been made famous via a chain of postmodern theorists: the view from behind the windscreen reduces the cityscape to an image, dematerialising it through speed.443 However, to walk by, around, or over the mosaic outside parliament is to pass by in a different way. It is a reminder of the importance of the ‘material haptic space’ of the city and a contestation of its subordination to the ‘virtual space celebrated in the sign or image.’444

444 Kerstin Thompson, ‘Spaces In-Between,’ Transition 43 (1994): 64.
The mosaic is an installation on the ‘Another View Walking Trail: Pathway of the Rainbow Serpent,’ a small-scale but nonetheless suggestive ‘urban design/community arts project’\textsuperscript{445} in Melbourne’s central city which highlights places of historical and everyday significance in terms of the relationship between non-Indigenous and Koori\textsuperscript{446} people. The mosaic itself an interpretation of a painting—\textit{Ceremony} (circa late 1890s) (\textit{Fig}. 5 and 6)—by the same William Barak who marched to this site in the late nineteenth century as a representative of the Coranderrk community.


\textsuperscript{446} Indigenous Australians in southern New South Wales and Victoria self-identify as ‘Koori(e)s.’
Fig. 15  William Barak, ‘Aboriginal Ceremony,’ ca.1880-ca.1890.

Fig. 16  William Barak painting, ca.1898.
Ceremony provides an image of an even earlier moment of contact at this site for it depicts the Wurundjeri (one of the Woiworung clans who originally inhabited this area) performance of ‘their great national dance “Ngargee,” a contribution to the festivities held in honour of the birthday of William IV on 21 August 1836. The event was painted from memory over fifty years later by Barak.

Barak’s extraordinary nineteenth-century journeys into the central city, with their aim of continuing the negotiations between indigenous and non-indigenous people, are thus memorialised and echoed in the walking practices of the passerby in the twentieth century. This physical connection, literally embedded in the central cityscape at the intersection of a history of footsteps and an attractive artwork, raises a number of important issues for scholars interested in the broader relations between urban landscapes, history and memory, everyday practices, and the processes of placemaking. How are the histories of place inscribed on the contemporary landscape of the city? Can a comparison of culturally distinct techniques and practices of walking offer us insights into the production of particular places? What can be remembered in conjunction within the context of typical postmodern efforts to renew and make central city landscapes ‘interesting’ and attractive to local and non-local tourists? In what ways does the city function as a space that carves out what Lisa Yoneyama describes, in a discussion of urban renewal in Hiroshima, as ‘new knowledge and consciousness, as well as amnesia, about history and society’? Do processes of ‘remembering’ and ‘forgetting’ constitute a form of contact between indigenous and settler cultures?

As I argued in chapter three in my discussion of ‘Great Moments in Social Climbing: King Kong and the Human Fly,’ Meaghan Morris’ reading of Chris Hilton’s actions suggested a rich zone where the extraordinary and the everyday are

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448 More generally, his paintings offer an important indigenous response to the veritable deluge of white depictions of black subjects. Unlike his non-Aboriginal counterparts, the unique style of Barak’s extraordinary paintings suggest a willingness to consider more hybridised ways of seeing the world. (Some of Barak’s paintings now hang in museums in Europe and others were presented as gifts to visiting dignitaries such as the Prince of Wales). Unattributed pamphlet, Barak. The Last Chief, Wurundjeri Tribe (Living Museum of the West, n.d.)

brought into contact in the city and the possibility of different kinds of reterritorialisation of aspects of the ‘city face’ occur. Taking my cue from that discussion once again, in this chapter I explore the face-to-face interactions that might be performed in ordinary encounters in central Melbourne—where everyday practices rub against and sometimes transform aspects of the city face. If Morris’ concern was with popular practices and postmodern, late capitalist urban space, in contrast my interest here in the extraordinary everyday is one framed in terms of urban space that is also (post)colonial and a site of continuing encounters between different cultures. Put another way, this chapter is an attempt to think through issues concerning the visibility and invisibility of indigenous people in the (post)colonial city, everyday urban experience, and how practices of walking might articulate different kinds of ‘contact.’ To make this argument, however, immediately throws up new questions in regard to the theoretical frameworks (particularly those deriving from Certeau and Foucault) that I discussed in the first part of this thesis. Such Euro-centric frameworks are unsettled and destabilised by the history of Other, indigenous practices of walking that have informed central city Melbourne. It requires us to rethink the notion of the city as the face of European modernity and reconsider it as a space/place of ‘contact’ between European self and indigenous other, a place where multiple trajectories of touring and dwelling intersect.

However, before looking at specific moments of contact upon the contemporary cityscape of Melbourne through a discussion of the Another View walking trail, I want to briefly discuss recent scholarly and institutional discussions of techniques of walking which might then assist us in thinking about the histories of race relations in the postcolonial city and how that city functions as a ‘contact zone.’

I. Cultures of walking

Everyday footsteps, argued de Certeau, have ‘the function of articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning. They insinuate other routes into the functionalist and historical order of movement.’

Thus for Certeau the ‘rhetorical gestures’ produced through everyday practices such as walking compose the spatial network of an ‘anti-discipline’ and thereby provide the basis for a political notion of agency in a society constructed through the structural production of grids of discipline. But what about

*Certeau 105.
those orders of movement that are ‘other’ to the formation of ‘the city’—orders that point to the western-centric nature of ‘modernity’ and its key forms? Where are they located? Stephen Muecke has turned his attention to this issue in a reflective anecdote in his recent work, No Road:

The family is taking a stroll down King Street, Newtown, not far from the centre of Sydney. Some people we see are on their way somewhere, but others are footloose and fancy free, subject to distraction, either chance meetings with friends, or the temptations of the shops and restaurants which turn their attractive faces towards them as they pass. We are innocent subjects engaged in the most innocent of pastimes; and we are on familiar territory. But I can't help thinking about de Certeau: *space is a practised place*. The street, geometrically defined by urban planning, is transformed into space by walkers.

I am thinking, now less innocently, about history and demography. These lands around King Street all once belonged to Governor Bligh, of *Bounty* fame. Down the hill towards the Everleigh railway yards bushrangers used to spur their horses. Here, near St. Stephen's church, is a tree with a plaque: *Mogo's Tree*, a marker of the original inhabitants ... how has this place been transformed into different kinds of spaces by different practices? We are practising being ourselves, as it were, in a place which I identify with as 'home': but there are concentric circles of engagement— Australia, a locality within Australia, an appreciation of one thing, an intolerance of another ...

Here Muecke offers a reading of Certeau’s work that emphasises the role of history and memory in everyday practices and the production of place. On the one hand Muecke registers the experience of the urban pleasures afforded by strolling through a cosy contemporary environment of inviting cafes and stores, thereby granting walking the same (modern/European) ‘glamour’ as that suggested by Certeau and Benjamin before him. At the same time, however, the ‘innocence’ and romance of Muecke’s pleasure is unsettled by his realisation that practices of walking and their corresponding performances of identity in particular places are informed by multiple historical vectors. Places, in other words, resonate with the histories of

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451 Muecke 124.
452 As Simon During has noted, that ‘glamour’ has its antecedents in Benjamin’s *flaneur*. See During 151.
multiple footsteps. How might urban space be rethought through a consideration of the history of practices of walking that have informed it? How are contemporary practices of strolling articulated to the (often violent) displacement of ‘other’ walking practices whose presence is now marked only by traces embedded in the physical landscape (the plaque on ‘Mogo’s Tree’)?

Muecke’s discussions in No Road are part of a ‘meandering’ journey that deliberately veers off the beaten track; they are part of an attempt to rethink that broad and awkward conglomeration of knowledge that falls under the rubric of postcolonial studies—more specifically, about the ways in which hegemonic (academic) discourses have framed and discussed ‘Aboriginality’ as an object of study. At one point Muecke notes an odd absence when he comments that ‘much of the history of Aboriginal life has ignored walking as a basic activity. Walking should also be of general interest ... Walking was the activity that enabled later classifications like ‘nomadic society’ to emerge from the comparative accounts of the anthropologists.’

Perhaps a more sustained attempt to ‘understand’ Aboriginal practices of walking and their relation to place would have been too revealing and destabilising in terms of the epistemology of the coloniser? For as Paul Carter has noted, colonial discourses which rely on characterising Aboriginal culture as ‘nomadic,’ ‘unsettled,’ and relatively ‘uncivilised’ are themselves sites of a profound rhetorical contradiction:

Is it not odd that ours, the most nomadic and migratory of cultures, should found its polity, its psychology, its ethics and even its poetics on the antithesis of movement: on the rhetoric of foundations, continuity, genealogy, stasis? Is it not decidedly odd that a culture intent on global colonization should persistently associate movement with the unstable, the unreliable, the wanton and the primitive?

However, while academic discourses may, as Muecke asserts, have been reluctant to consider the relevance of walking as a basic activity of Aboriginal culture, popular culture has been a site at which a voluminous amount of discourse

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453 Muecke 195.
has been devoted to one type of Aboriginal walking—that of ‘walkabout.’ When originally used in hegemonic settler discourse it most commonly inferred a directionless and aimless kind of movement and an unwillingness to conform to European patterns of work and discipline. The definition in *The Macquarie Dictionary* describes ‘walkabout’ as ‘a period of wandering as a nomad, often as undertaken by Aborigines who feel the need to leave the place where they are in contact with white society, and return for spiritual replenishment to their traditional way of life.’ Even the individual syllables of this word—walk/ab/out—convey the sense of a walking practice concerned with leaving the boundaries of sites of ‘civilisation’ and white, colonial institutions, of which the city is one. Taking on a slightly different inflection, twentieth-century non-Aboriginal appropriations of the term have frequently seen refer to practices of touring and leisure in places other to one’s ordinary home. One common usage of the term describes the condition of being ‘misplaced or lost.’ A long-running, popular Australian travel magazine first published in 1934 took the name ‘Walkabout’ as its title. Used in this context, ‘walkabout’ suggests a particular local, white fantasy of escape into a world outside of the everyday. More recently, the term has enjoyed something of a renaissance thanks to its local and global appropriation in new-age discourses. Walkabout thus stands as a marker of the persistent discursive strategies which have sought to render Aboriginal people as somehow unable to adapt to an everyday inhabitation of urban space, as only at ‘home’ far from urban territories. Could this technique of walking be refigured in the contemporary city in order to produce different effects?

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455 *The Macquarie Dictionary*, 2nd rev. ed. (Chatswood, NSW: Macquarie Library, 1987) 1916. ‘Walkabout,’ of course, may have quite different meanings when used by Aboriginal people themselves. For example, in his entry for the term in *Aboriginal Mythology: an A-Z Spanning the History of the Australian Aboriginal People from the Earliest Legends to the Present Day* (London: Thorsons, 1994), Mudrooroo writes that ‘Aborigines have never been aimless wanderers, but have always followed well-defined paths across their land. They have done so for thousands upon thousands of years and continue to so when the conditions permit, enacting the great journeys, or sections of them, that the ancestral beings undertook long ago in the Dreamtime.

Walkabout is seen to reflect the circulation of the planets about the sun, and the rise and fall of the stars. In fact, it was the stars and their positions in the sky which determined many aspects of the lives of Aborigines, including the direction of pilgrimage. As all the universe was in motion, so were the Aboriginal people (174-175).’


457 More contemporary examples of the diverse non-Aboriginal and globalised use of ‘walkabout’ include a song of that title on the Red Hot Chilli Peppers album *One Hot Minute* (Warner Brothers Records, 1995) and an episode of the science-fiction television series *Babylon-5* (Warner Brothers, 1996) in which one of the main characters (an African-American) goes ‘walkabout’ in order ‘to find himself.’
Current scholarship has tended to look to other techniques of walking when thinking about the relations between indigenous and non-indigenous cultures. For instance, in contrast to ‘walkabout,’ Muecke (in No Road) highlights a different practice of walking that might offer a pragmatic model for everyday, intercultural exchange. That practice is highlighted in Muecke’s recollection of a program he once watched on Aboriginal television and which pointed to walking as a mechanism potentially enabling processes of translation and learning between cultures: ‘Harold also talks about how travellers who come to the Alice had to enter through Honeymoon Gap and only when escorted by our elders... Each person travelling through here had to follow the footprints exactly, each footprint on top of another.’\(^{458}\) As Muecke comments, there ‘is a lesson here for thinking about getting to know places... In the observation of the rules, that is, the footsteps, you can get new insights into places and their meanings.’\(^{459}\)

A more localised and literal account of the possibilities of intercultural exchanges mediated by footsteps has been provided by Chris Healy in his account of walking the Lurujarri Heritage Trail, which runs north of Broome along the coast of Western Australia and where non-indigenous consumers are guided in groups by members of the indigenous Lurujarri Council and Goolarabooloo Co-op.\(^{460}\) For the most part, Healy’s article is concerned with analysing some of the multiform effects resulting from intercultural tourism ventures. In particular, Healy is concerned with the processes and possibilities of intercultural exchange involved in actually ‘doing’ (walking) the trail. In producing his analysis, Healy takes some inspiration from Reading the Country (1984), co-authored by Krim Benterrak, Stephen Muecke, and Paddy Roe: ‘In the Aboriginal science of tracking, following someone’s footsteps means to “know” the person. To walk exactly in their footsteps means that there is an imitation—not a reproduction—of the whole movement of their bodies’[my emphasis].\(^{461}\) In the context of contemporary intercultural tourism, such as the Lurujarri Trail, as Healy demonstrates, this mimetic technique of walking articulates with subject positions structured around relationships of both proximity and distance between self and racial other, enunciated in this particular case through what Healy identifies and discusses under the modalities of ‘aesthetic leisure’, ‘huntin’ and

\(^{458}\) Muecke 197.
\(^{459}\) Muecke 197-198.
\(^{461}\) Benterrak, Muecke, and Roe cited in Healy, ‘White Feet and Black Trails’: 62.
fishin’,’ and ‘allo-fascination’. As Healy demonstrates, these relations offer the possibility of a wide range of politically progressive, conservative or sometimes simply indeterminable political effects that are anchored in the context of the trail.

Having observed this recent scholarly interest walking as a metaphor and mode of intercultural exchange, I also want to note that a similar notion has enjoyed popular currency in the past decade in Australia as part of official national project of ‘reconciliation’ which aims to ‘heal the wounds’ produced in the ongoing history of dispossession and marginalisation experienced by the country’s indigenous inhabitants. In 1991, an official national body, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, was established to guide this healing process. In its first major report, *Walking Together: The First Steps*, released in 1994, the Council advocated that such healing would best be achieved through a pedagogical process in which the founding narratives of the nation were revised so as to acknowledge the shameful treatment of indigenous people. But what might ‘walking together’ encompass here? In one sense this metaphor recognises the different cultural practices and histories that mark the continuing interactions between indigenous and settler cultures. But what kinds of ‘contact’ between the two might be possible under the logic of a metaphor (‘walking together’) that attempts to ‘reconcile’ a recognition of difference with a realisation of the inevitability of shared histories and pathways?

‘Walking,’ in the disparate literal and metaphoric usages I have charted in this section of my chapter, might thus figure in two distinct but equally important ways that allow insights into the history of race relations in the city. Firstly, as a mnemonic technique it can allow histories of the everyday inhabitation of urban space to be remembered and forgotten. As my discussion of the term ‘walkabout’ indicated, popular settler discourses on this technique of walking have persistently produced effects of forgetting the continuing presence of indigenous people within the times and spaces of colonial modernity and, in particular, the city. The everyday of the indigenous other has, in this sense, frequently been figured as both unknowable and elsewhere. However, more recent mobilisations of the metaphor of walking as a figure for translation (be they cultural theory texts, ventures like the

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462 Healy, ‘White feet and Black Trails’: 64-69.
Lurujarri Trail, or national policy initiatives such as Reconciliation) offer an alternative organised around a practice of mimesis, or learning from the distinct footsteps of the other (though the effects of this process are complex and unpredictable). Later in this chapter I argue that the Another View walking trail in Melbourne successfully brings these two kinds of walking—the mnemonic and mimetic—together, within the space of the central city. However, before we can more closely discuss the trail’s employment of these techniques some attention needs to be paid to the ‘context’ of this discussion—that is, to the specific history of Melbourne as a site of contact between indigenous people and European settlers. In my next section I argue that one productive way of approaching this question, and of historically and spatially framing practices of walking and their associated cultural encounters, is through the useful notion of the ‘contact zone’ that has recently assumed some currency in and around the field of postcolonial studies.

II. The colonial city as contact zone: a ‘prehistory of postcolonialism’

In Imperial Eyes, Mary Louise Pratt employs the phrase ‘contact zones’ to describe ‘social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly assymetrical relation of domination and subordination - like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today.’\textsuperscript{464} She further outlines the term ‘contact zone’ as an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect. By using the term “contact,” I aim to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination.\textsuperscript{465}

For the most part, Pratt’s work is primarily concerned with different instances of travel and exploration writing produced in the wake of the massive European economic and political expansion from around the mid-eighteenth century. Pratt’s notion of the contact zone also offers a useful starting point from which to consider

\textsuperscript{464} Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturature (London: Routledge, 1992) 4.
\textsuperscript{465} Pratt 7.
the importance of the nineteenth-century Australian city as a place which provided an important context for the establishment of everyday relations between indigenous and settler cultures. In particular, I argue that the construction of the everyday space of the central city was strongly linked to the articulation of a contact zone organised around relations of visibility and invisibility, and myths of presence and absence.

The land on which present-day central Melbourne exists, and the more general area of southern Australia, is thought to have been populated by Koori people for at least forty thousand years. At the time when white invaders first came to settle in Victoria, Koori groups living in and around the present-day site of wider Melbourne formed part of a wider federation known as the Kulin. The Kulin ‘federation’ was made up of five dialect groups, namely the Woiworung, Bunurong, Wathaurung, Kurung, and Taungurong (all of which were further structured in terms of clans), that ‘shared adjoining territories, a common language, cultural ideas and mutual interests’ and maintained strong links to each other through inter-clan marriages. Regular gatherings of the groups were held at multiple sacred sites in the area. Melbourne was officially founded in 1835 and this had a dramatic impact on Koori life as a result of its displacement and disruption of crucial Aboriginal activities. As Gary Presland notes,

The site selected by the first settlers for the village of Melbourne was precisely the place most favoured for Kulin inter-clan gatherings ... In the first years of the settlement Koories still gathered at their traditional locations; camps at a number of sites on both sides of the Yarra were noted by European observers.

By the late 1830s Kooris were starting to be registered as ‘a nuisance and a disturbing influence in Melbourne streets.’ The colonial ‘Assistant Protector’ responsible for Aboriginal people in the central city area (during the 1840s), William Thomas, unsuccessfully tried to encourage the Woiworung and

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468 Presland 47.
469 Presland 99.
Bunurong—the groups occupying the area in which central city Melbourne was located—to move away from the settlement.\textsuperscript{470}

Despite the continuing everyday presence of Aborigines in the areas that settlers chose to call their home, a vital part of colonisation more broadly was the \textit{fictional} erasure of the Aboriginal inhabitation of Australia via the transformation of land into landscape, and the imagining of the space of the new colonial settlement as one free of the traces of prior indigenous occupation. It is now axiomatic in postcolonial scholarship that the attempted erasure of Aboriginal claims to the inhabitation of particular places was rationalised through the fiction of \textit{terra nullius} (or land unoccupied), that effectively rendered invisible the patterns of life and movement of indigenous peoples, the Aborigines, and their relationship to particular locales. \textit{Terra nullius} was ‘a most unstable foundation for the nation’ and, as Jacobs notes, in order to shore up its fantastic nature it required ‘a whole range of spatial technologies of power such as the laws of private property, the practices of surveying, naming and mapping and the procedures of urban and regional planning.’\textsuperscript{471} These were the technologies that installed the symbolic foundations of a European everyday in this place.

In particular, that construction of the everyday was ensconced through the production of what might be described as the colonial ‘face’ or ‘super-object’ of the grid that dominates a number of major Australian cities (for example, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth). Andrew Brown-May notes that its ‘straight lines ruled off a symbolic and actual matrix of colonisation, exclusion and control, imposing a new space-discipline.’\textsuperscript{472} Paul Carter has convincingly argued that the grid might be considered a rich ‘spatial metaphor’ that encapsulated ‘the essential precondition[s] of capitalist settlement ... Located against the imaginary grid, the blankness of unexplored country was translatable into a blueprint of colonisation: it could be divided up into blocks, the blocks numbered and the land auctioned, without the purchasers ever leaving their London offices.’\textsuperscript{473} The grid was thus instrumental in producing a colonial gaze that reached out from the imperial heart. It also

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\textsuperscript{470} Presland 99.
\textsuperscript{471} Jane M. Jacobs, \textit{Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City} (London: Routledge, 1996) 105.
\textsuperscript{472} Brown-May 12.
\textsuperscript{473} Paul Carter, \textit{The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History} (London: Faber and Faber, 1987) 203-204. Also see his more recent \textit{Lie of the Land} (1996) 246-250, regarding the quite different character of Adelaide’s grid (especially in terms of its relation to physical topography).
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functioned to erase the inhospitable ‘otherness’ of a foreign landscape and attract reluctant settlers: ‘[w]hen the colonists take up residence in Hoddle’s Melbourne or Light’s Adelaide, they do so not because they spontaneously react to the government’s authority but because they recognize the space. It is familiar. It speaks to them.’  

As a cultural form it mapped out the contours of a familiar, everyday colonial space.

To actually achieve the erasure of traces of an Aboriginal presence from the central Melbourne area required that the fictional strategies of terra nullius and spatial technologies such as the street grid (physically laid out on the ground in 1837) be supplemented and underwritten by physical acts of dispossession and genocide. For instance, Melbourne Aborigines were cajoled and forced by various means to move to regional reserves and missions far outside the city boundaries. At these sites the newly appointed ‘Aboriginal Protectors’ annually distributed a limited amount of provisions, blankets and clothing in an attempt to encourage Aborigines to stay there. According to nineteenth-century historical accounts, one of the four assistant protectors, William Thomas, frequently complained that ‘he could do nothing as long as the natives were allowed to visit Melbourne’ where ‘they begged upon the streets, and the inhabitants gave them provisions and old clothing, and what suited the black man still better, they gave him sixpences.’ In 1840 a decisive turning point was reached when approximately four hundred Aborigines were simply arrested on the distant outskirts of Melbourne and marched into the settlement, down Bourke Street, ‘men, women, and children, a sheep-like mob in the middle, with a file of troopers on either hand acting as shepherds.’ While the majority of those arrested easily escaped from their place of imprisonment that night, the event of the arrest effectively ensured that local Aborigines no longer congregated in large numbers around the city. Presland sums up the consequences of this trend by noting that hostility towards indigenous people continued to rise in the following decades culminating, for him, in the 1880s when ‘the remaining Koories were seen as objects of ridicule or curiosity, to be displayed, for instance, at the Great Exhibition held in 1880-81.’

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477 Sutherland 241-242.
478 Presland 99. In referring to Kooris on display at the Great Exhibition of 1880-81, presumably...
While Presland’s summary of the period between European settlement and the 1880s captures the general trajectory and brutal consequences of the displacement of Aborigines, it also glosses over the complex ways in which local Aborigines did not simply disappear but how in that era for they were simultaneously visible on the streets (as in Barak’s march into parliament) and ‘remembered,’ ‘forgotten,’ and ‘re-presented’ through different urban institutions such as the international exhibitions. While this kind of historical work productively allows us to see the ways in which the central city functioned as a ‘contact zone’ it tends to be focussed on the temporal and spatial aspects of those interactions without more closely considering what actually constituted ‘contact.’ One site at which the multiple valencies and performative dimensions of ‘contact’ might be considered are the international exhibitions mentioned by Presland. As has been now made clear in an abundance of excellent scholarship on the topic, exhibitions of this period offer crucial insights into racial theories dominant and circulating at the time. Such exhibitions inevitably featured a heterogeneous range of displays concerning the lives and histories of indigenous peoples. Here I want to turn to these exhibitions as a way of opening up a discussion about ‘contact,’ and the important relations established at these sites between modes of display and their associated strategies of visibility and invisibility, and technologies of walking and ‘remembering/forgetting.’

Melbourne had a particular penchant for the exhibition phenomenon—it staged more exhibitions between 1851 and 1900 than any other city in the world. As Paul Fox has observed, it was during the 1880s that Melbourne established a vision of itself as Australasia’s premier metropolis and a major colonial city. This particular decade was one of accelerated growth for Melbourne: the urbanscape changed dramatically as the settler population almost doubled. (In contrast, a

Presland is referring to representations of the residents of Coranderrk Station that I discuss later in this chapter. It should also be noted that colonial exhibitions like Melbourne did not feature the ‘coerced performances of identity’ (Clifford, Routes 197) of kidnapped Indigenous people that occurred in the exhibitions in metropolitan Europe.

Victorian census taken in 1861 recorded only thirteen Aborigines as being residents in the city). The centrepiece of Melbourne’s vision of itself as a major colonial metropolis, as Fox argues, was the replacement Exhibition Building and grounds built on the northern edge of the city grid (Victoria Street) in Carlton for the staging of the 1880-1881 International Exhibition.

Like other exhibitions held around the globe in this era, this one featured a number of displays concerned with indigenous peoples. For example, the Coranderrk residents I referred to in my introduction were incorporated within the exhibitionary apparatus in two quite different ways. Firstly, Coranderrk residents engaged in various farming activities, notably the harvesting and preparation of hops, and these won ‘a gold medal and prize money at the Melbourne Exhibition [in 1881].’ This was an unusual instance within the wider context of these exhibitions of how indigenous people might ‘advance’ through assimilation within white industrial culture. At the same time, however, as Anne Maxwell has discussed, the residents were also the subject of a giant mural consisting of 106 silver albumen portraits taken by Charles Walters and displayed at the earlier Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition of 1866 (Figs.17 and 18). As Maxwell argues, these portraits and their accompanying captions still relied on ‘conventional “scientific” methods of racial classification’ and literally framed the subjects as objects of anthropological interest.

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482 Maxwell 144. In this period, children of mixed relationships were not generally classified as Aborigines. More broadly, the genocide that had occurred as a result of invasion can be registered in the estimation that the Koori population of Victoria fell from 15000 to 2000 between 1834 and 1858 both as a result of violent death inflicted by whites and introduced diseases (Broome 10).
483 Fox 63. The form of the 1880-1 Exhibition itself was strongly influenced by the 1878 Paris Exposition which was visited by the Victorian Exhibition Commissioners who used their visit to secure the rights to stage the next event. It is symptomatic of the centre-periphery relationship engendered by colonial modernity that the French Court at the Melbourne Exhibition featured ‘books, maps, plans and models showing how “the various charitable institutions, courts of justice, prisons, lunatic asylums were constructed and administered”’ in Paris (66), and these exhibits were later donated to the Melbourne Public Library. Paris thus provided a model for a city attempting to imagine itself as fully modern. Among the documents in the French Court were photographic albums depicting Haussman’s reshaping of Paris from the late 1850s onwards. Haussman initiated his radical redevelopment of Paris through the construction of massive boulevards and a wealth of new pedestrian spaces and territories. In Melbourne, those images of urban transformations sent from Paris would be deliberately echoed in the work of prominent local photographers like Caire and Lindt who re-imagined the already existing Collins Street East ‘in the genre of the Parisian Boulevard (66).’ That vision of Parisian bourgeois culture was further exemplified in the form of Melbourne’s grandest inner-city passage, The Block Arcade, which featured one entrance on Collins Street and opened in 1892. For many years the Block Arcade was the hub of city’s most fashionable bourgeois promenading circuit.
484 Barwick 281.
485 Also known as Carl Walter.
486 Maxwell 146.
Putting aside the specificities of particular displays for the moment, I want to flag a number of important arguments made by scholars interested in what these
Fig. 17 Carl Walter’s photo of Coranderrk residents at 1866 Inter-colonial Exhibition.

Fig. 18 Coranderrk Men, ca. 1898 (including William Barak in centre).
exhibitions have to tell us about the staging of a moment of contact between self and other. Firstly, despite their heterogeneity, a reasonably consistent ideological message was encoded in the exhibition displays. The message was that white industrial progress was a definitive sign of evolution and that this correspondingly positioned this social group at the top of an imagined scientific, racial hierarchy. In contrast, Aborigines—whether figured in the form of dead bodies, ‘anthropological’ images and dioramas, or collections of artefacts such as ‘stone-age’ tools—were represented as being at the bottom of this hierarchy and consequently destined to vanish as a race. Visitors entering the 1880-81 Melbourne International Exhibition, for example, were ‘confronted by a gigantic allegorical mural depicting [white] Australian’s rapid advancement up the evolutionary ladder.’

Implicitly, Aboriginal people were represented as a superseded race. This interpretation was authorised in the official exhibition guide’s commentaries on displays: ‘[i]n spite of the preserving attempts of benevolent persons it would seem as if the extinction of the aboriginal race is but a question of time.’ In another instance the writer observed of a diorama in the South Australian court (Fig. 19) that ‘[t]he whole formed a faithful representation of aboriginal life, an contrasted admirably with the proofs of advancement displayed in all directions around.’

Secondly, as Tony Bennett has argued, these kinds of exhibitionary apparatuses (and the epistemologies from the historical sciences they relied upon) are indicative of the emergence of a set of cultural technologies which ‘opened up the prospect for new kinds of “progressive” work on the [white] self.’ These technologies regulated ‘the performative aspects of their visitors’ conduct. Overcoming mind/body dualities in treating their visitors as, essentially, “minds on legs,” each, in its different way, is a place for “organized walking” in which an intended message is communicated in the form of a (more or less) directed itinerary’

487 Maxwell 135.
488 Cited in Fox 66-67.
489 Melbourne International Exhibition: Official Record Containing Introduction, History of Exhibition, Description of Exhibition and Exhibits, Official Awards of Commissioners and Catalogue of Exhibits (Melbourne: Mason, Firth and McCutcheon, 1882) cxlvi. In contrast to this persistent framing of Australian Aborigines as being destined to disappear and beyond the apparent benefits that modernity could endow, the displays of the Fijian and Ceylon Court showed that certain native races could usefully benefit from the hand of industrialisation. In the case of Fiji, as Fox has argued, Melbourne’s aspirations to being an imperial centre were apparent in the concurrent travels of a party of twenty Melbourne businessmen to Fiji to inspect the sites at which the mineral wealth and foodstuffs on display at the exhibition were actually produced (See Fox 67).
490 Bennett, Culture 153.
In racial and evolutionary terms, Bennett wryly quips, the lesson offered ‘seems clear enough: stay on the main routes of progress or run the risk of becoming an exhibit.’

Finally, and following on from that previous point, Chris Healy has argued persuasively that the diverse nineteenth-century exhibitionary practices of ‘collecting Aborigines’—as bodies, objects, image and text (which also included remembering Aboriginal people as a vanishing race)—were not so much an effort to engage in a conversation with the other, but to ‘know’ Aborigines in order to establish a memory of social whiteness. Thus to walk through the relevant exhibition displays was to perform a particular technique of remembering.

The three points I have made here help confirm that the ‘contact’ taking place in the context of the International Exhibition did not for the most part involve any significant exchange or negotiation with indigenous people. Generally speaking, this was a site where indigenous people and their culture were presented as ‘mute, exoticised specimens for curious and titillated crowds.’ Yet some of the practices that took place in relation to representations of Aboriginality at the Exhibitions gesture toward possibilities of other kinds of ‘contact’ and a destabilising of the mostly unambiguous racial messages maintained by the various displays. For instance, more philanthropic nineteenth-century Melbourne identities such as the government botanist, Ferdinand von Mueller, suggested that Victorian Kooris should be brought to Melbourne to visit the 1880-81 International Exhibition. Despite any direct and immediate response to Mueller’s suggestion, in January 1881 a group of forty Aboriginals were brought from northern Victoria by a Mr. and Mrs. Matthews in

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492 Bennett, *Culture* 135.
494 In making this argument, I am not suggesting that staged performances of ‘Aboriginality’ cannot be sites where meaningful contact zone work can be done. My later argument regarding the Another view trail makes this clear. The intervening historical period also suggests performances of ‘Aboriginality’ in the city that lie somewhere in between. Sylvia Kleinert’s ‘An Aboriginal Moomba: Remaking History’ *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 13:3 (1999): 345-357, discusses one such moment.
495 Clifford, *Routes* 198.
Fig. 19 Aboriginal Diorama, South Australian Court, 1880-81 International Exhibition, Melbourne

Fig. 20 ‘Doing the 1880-81 Exhibition’
order to see the exhibition. Their visit was officially endorsed in the form of passes supplied by the Victorian Government Railways. While few historical clues remain as to how those Aboriginal visitors might have ‘interpreted’ or engaged with the exhibition’s displayed it seems apparent that the dominant ideological frameworks could not have completely contained their presence and temporary status as viewing subjects rather than objects. Aside from the lack of historical ‘documents’ there is also the simple fact that, as Tony Bennett has observed in his account of museums in this period, indigenous visitors such as these ‘had no place within the implied address’ of such institutions and did not figure ‘among its potential subjects or beneficiaries.’ Equally, such institutions could not have incorporated the radically different techniques of walking practised by such visitors. At the same time, the Aboriginal visitors themselves were once made into an extraneous and exotic object of spectacle during their time in Melbourne—one local newspaper invited curious locals to visit their camp by the beach at Brighton (a southern beachside suburb of the city). Thus while a focus on exhibitionary apparatuses and their strategies of display is no doubt crucial and valuable to postcolonial cultural studies it is also fundamentally limited in so far as it leaves unexamined any sense of other types of ‘contact’ that might have taken place outside of those highly organised parameters.

In the remainder of this chapter I want to further consider the valencies and possibilities of ‘contact’—this time, however, in relation to the landscape of the contemporary everyday city. As we shall see the patterns of relations between indigenous and settler inhabitants established in the colonial period—based around modes of visibility and invisibility, presence and absence—are refigured the landscape of the present. This is not surprising given that places and moments of contact in contemporary culture are, as James Clifford has observed, ‘crucial sites for unfinished modernity.’ Thus the rubric of contact allows a way of thinking about the seemingly paradoxical continuities and breaks that organise the relationship between colonial and postcolonial moments. As Marc Augé has

497 The Matthews operated a rural mission station on the Victorian-New South Wales border. It should be noted that outside the city, rural mission stations and their Aboriginal residents were regularly the subject of large-scale tourist visits partially motivated by the need to raise funds to keep the stations running. See Nancy Cato’s Mister Maloga, rev. ed. (St. Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1993).
498 Bennett, Culture 154.
499 Dunstan 125.
500 Clifford, Routes 2.
commented, ‘[t]he presence of the past in a present that supersedes it but still lays claim to it: it is in this reconciliation that Jean Starobinski sees the essence of modernity.’\textsuperscript{501} The Another View walking trail (which is the focus of the following section of this chapter) engages with those continuities and ruptures in order to highlight the ongoing presence of an extraordinary indigenous everyday in the city—‘extraordinary’ in the sense that this ‘indigenous’ everyday is positioned as both ‘other’ to, and a product of, colonial modernity. I argue that the Another View trail enables a different kind of contact on the landscape of the contemporary city by rearticulating the dominant technologies of seeing, walking and remembering established at extraordinary colonial sites like the international exhibition and placing them in the everyday context of the city street.

III. (Post)colonial practices: walking the Another View trail.

As I noted above, the Council for Reconciliation’s current efforts to enable ‘healing’ between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people at the end of twentieth century (and into the twenty-first) have focussed around a pedagogical process that aims to revise the racist founding narratives of the nation. As Jacobs comments, the Council for Reconciliation ‘has a mandate to educate wider Australia about Aboriginal culture (past and present) and to remould the story of Australian “settlement” into a story of “colonisation,” with all its attendant grimness and with its new heroics of survival.’\textsuperscript{502} More specifically, as the Council’s first report notes, this process was to be materially expressed in a number of projects engaging with ‘smaller, practical, localized terms’,\textsuperscript{503} and initiated by local authorities and community groups. The Melbourne City Council (MCC) obviously paid heed to the suggestive title of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation’s first major report (\textit{Walking Together}), and from some of its staff came the proposal for a trail along which all Australians could experience a literal walk through central Melbourne’s previously ‘hidden’ Koori history.\textsuperscript{504} A background statement describing the MCC’s rationale for being involved in the project noted that it would be ‘an example of the Council’s Public Art and Community Arts programs working to impact on

\textsuperscript{502} Jacobs, ‘Resisting Reconciliation’ 209.
\textsuperscript{503} Council for Reconciliation cited in Jacobs, ‘Resisting Reconciliation’ 269.
\textsuperscript{504} John Stevens, ‘Another View of City’s History,’ \textit{Age} 6 Jan. 1996: 15.
social issues in a positive way. The MCC coordinated the planning, funding and installation of the trail project as well its continuing maintenance. While itself contributing significantly to the cost of the trail, the MCC was also successful in obtaining funding from the Australia Council for the Arts (Community Cultural Development Unit and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit), Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, and the private Myer Foundation. The budgeted cost of the trail was approximately one hundred thousand dollars.

Comprised of seventeen inner city sites, fourteen of which feature small-scale contemporary artworks, the trail marks places of ‘historical and cultural significance to either Aboriginal people or to the European settlement of Bundaiyan (Australia). All of the sites are located ‘within’ the general vicinity of the outer perimeter of the rectangular grid that forms the basis of the city’s central business district (Fig. 21), but simultaneously help produce quite an out-of-the-ordinary orientation to the area that momentarily makes visible the contingent temporality and spatiality of the seemingly neutral form of the grid. The trail’s actual design was a collaborative effort between an Aboriginal artist, Ray Thomas, a non-Aboriginal artist, Megan Evans, and an Aboriginal researcher/writer, Robert Mate Mate. The researcher and artists also consulted with the Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation, Cultural Heritage Council, and the Melbourne Foundation Committee. According to the artists:

The context of this project is reconciliation. We believe that it is not until the past is confronted and accepted that we can move on and build a creative and harmonious future ... This project asserts that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians have a shared history, and that in order to have a shared future we need to acknowledge successes and failures from the past in our contemporary reading of history.

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505 Melbourne City Council (Recreation, Arts and Cultural Development Section), Community Arts Koorie Project 1994, 2 Files, Nos. (1)48/10/34; (4)48/10/34 (P2).
508 Trail Guide 1.
509 Even this process involved a set of complex negotiations. One community newspaper featured a story in which a descendent of William Barak complained that the MCC had not really dealt with community elders but with ‘the white styled,’ Wurundjeri Council Land and Compensation, Cultural Heritage Council. See ‘Walking Trail Leads to Tribal Dispute,’ Melbourne Times 12 Apr. 1995: 9.
510 Trail Guide 1.
Officially, the Another View trail is packaged as a self-guided walking tour of around 4-5 hours (the guidebook notes that you can reduce this time to 2.5 hours if you make use of the City Circle Tram). An explanatory narrative for the trail is provided in a brochure available at a couple of tourist information booths. Similar kinds of trails in which walkers can experience the Aboriginal relation to place have appeared frequently in the past decade. These kinds of trails frequently produce critical postcolonial reflections on earlier kinds of institutionalised walking or touring (typical of exhibitionary apparatuses like museums and the international exhibitions), where indigenous people have largely been positioned as ‘mute’ or ‘exotic’ objects of display. In contrast, many of these contemporary trails are often ventures which may involve Aboriginal designers and/or guides as well as extensive narration designed to bring users into contact with various aspects of ‘traditional’ Aboriginal life and/or the effects of European invasion.\(^{511}\) While exhibiting some commonalities with such trails, the Another View trail is different from these in two significant ways.

Firstly, the trail does not bring its predominantly non-Aboriginal users into face-to-face contact with Koori people (in the form, for example, of guides). However, it does bring its users into contact with discursive formations located at the intersection of ‘colonial history’ and ‘Aboriginality.’ As Marcia Langton has argued, “‘Aboriginality’ arises from the subjective experience of both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people who engage in any intercultural dialogue, whether in actual lived experience or through a mediated experience such as a white person watching a program about Aboriginal people on television or reading a

\(^{511}\) See, for instance, Healy on the Lurujarri Trail in ‘White Feet and Black Trails’; Jacobs on Brisbane’s Aboriginal Art Trail in *Edge of Empire*, ch.6.
Langton further suggests that the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people finds its most dense or concentrated moment ‘not between actual people, but between white Australians and the symbols created by their predecessors.’ In this regard, the realm of representation and memorialisation, particularly that pertaining to Australian colonial history, is crucial to the production of ‘Aboriginality.’ This is particularly true in an urban centre like Melbourne where ‘real’ Aborigines are typically located on the periphery of a spatial imaginary (somewhere in the ‘centre’ or ‘far north’ of Australia). Following Langton, then, we can consider the relations between non-Indigenous Australians and representations of Koori culture as an important dimension of ‘contact’—but what are some of its political possibilities?

The second distinguishing feature of the Another View trail that I want to highlight here is that it functions as both ‘a tour’ and ‘not a tour.’ While for some users it may be experienced as a coherent totality—for example, visiting tourists who happen upon the trail guidebook in a city tourist information centre; different Koori or Aboriginal groups; school groups; or interested postgraduate researchers—for the greatest number of users, I would argue, it operates according to quite a different logic, that of the fragmentary, everyday encounter on the part of the walker who is ‘just passing by.’ This sense of how the trail is most commonly experienced was further confirmed for me recently in the form of the blank looks I received when I tried to obtain the trail guide at a number of the official tourist information booths located in the central city (‘what trail?’). Furthermore, the walking practice of ‘passing by’ situates the trail sites as being located in in-between spaces, part of the urbanscape of pedestrian transit. This logic situates the trail and its meanings as always embedded within the sphere of the everyday rather than the ‘special event.’ Accordingly, I frame and orient my following analysis of sites on ‘the trail’ around the multiple registers structuring this mode of walking of the individual ‘encounter’; that is, the possible politics and effects of ‘just passing by.’ However, a brief caveat is necessary here. The following discussion and metaphoric walk by these sites is not—despite some convergences—a situationist-inspired dérive, or twenty-minute drift ordered by chance encounters in city streets. It is not an attempt, as the famous situationist slogan incited, to discover ‘the beach,’ or dream sites (or even, perhaps,

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513 Langton 33.
the dreamtime in this context), ‘beneath the cobblestones.’ The trail reminds us, I argue, that to ‘walkabout’ the city is not in fact about escaping the everyday but is, instead, about the possibilities of experiencing a quite different sense of the ordinary.
The southern bank of the Yarra river west of St. Kilda Road in central Melbourne is the epicentre of spectacle, tourism and festivity in the city. It includes the Southgate cafe and retail centre and the enormous Crown Entertainment Complex, both of which are exemplary instances of the kinds of crowd-pulling, consumption-oriented sites that have been a focus of analysis for a number of cultural studies scholars interested in thinking through the changing conditions of urban life, its key practices, and associated modes of perception and experience. Somewhat paradoxically, perhaps, these rich and extraordinary sites continue to provide us with useful clues to changing formations of ‘the everyday.’ One of the best and most obvious pleasures to be enjoyed while walking down the long riverside promenade in front of these sites involves simply looking north at the city skyline and enjoying the view of the spectacular, postcard ‘face’ of the metropolis.
Underneath the busy footbridge that crosses the river and joins Southgate to the Central Business District there is a small image painted above some public seating on a lower support section of the bridge. It’s easy to miss unless you narrow your glance at the right time and angle or happen to go beneath the bridge for an ice-cream, a cold drink or just to sit and pass some time. The image, partially framed by the representation of a giant serpent, is a depiction of the indigenous inhabitation of this part of the river in a pre-colonial moment prior to the creation of ‘the city.’ The image certainly isn’t extraordinary or spectacular in the way of the other views and experiences generally available in this part of the city or indeed analogous places in many other cities. But by virtue of its placement, its proximity to the ‘face’ of the city, and the possibility of a glance from the passerby, this representation of an/other history of ‘the everyday’ enters into a momentary relation with the (paradoxically) more spectacular, yet familiar, everyday image of the city. In this context, the practice of passing by articulates a momentary interface between ‘the extraordinary’ and ‘the everyday’ which is much more than a relationship of alienated spectatorship.

The image attempts an extraordinary symbolic gesture in this context by producing a contact zone within the everyday space of the city. For the non-indigenous passerby, the serpent is probably one of the most identifiable signifiers of the idea of an/other temporality in relation to this land and space, particularly through its association with the notion of ‘the dreamtime.’ (This site, advises the trail guide, also offers a vantage point on the place where a creek now hidden under nearby Elizabeth Street flows into the river: this meeting point of river and creek is traditionally believed by Aboriginal people to be the site of a camp of spirit children (‘Kameruka’)). To encounter the trail image might produce an experience analogous to that described by Margaret Morse in her work on postmodern everyday environments (as discussed in my preface). She observes that ‘[t]he late twentieth century has witnessed the growing dominance of a differently constituted kind of space, a *nonspace* of both experience and representation, an *elsewhere* which inhabits the everyday.’ Such nonspaces, Morse argues, are constitutive components of our contemporary everyday. I would argue that the notion of the Dreamtime foregrounded in the Another View installation suggests the possibilities of transportation into an/other spatial and temporal realm. Typically, such a gesture is considered by postmodern urban critics to be of dubious value: non-spaces are
invariably associated with the endless play of simulation, uncritical nostalgia, and loss of older forms of communal experience. The trail installation suggests a different perspective by politically inflecting the postmodern everyday experience of nonspace with a postcolonial act of remembering that instead of destabilising the subject’s sense of location in place actually enriches its meanings and texture. A strange paradox is thereby produced: this nonspace becomes not just a temporary escape from ‘the everyday,’ but a reminder that not only does the everyday have a particular history that is subject to change, but indeed there are multiple existing histories of the everyday. Even more radically, the installation reminds the viewer of a different kind of everyday logic, a haptic relationship to the landscape in which the river is more than simply a picturesque backdrop to the postmodern city’s tourist economy. As Paul Carter has suggested, the modern city has in one sense always been a ‘non-place’: ‘we idolize the picturesqueness of places because we sense our ungroundedness, the fragility of our claim on the soil. Our carefully enclosed and ornamented places ... grow out of the sacrifice of the ground and are, in this sense, non-places.’

Site#4

Fig. 23a

514 Carter, Lie of the Land 2.
The hill occupied by Flagstaff Gardens was once a Koori burial site and also perhaps the lookout point from where Kooris first observed white settlers sailing up Port Philip Bay in 1835.\footnote{Trail Guide 6.} In 1836 it became known as Burial Hill when white settlers, some killed by Kooris, were also interred there, and already by the 1860s it featured a Pioneer Monument. These days it is a pleasant green retreat in the middle of the city, a popular spot for an outside-the-office lunch, for sitting on the grass and removing shoes. When I took this photograph at the gardens late in the afternoon a small group of office workers were planning some sort of corporate strategy. In the evening couples often walk hand-in-hand around the monuments, sometimes just passing by, sometimes stopping briefly to check the scattered inscriptions.\footnote{In a personal, descriptive account of walking the trail Rhonda Dredge notes how in the process of peering down at the boxes a park ranger approaches her and, as he tells her how he is “‘knocking off’ and has no time to talk,” supplies her with a page summary of “the importance of Flagstaff Gardens to the people of Melbourne. It is the last word on the topic and I can tell you that the earth has been silenced yet again.” Rhonda Dredge, ‘Place and Personal History: Encountering Melbourne’s “Another View” Walking Trail,’ \textit{Meridian} 16:1 (1997): 47-53.}

More recently, as part of the Another View trail, three small boxes have been set in the grass verge surrounding the Pioneer monument and these frequently pique the curiosity of the passerby. That interest is first engaged through the glass tops of the boxes which are imprinted with evocative extracts from Liam Davidson’s book, \textit{The White Woman} (a recent fictional account of relations between settlers and Aborigines in Victoria in the nineteenth century)—‘A whole repertoire of stolen
sounds echoing through the still bush as if the birds bore witness to some horrifying massacre.’ The boxes themselves contain barely identifiable items (miniature replica paintings of photographs of early settlers, cartridges, some lace).

The minimalist nature of the installation and its lack of any accompanying interpretative or contextual information is significant here. (In the majority of cases, installations on the trail simply feature a circular marker that reads ‘Another View walking trail, 1995’). While extracts such as those printed on the boxes next to the Pioneer monument may be modest gestures they are nevertheless suggestive. The Another view installations or plaques can’t and don’t aim to provide ‘monumental’ stories of place per se, but invoke instead the multivalent nature of inhabitation, the extraordinary affectual dimension of places as they have been practised in a range of ways, pointing to a sense of the everyday as something palpable and textured, rather than a necessarily flattened surface. The incantational quality of the extracts function to summon up the noisy histories of contact by which colonial place was violently established, an aural memory that has for the most part been dulled beneath the seemingly eternal hum of city traffic.517

To encounter this installation (and others like it on the trail), is to experience an extraordinary combination of ‘resonance’ and ‘wonder.’518 Stephen Greenblatt has used these terms to describe the curiosity- or wonder-cabinets of the Renaissance which were the forerunners of museum displays and that are the inspiration for the Another View artworks. Wonder-cabinets frequently marked out the marvellous in relation to discoveries in the new world: what was important to the collection, as Anthony Shelton observes, ‘were rare or near-unique phenomena that were thought to have resulted from some exceptional condition or circumstance.’519

517 A similar installation, located next to a statue of the explorer Matthew Flinders (which sits in the grounds of St. Paul’s Cathedral in Flinders Street), takes the form of a cross-shaped box with blood-red lining which is filled with bleached bones and bullet cartridges. (According to the Trail Guide a different kind of resonance is also invoked here—early settlers mistakenly identified the cross symbol etched on burial trees and rocks as a Christian one when it was in fact a reference to Barramal, ‘the emu constellation known today as the Southern Cross(19)).’ However, it is the text on the red-tinted glass top of the box which is perhaps the most resonant aspect of the installation. It reads ‘IN THE NAME OF progressjusticecivilisationEnglandHis Majestyprogressjustice . . .’ Once again the power of a certain type of incantation is examined in a trail installation.


519 Anthony Alan Shelton, ‘Cabinets of Transgression: Renaissance Collections and the Incorporation of the New World,’ The Cultures of Collecting, ed. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (Melbourne, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1994) 180. An important social function of such collections, argues Shelton, was to ‘domesticate potentially transgressive worlds and customs(203).’
Yet what is made marvellous here in the postcolonial wonder-cabinets found on the Another View trail is not so much the strange concatenation of objects from that new world (instead, the objects are quite mundane), but the extraordinary nature of that early *everyday relationship* between settler and indigenous inhabitant (a relationship frequently elided in pioneer histories) that the objects invoke. Thus the Another View installation employs a politics of resonance through what Greenblatt describes as ‘the power of the object displayed to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which as metaphor or more simply as synecdoche it may be taken by a viewer to stand’.⁵²⁰

**Secret Site**

Despite its relatively modest scale compared to many other public arts projects, the news of the construction of the Another View trail managed to ignite a number of heated public debates thereby pointing to the significance of its intervention into the cultural memory, inhabitation and landscape of the city. One headline in *The Australian Financial Times* in particular—‘Melbourne plans a guilt trail of white occupation’—prompted a flurry of anxious responses.⁵²¹ This debate

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⁵²⁰ Greenblatt 79.
received a different inflection when, shortly before the official opening, one of the artist’s publicly claimed that installations planned for five locations on the trail had been ‘censored’ and/or withdrawn by the MCC late in the planning process due to their perceived confrontational nature. 522

One of those censored locations was outside the Supreme Court (pictured above) and the planned installation was to have been a ‘footpath mosaic designed for the front of Melbourne’s law courts building . . . [that] depicted an Aborigine’s head impaled on the sword of justice—a reference to the practice of Western District pioneers of putting Aborigines’ heads on stakes on their properties to warn off “intruders”. 523 According to the project planning documents, this mosaic was to address ‘the effects of the British legal system and the unlawful treatment of aborigines [sic] in the 1800s.’ 524 The installation of this mosaic below the statue of justice was, perhaps not surprisingly, vetoed by the Chief Justice who also refused to allow a trail marker outside the law courts. According to correspondence between the MCC and the Chief Justice, the latter was troubled by the fact that the installation made no reference to the ‘good work’ that the justice system was currently doing in regard to Aboriginal people. The Chief Justice would also not allow a simple trail marker without an artwork to be installed (outside the court) as was the case at other sites on the trail.

Why couldn’t such a central institution as the law acknowledge its complicity in the history of injustice experienced by Aboriginal people? Because to do so would let an extraordinary ‘public secret’ out of the bag. The specific public secret that threatened to be spoken by the planned Another View installation was that the injustices committed in regard to Aboriginal people (in the name of the law and other state institutions) could not easily be located in a superseded past. By virtue of its location in contemporary everyday space, and the fact that it ‘did not address an injustice contained in . . . [a specific] historical event,’ 525 the planned installation would expose how such injustices have maintained elements of continuity from the past into the present despite, perhaps, changes in the public face

523 Stevens 15.
524 MCC, Kooring Community Arts Project 1994.
525 Jacobs, ‘Resisting Reconciliation’ 214.
of the justice system. The planned installation threatened to expose what Taussig in
my epigraph refers to as the ‘contingency’ of the face—that is, the historical
partiality of the justice institution despite its everyday claims to neutrality. In the
controversy raised over this installation we see a clear manifestation of what Jacobs’
usefully describes as a continuing hegemonic ‘resistance’ to ‘reconciliation.’ To
walk along Williams Street under the watchful gaze of the Supreme Court is thus to
continue practicing a public secret that maintains the lie of a non-racialised
postcolonial face.

526 Jacobs, ‘Resisting Reconciliation.’
As I noted above, a number of the installations to have been located next to monuments of colonial pioneers (Burke and Wills, John Batman) or royal sculptures (Queen Victoria, King Edward VII) were ‘censored’ and most were replaced with numbered markers that match short written accounts of the site’s significance in the trail’s accompanying guidebook. Given that most encounters with the trail are experienced in the act of passing by and without the benefit of the accompanying guide what can we surmise from this ‘precarious’ group of sites on the trail? More generally, how do monuments function as mnemonic devices and what is/was to be achieved by locating trail artworks next to them?
Monuments, of course, are another aspect of urban faciality. In his seminal urban planning work, *The Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch characterised monuments as unique nodes in city space—vital landmarks which enabled the cognitive mapping of urban space by inhabitants.\(^{527}\) Henri Lefebvre argued for their function as sites of ‘intensity’ in urban space, points of capture for certain relations of power and their associated social meanings.\(^{528}\) Yet whether that intensity of the city face is registered or ‘practiced’ by the passerby is another matter, for monuments frequently seem become urban wallpaper for the city walker. In his recent book, Benedict Anderson cites Robert Musil’s *Posthumous Papers of a Living Author*, where the latter writes that ‘[t]here is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument.’\(^{529}\) Musil goes on to observe that

[monuments] are no doubt erected to be seen—indeed to attract attention. But at the same time they are impregnated with something that repels attention, causing the glance to roll right off, like water droplets off an oilcloth, without even pausing for a moment. You can walk down the same street for months, know every address, every shop window, every policeman along the way, and you won’t even miss a coin that someone dropped on the sidewalk; but you are surprised when, one day, staring up at a pretty chambermaid on the first floor of a building, you notice a not-at-all tiny metal plaque on which, engraved in indelible letters, you read that from eighteen hundred and such and such to eighteen hundred and a little more the unforgettable So-and-so lived and created here.\(^{530}\)

Musil’s sardonic observations indicate the peculiar way in which monuments, despite their obvious efforts at signalling themselves as extra-ordinary and vital to a sense of the history of place, seem to mark the ‘dead’ nature of urban space as opposed to the ‘life’ of the city.

How can we reconcile these contradictory qualities of monuments; that is, there status as ‘sites of intensity’ for social meaning and their ‘extraordinary

\(^{528}\) Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* 142-144. Also see Pile’s commentary on Lefebvre in *The Body and the City* 212-213.
\(^{530}\) Cited in Anderson 46.
invisibility. Recent scholarly work on modes of public remembering is helpful here. As James E. Young has noted, for instance, monuments give material form to a particular community’s past and its founding events. At the same time, however, monuments also perhaps materially manifest an abdication of responsibility for memory (they can be a way of forgetting), because in the form of the public monument ‘the memorial operation remains self-contained and detached from out everyday lives. Under the illusion that our memorial edifices will always be there to remind us, we take leave of them and return only at our convenience.’

Thus at those sites on the Another View trail where artworks are located in everyday space next to monuments, we can say that the tactic employed by the trail is one which partly seeks to return the history of contact back into the everyday lives of city inhabitants rather than leaving such memorial work to more official institutions.

However, the monuments on the trail which only feature circular trail markers instead of artworks must be considered differently as, without a doubt, their effectivity in terms of critiquing colonial history was greatly reduced by the withdrawal of their planned installations. The anxiety felt in relation to the planned placement of trail artworks next to these statues was one that can be characterised as the threat of ‘de(/)facement.’ Michael Taussig argues that when they are defaced, statues move ‘from an excess of invisibility to an excess of visibility.’

De/facement produces a particular kind of magical, sacral discharge at monumental sites by bringing alive the history of practices that have informed the particular place they are located at and are a reminder, perhaps, of the ‘primitive’ that is mutually constitutive of the ‘modern.’ At the site of the colonial statues accompanied only by trail markers, however, that discharge has been reduced to a feeble trickle and is

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531 Taussig, Defacement (on the same Musil passage cited in my text) 52.
533 Taussig, Defacement 52.
534 Taussig, Defacement 5. Also see Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs, Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in Postcolonial Australia (Melbourne University Press, 1998). I’m certainly in agreement with their use of the term ‘uncanny’ to describe the effect by which claims for Aboriginal sacredness can ‘turn what seems like “home” into something else, something less familiar and settled’ (xiv). However, my efforts in this chapter are concerned with organising my discussion in a way that is not so constrained by the psychoanalytic epistemology underlying the notion of the uncanny. It is also the case that the Another View trail is less concerned with claims for an autonomous sacred indigenous realm within in the city as with the sacredness of (post)colonial urban space and its histories.

Finally, there is a further twist to the narrative of ‘defacement’ enacted by some trail artworks in so far as artworks on the trail have themselves, at various times, been defaced revealing not only the power of the artworks to make visible the energy of particular beliefs (the sacredness of monuments to colonial history), but the neverending nature of the crisscrossing of the face.
unlikely to come to the attention of those passing by. Thus these monuments predominantly function around a technology of walking that works not only to remember the deeds of the colonial figureheads they commemorate but also to forget the more complex histories of the places they occupy.
It is tempting to read the trail as dovetailing smoothly with efforts to add to the city’s list of tourist attractions and thus as being part of that wider national process of the aestheticisation and commodification of Aboriginality under the ambiguous banner of cultural tourism for Australia. For while the official impetus for the Another View walking trail arises out of the national context of ‘reconciliation,’ it is reasonable to assume that it was not hindered on the City Council’s part by a desire to add another entry to the city’s list of tourist attractions. In other words, the trail not only addresses local inhabitants, in a symbolic fashion, in terms of political developments in Australia’s race relations, but is also framed as a ‘historical attraction’ for visitors to Melbourne, or ‘another view’ of the city to that
found, say, from the top of the Rialto Towers, Melbourne’s tallest building. The mission statement of the Recreation, Arts and Cultural Development Unit of the Melbourne City Council responsible for coordinating the production of the trail adds further weight: ‘To develop, enhance and highlight the City of Melbourne as the cultural capital of Australia and as the State’s pre-eminent retail, leisure and visitor destination.’

In his recent account of the memorial landscapes of western Victoria, Tony Birch has persuasively argued that ‘a colonial history project centred on commemoration and tourism can destroy the ability to remember all.’ However, the relationship of the Another View trail to cultural tourism suggests the possibilities of more complex and ambivalent alternatives as is evident in the form of the installation located next to the Russell Street footpath, directly adjacent to the heritage site of the Old Melbourne Gaol. Inside the Gaol, the visitor can walk their way through a tourist-style, ‘institutional remembering’ of the horrors of that older penal system and pay tribute to Ned Kelly (who was executed here) as a folklore hero. Outside of the old gaol, and still spatially distanced from that official colonial heritage site and history, the Another View installation alludes directly to a different kind of remembering; specifically, the first public hanging in the colony of Victoria (on 20 January 1842) when two Aboriginal men (who allegedly led a series of attacks in which two whalers were murdered) were executed before a crowd of 6,000 people who gathered around the gallows and, according to the excerpts of nineteenth-century texts reprinted on the installation, enjoyed ‘a fine morning’s fun.’

With this installation we once again witness a ‘doubleness’ in terms of Koori relations to History as it is made everyday through the ‘face’ of official tourism. That doubling occurs through the inside/outside relation constructed through the positioning of the installation. In particular, the trail installation refuses to let those nineteenth century hangings either be made invisible or to be directly appropriated (that is, to be made visible through the regimes of looking typically associated with western tourism) through the modes of remembering practised within the

537 Rhonda Dredge attributes this extract to Garryowen’s The Early Chronicles of Melbourne, 1835-1852 (Melbourne: Fergusson and Mitchell, 1888): 50.
sequestered context of tourist heritage attractions. It is not a simple case of the kind of historical revisionism in which a Koori presence is simply ‘tacked on’ to the official story. Instead, the trail produces its own site of revision where official modes of remembering are themselves made the subject of a (mini-)spectacle, a different kind of walking tour that traces out the footsteps of an/other everyday made invisible. The trail installation encourages an/other view of that extraordinary colonial history—in terms of the violence endured by Indigenous inhabitants—to be invoked in the simple act of walking by on the busy Russell St footpath.

While the installation memorialises and revises a particular historical moment its location only fifty metres or so from the former Russell Street Police Station also gestures toward a critique of contemporary modes of policing with its implicit allusions to Australia’s appalling record in relation to Aboriginal deaths in custody. This critique is figured not only through the noose that sits inside one of the metal poles that make up the installation but, perhaps more importantly, by dint of the location of the installation in the here and now of everyday space. So, rather than simply complementing and extending the official place-history of the site next to which they were installed and bare some affinities with (the old Melbourne Gaol), the artefacts selected for the installation have also ‘provoked (called forth, brought to voice) ongoing stories of struggle.’

Site#13

Fig. 27a

Clifford, Routes 193.
This is another site on the trail where an installation is placed in close proximity to a monument. However, in this instance the monument in question is not a pre-postcolonial statue but a more recent memorial in the form of a large granite boulder that marks the burial site of the skeletal remains of thirty eight Aboriginal people, each from different tribes across Unungan (Victoria). These remains had been locked in a vault at the State Museum of Victoria until their return to Aboriginal elders in 1988. Embedded in the rock is a plaque featuring an inscription naming the thirty-eight tribes, an image of the Aboriginal flag, and the following inscription: ‘Rise from the grave / Release your anger and pain / As you soar with the winds / Back to your homelands / There find peace with our / Spiritual Mother the land / Before drifting off into the Dreamtime.’\textsuperscript{539} The trail artwork nearby is comprised of ‘five painted Eucalypt poles adorned with the spirit people, the Rainbow Serpent and the red ribbons.’\textsuperscript{540}

This site on the trail is powerful in terms of its significations and attention to the long history of various regimes of visibility that have underscored colonial understandings of Aboriginality, for the granite memorial and its plaque identify the complicity of civic institutions such as museums in exercising power over Aboriginal bodies. In some ways the trail artwork seems redundant here and it unclear as to what function it might have. In any case, what is most striking about this site is the context of its location on a small grassy hill that forms part of Kings Domain, a piece of parkland that forms a buffer zone between a major arterial route into the central city (St. Kilda Road), the Yarra River and the city’s sizeable Royal

\textsuperscript{539} This inscription comes from Jim Berg, Guditjmara Tribe. See Trail Guide (n.35) 24.

\textsuperscript{540} Trail Guide 17.
Botanic Gardens. Surprisingly, no paved tracks or footpaths lead to, or pass directly by, the monument. The bottom of the hill that the monument sits upon (Lithgow Avenue) is encircled by ‘the tan,’ a track popular with local joggers and powerwalkers. From the viewpoint of the track you can just glimpse the presence of the poles which draw attention to the otherwise fairly unremarkable granite boulder.

This site thus marks out an ‘in-between’ space.\textsuperscript{541} For while it is located in an area that is outside of the paved and strictly ordered space of the street it is not quite located within the formally ordered landscape of the botanic gardens. What makes this place ‘in-between,’ I would suggest, is the way in which you might (literally and figuratively) approach the memorial and installation. As Paul Carter argues in \textit{The Lie of the Land}, there is an ambiguity in modern modes of walking on the ground (particularly in the postcolonial context). Literally, due to the ‘engineered surfaces’ we walk on in the contemporary city, and more metaphorically, in terms of settler ignorance of indigenous modes of understanding the land, we ‘walk with the surface; we do not align our lives with its inclines, folds and pockets. We glide over it; and to do this, to render what is rough smooth, passive, passable, we linearize it, conceptualizing the ground, indeed the civilised world, as an ideally flat space . . .\textsuperscript{542} Any space that is not roaded or rendered smooth thereby becomes hostile, an ‘in-between space’ which settler culture, according to Carter, has historically been afraid of.\textsuperscript{543} Thus to scramble from the path on Lithgow Ave up to the monument and Another View artwork on the King’s Domain hill is to experience an extraordinary reminder of the lie of the everyday ground beneath one’s feet. On the Another View trail, to borrow from Carter once more, it is ‘the irriguous uncertainties of the ground that introduce us to the adventure of taking calculating steps, of engaging with in-between spaces; and this adventure translates itself into stress and breath patterns.\textsuperscript{544} Or, to return my earlier point about alternative cultures of walking, it is to participate in a mimetic process that involves learning to follow the footsteps of other histories of walking and being in place.

\textsuperscript{541} My use of the term ‘in-between’ is also indebted to Thompson.
\textsuperscript{542} Carter, \textit{Lie of the Land} 2.
\textsuperscript{543} Carter, \textit{Lie of the Land} 3
\textsuperscript{544} Carter, \textit{Lie of the Land} 5.
Conclusion

In ‘White Feet and Black Trails,’ Chris Healy describes a scene from a television program in which Paddy Roe, a Lawman and Guardian of the Lurujarri Trail in Western Australia, offers a spatial mapping of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations:

Paddy draws two parallel lines in the dirt . . . He assigns white people to the top line, to a position not touching the land, and black people on the bottom, in the dirt. In describing how Aboriginal people moved half way to meet white people, Paddy is matter-of-fact about the refusal of white people to make a commensurate move towards his people. 545

Roe’s succinct summary of the lack of reciprocity in terms of intercultural exchange between black and white serves equally well as a history of moments of encounter in the lived spaces (the ‘contact zone’) of central-city Melbourne. Instead of being a space in which non-Aboriginals could have learnt something from the footsteps of indigenous people, the central city has been marked as a space requiring enclosure. As Paul Carter has observed, the colonial fear of engaging in exchange and hybridisation is figured in that early ‘introduction to the psychology of the colonizer,’ 546 Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, when the protagonist pitches his tent and organises his presence on the island through a telling act of enclosure: ‘I drew a half Circle before the hollow Place [and] pitched two Rows of strong Stakes, driving them into the Ground.’ 547

As we saw in the early part of my chapter, the establishment of the city grid in Melbourne was a vital component in the production of the colonial everyday, a process that ‘effaced’ the presence and traces of Other, everyday histories of this place. This act of enclosure also entailed the production of a public secret—one concerned with maintaining the fiction that despite everyday appearances in a range of contexts, Aborigines were destined to die out as a people and therefore had no place in the everyday space of the newly-born colonial city. This colonial strategy was, as Taussig puts it in the epigraph to this chapter, a manifestation of ‘secrecy

545 Healy, ‘White Feet and Black Trails,’ 55.
546 Carter, Lie of the Land 10.
itself as primordial act of presencing." As a consequence of dispossession and part of the logic of this public secret, Indigenous people were mostly displaced to sites outside of the city—if Aborigines were invoked in the city (at sites such as the 1880-81 International Exhibition) then it was overwhelmingly as objects of spectacle in apparatuses of display that insistently positioned them as a mute and vanishing race. Yet as we saw in my discussion of Coranderrk, there were important moments when Aboriginal people engaged in their own politics of the urban everyday, which was at one and the same time a kind of politics of ‘survival’ and attempted negotiation. For William Barak and his fellow Coranderrk residents, to be seen simply walking into the central city in order to try and negotiate with colonial powers was an extraordinary act given the institutional efforts put into convincing a white public that Aborigines were generally incapable of such a presence. The Coranderrk residents were, in one sense, moving to a particular kind of negotiated modernity (in which white and black practices and lifeways intermingled) but that was ultimately denied them by institutional structures that would not reconcile themselves to such a world of in-betweenness.

Today, non-Aboriginal Melbourne residents are increasingly awakening to the presence of a Koori population and its history in this place. That education and process of (uneven) exchange continues to be performed through different practices of mobility and inhabitation. To move about Melbourne is to encounter different signifiers of a Koori presence, to be made aware of the ‘contingency’ of the urban face. Aboriginal flags and billboards now appear prominently in some suburban streets. The prowess, skills and contributions of indigenous football players to local sporting culture are regularly commented upon in the media. Street festivals frequently feature Koori performances. Yet as my discussion of the Another View trail demonstrated, the place where contact is perhaps most densely concentrated—the central city (with its overabundance of monuments to a particular history of settlement)—still reveals itself to be ‘resistant’ to acknowledging the injustices of the past and there continuity in the present. The controversy generated by the relatively small-scale Another View walking trail and its modest interventions into city history and space lets us see the importance of the politics of the extraordinary everyday and it potential effects/affects. The interface produced by the proximity of the small-scale trail markers and the various kinds of ‘monuments’ (statues,

548 Taussig, *Defacement* 3.
buildings, town planning forms such as the grid) establishes a contact zone where important cultural work—at the level of the politics of the cultural gesture—is performed. The trail’s attempted de/facement and re-placement of a particular, contingent colonial face also show us that a critical engagement with contact history (one that plays on histories of in/visibility) is one that can be successful staged within the spectacular and haptic logic of what Taussig describes as the ‘endless back-and-forth of revelation and concealment.’\(^{549}\) The effects are not, of course, predetermined. The interface that is a place of various performances is the site of both a possible ‘face-off’ where there is often a refusal to consider other views and experiences, as well as a place of transformative possibilities where non-Aboriginal people might begin to make that commensurate move towards the Other.

So far the interfaces discussed in this second part of the thesis have concentrated on walking practices that have located the extraordinary everyday in the street (parades) and in-between spaces such as the footpath (the Another View trail). In my final chapter I turn my discussion to a different kind of distinctive twentieth-century urban site where pedestrian practices have experienced a new lease of life. That is, I discuss places where walking has in a sense been turned into a highly fetishised practice and where visitors move about a vast interiorised city where they don’t need to compete with cars. In particular, I examine a new casino-entertainment complex in Melbourne that offers us insights into the important role of media technologies in producing extraordinary everyday space.

\(^{549}\) Taussig, \textit{Defacement} 3.
6. ARCHITECTURES OF ENTERTAINMENT  
Vectoral technologies and the body at Melbourne’s Crown Casino

Urbanism is in decline, architecture is in constant movement ... In spite of people [being] nostalgic about History, Rome is no longer in Rome, architecture no longer in architecture, but in geometry; the space-time of vectors, the aesthetic of construction is dissimulated in the special effects of communication machines, engines of transfer and transmission ...

— Paul Virilio

Introduction: architecture and entertainment

The presence of one of Melbourne’s newest inner-city landmarks, the gigantic Crown Casino Entertainment Complex, is writ large through its waterfront ‘sign’ of eight towers that shoot enormous gas-fed fireballs twenty metres into the air, once an hour, every night (Fig. 28). When those fireballs explode, light, heat and sound combine to produce an ethereal moment that seems to temporarily transport you out of everyday Melbourne into some other place and time.

Twenty-six years ago, in *Learning from Las Vegas*, Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour persuaded urban critics to turn their attention to the similarly over-scaled signs that grace the ‘decorated sheds’ of the Las Vegas landscape and to reevaluate their function in the construction of space and place. ‘If you take away the signs there is no place,’ Venturi argued. Among the ‘lessons of Las Vegas,’ then, were those calling for a recognition of the emergence of an ephemeral architecture of the sign. However, Las Vegas was in one sense an architectural paradox in so far as it was constructed equally from symbols and from a generic architectural figure, the shed. Thus for the authors of *Learning from Las Vegas*, as Chris McConville puts it, ‘Las Vegas seemed proof that the most functional urban forms were at the same time

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Image removed for copyright reasons.

*Fig. 28 Bladerunner-on-the-Yarra?*
symbolic.’ In Venturi and company’s view the postmodernist architecture of the sign (what they referred to as the ‘decorated shed’) was something to be championed, a necessary turn away from the ‘duck’ or functionalist building which embodied the modernist tenet of giving material form to function.

Melbourne’s Crown Casino also manifests the simultaneous sense of solid monumentality and symbolic ephemerality that Venturi and company found on their journey to Las Vegas. Built on approximately nine hectares of prime central city riverfront land and at a cost of over $AUD 2 billion, the Crown Complex includes a 500-room hotel tower, extensive conference facilities, 40 bars, 25 restaurants, 25 retail outlets, a multiplex cinema, three nightclubs, a showroom, eight themed gaming spaces (which collectively feature 350 gaming tables and 2500 electronic poker machines), and 5400 car parks all under the ‘one roof.’ Crown employs approximately 8000 people, runs its own training college, leases private jets to fly in international gamblers, and also owns a golf course reserved for the sole use of its most exclusive customers. Since its opening in 1997, Crown has been generating almost 3 million dollars per day in revenue. In both its scale and its advertising Crown presents itself as a self-contained ‘world of entertainment’ (Fig. 29 and 30). Yet while Crown is easily the largest casino in Australia (eclipsing Sydney’s newer Star City) and the biggest in the southern hemisphere, it is also a strangely insubstantial presence, a facade composed out of visual tricks and neon lighting. Here we are reminded of Meaghan Morris on shopping centres (see chapter three), which she describes as ‘overwhelmingly and constitutively paradoxical’ in their mix of monumentality and indeterminacy. Shopping centres in this formulation are manifestly present but only meaningful in so far as they are places where, to repeat Frow and Morris, ‘disparate structures’ meet, and flow through. Similarly, Benjamin understood the earlier form of the arcade as a particular kind of structure, a passage, that was defined by its qualities of transitoriness, and thus directed us to the paradoxes.

552 McConville ‘Learning from Venturi—and Melbourne’ 219.
553 McConville ‘Learning from Venturi—and Melbourne’ 219.
557 Frow and Morris xvi.
Fig. 30  Map of Crown’s ground floor
embodied in these emblematic forms of modern architecture where, to paraphrase Marshall Berman (following Marx), all that is solid threatens to melt into air.

In a postmodern media age perhaps it is not so much the air that these architectures melt into but, instead, what Paul Virilio refers to as the ‘special effects of communications machines, engines of transfer and transmission.’ For instance, in the years following the publication of Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour’s classic work, urban theorists have argued that ‘Las Vegas’ not only designates a site in the Nevada desert but also represents an ‘imaginary-real’ place produced and disseminated through various cultural technologies and texts. After viewing One From the Heart (1982), in which Francis Ford Coppola electronically inserted his actors into a replica of Las Vegas built in his Zoetrope studios, Virilio was inspired to suggest that perhaps today we should be looking to Hollywood films about Las Vegas for clues to the nature of contemporary urbanism rather than travelling to Las Vegas itself.558 ‘Las Vegas,’ as he suggests, is no longer fixed to a stable location in the Nevada desert and is continually being dispersed and (re)constructed through technologies of communication and entertainment.

Crown’s spectacular sign takes Virilio’s notion one step further. The fireballs may temporarily halt us in our footsteps but they also invitingly beckon us through their suggestion of similar thrills within Crown’s walls. To drive past or cross one of the nearby footbridges and walk towards the complex as the fireballs erupt is to experience not only a place but a cinematic moment. The spectator’s mobile body functions as a zooming and slowly tracking camera moving like the now conventional establishing shot towards its object of fascination. More specifically, the flames that erupt at Crown eerily evoke the first few minutes of Bladerunner (1982) where the screen version of an imagined future cityscape of Los Angeles in the year 2019 is similarly punctuated by gas fireballs. As the film progresses, and we descend from our aerial vantage point and travel inside and around the city of Bladerunner—and here I would suggest a direct parallel with a walk inside and around the vast interior spaces of Crown—we find a curious mixture of the familiar and the strange, of the industrial and post-industrial, past and future, the utopic and dystopic, co-existent spaces and times, the extraordinary and

the everyday, and the pleasures and anxieties that beset living across these different moments and affects.

Today, Virilio’s observations on the relationship between urban form and popular entertainment can be credited with a considerable degree of prescience; particularly in light of the recent emergence of a number of distinctive mixed-use, large-scale, entertainment-oriented urban developments around the world. These developments point to the increasing centrality of a globalised cultural field of entertainment—which includes, of course, forms like cinema and television as well as a host of new multimedia technologies—to both representations and the material fabric of the contemporary city. This shift has been observed in a number of recent scholarly studies of entertainment-oriented urban developments that have focussed on themeparks, mega-mall projects such as the West Edmonton Mall in Canada and the Mall of America in Minneapolis, and other kinds of similar touristic sites and experiences. Besides their over-scaled nature, these developments distinguish themselves from the established shopping centre form through their construction as ‘destination entertainment centres.’ At Universal Citywalk in Los Angeles, for example, MCA-Universal’s cinematic expertise has been channelled into a retail precinct that attempts to recreate the feel of ‘authentic’ pedestrian street life in a city where practices of walking have been marginalised to an unprecedented degree. In Las Vegas another instance of this new integrated architecture of entertainment is witnessed at the MGM Grand, which bills itself as ‘the city of entertainment’ and brings together the spaces and technologies of the cinema, casino, and theme park. As new sites of entertainment these urban developments chart an important shift; namely from a focus on specific sites of amusement or consumption to a multi-purpose landscape of entertainment built on the ruins of earlier forms.

560 Perhaps the most widely-cited work on this topic is Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space, ed. Michael Sorkin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).
562 See John Hannigan’s Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis (London: Routledge, 1998) for a broad account of the emergence of an ‘infrastructure of casinos, megaplex cinemas, themed restaurants, simulation theaters, interactive theme rides and virtual reality arcades which collectively promise to change the face of leisure in the postmodern metropolis.’
In his study of the institutionalisation of pleasure in Blackpool, Tony Bennett argues that the ‘discourse of modernity ... always the articulating centre of Blackpool’s self-image, was most effectively condensed ... in the sedimentioned forms of the town’s architecture and its pleasures, made concrete, as Gramsci insisted an enduring hegemony must be, at the level of the mundane and the particular.’ Similarly, I will argue in this chapter, discourses of progress and the everyday are effectively embedded in Crown’s architecture of entertainment. The terrain of popular culture—here, the kind of spaces, pleasures, and anxieties produced at the Crown site—is the landscape through which local narratives of ‘progress’ are enunciated, reformulated and contested through the production of experiences of the extraordinary everyday. At Crown, the architecture of entertainment is one that privileges particular models of representations of the world; in this sense, this architecture is part of a wider struggle concerning the frames of reference that govern our experience of the everyday.

Like Bennett, Jody Berland has also been concerned with historicising the important and shifting cultural ground occupied by the category of production called ‘entertainment.’ Berland has commented that,

The constellation of meanings associated with the term “entertainment” dates from the late nineteenth century ... Entertainment provided the space in which people didn’t have to keep their place; many of its conventional modes of address originated in variety and vaudeville performance styles, which worked to elaborate a discursive pact with audiences against defenders of the social order. The perceived need to “improve” such entertainment in the interest of a more hygienic “common life” extended to later furors among the respectable over popular responses to movies, television, and popular music. The emergence of these later technologies traces entertainment’s move from a particular space to a non-particular space. Entertainment has been continuously transformed by technological mediation from “medium of the special” to “medium of the everyday” (Rosing, 1984, p.125). Yet its value is determined by (and calculated on the basis of) its claim to autonomy from the constraints of work, philosophy, politics, effort, discipline,

boredom, history, and the “normal” confines of everyday life, of which it remains, in fact, an integral part.\textsuperscript{564}

Here Berland conceptualises entertainment in terms quite different from those that dominate earlier scholarship in the area. That earlier approach is exemplified by the work of influential authors such as Richard Dyer, and collections such as \textit{Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture} (1985), edited by Tania Modleski.\textsuperscript{565} Both of these examples, and the useful insights they continue to collectively offer, are clearly products of various trajectories of screen studies. Characteristically, the work in this vein tends to find its locus in issues of spectatorship, regardless of whether they are staged in terms of text or audience-based approaches, or in ‘form’ and ‘content’ debates. In contrast, I want to take up Berland’s implicit invitation to avoid the form/content dichotomy by critically examining entertainment in radically different terms; that is, to conceptualise entertainment as a particular field encompassing a range of cultural practices both intrinsic to, and yet defined against, everyday life. Entertainment in this sense, might be a site where the extraordinary and the everyday have become increasingly difficult to distinguish. In order to explore this intersection further it is necessary to examine the ‘architectures’ (which are for me simultaneously form and content) of entertainment.

\section*{I. Vectoral techniques of walking}

As an insular city-in-miniature, Crown emphasises different registers and techniques of walking to those discussed in my previous interfaces—that is, the modes of exaggerated walking seen at the Sydney Mardi Gras and the in-between encounters experienced on the Another View trail. In thinking about Crown we need to remember that this site—unlike the street—has been specifically and solely designed for pedestrian traffic. It is neither the site of an ‘event’ (as in Mardi Gras) that transforms the everyday into something extraordinary through techniques such

\begin{footnotesize}
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as marching, nor is it a site of ‘chance encounters’ in the sense that the Another View installations play on the everyday practice of just passing by in order to produce a moment of extraordinary contact. Returning here to Certeau we might recall his distinction between the regulating and disciplinary strategies of the planner versus the ludic tactics of the everyday walker. ‘Monuments’ and spaces like Crown are, in a sense, conscious attempts to synthesise and reconcile this opposition in the interests of profit. That is, the design of such spaces is premised on the seemingly contradictory recognition that the pleasure of patrons is heavily dependent on their perception of the ludic possibilities of such spaces, but at the same time that that pleasure must be highly organised and channelled so as to ensure the casino’s financial success.

For this reason techniques of walking are central to the design theories of these architectures of entertainment and related types of developments. In the past, designers have assumed that the key to maximising sales in these structures is to make exit points difficult to find and thus trap potential customers within spaces in which they are forced to circulate for long periods of time. This kind of experience is precisely the one made famous in the discourses of cultural criticism exemplified by Fredric Jameson in his now canoncial walking around the pedways of central Los Angeles and through the interior space of the Bonaventure Hotel (see my third chapter). In a theoretical move that echoes Benjamin’s use of the nineteenth-century form of the arcade, Jameson allegorically casts the interior of the Bonaventure as a figure for the disorienting cultural ‘hyperspace’ of postmodernism. In the lobby of the Bonaventure, Jameson finds it difficult to describe his experience: ‘what happens when you get there is something else, which I can only try to characterise as milling confusion, something like the vengeance this space takes on those who still seek to walk through it.’

According to Jameson, the hyperspatial nature of the hotel’s interior transcends the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself. In his walking tour of the Bonaventure Hotel and central Los Angeles, Jameson notes the way in which ‘this strange new system renders our older systems of perception of the city somehow archaic and aimless, without offering another in their place.’ This claim, however, seems somewhat overstated and Jameson omits to explain why systems of perception should remain static while environments mutate.

566 Jameson, ‘Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism’ 83.
567 Jameson, ‘Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism’ 62.
In contrast to Jameson, the recent comments of those who design these kinds of environments suggest that consumers are being provided with a training in new modes of perception and ways of inhabiting postmodern hyperspace:

It's sometimes assumed that good circulation patterns run contrary to good (profitable) casino design. Not so according to DDI [Daroff Design Inc. of Philadelphia]'s president, Karen Daroff, “We manipulate in order to reinforce a sense of comfort and orientation. We tried to have continuity of theme lead you through the space so that you're never disoriented. We also tried not to have visual disruptions but rather to have interesting ends of vectors.”

This terminology of the vector is in fact widespread in the discourses of retail design. The author of the above citation then goes on to state how Daroff’s comments remind him of the ‘theories’ of Paco Underhill, a leading American ‘retail anthropologist’:

Interesting ends of vectors translate to greater penetration into the depths of the store and the likelihood of a sale (purchasing a chance). Giving customers interesting destinations, which are easily reached, will keep them in a casino longer than scrambling their sense of direction and running them like rats in a maze than continually loops backs to the casino - although the casino is still the origin for those vectors.

This commentary from the discourses of retail theory provides a handy corrective to some of the Jamesonian modes of criticism that continue to dominate cultural critiques of related environments such as casinos, themeparks, and shopping malls, and which situate the user in an experiential limbo. Through the notion of vector, design theory offers up new modes of spatial experience and navigation for consumers, though they may of course respond to these in unexpected ways. An important implication of this shift is that cultural critics and other kinds of users do

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569 Blair 94.
not necessarily become so overwhelmingly ‘lost’ or ‘disoriented.’ Certainly large-scale sites like casino complexes may require some time and application to map, their spaces may seem to go on forever, and they may produce a range of heightened affective states; however, this does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that one is therefore perceptually ‘lost’ in such places. Such a privileging of this experience by cultural theorists is possibly to do with the fact that they go to these sites once (‘research’), but not habitually. A suspiciously old-fashioned high/low taste distinction seems to be lurking behind these kinds of responses. This mode of engagement thus tend to preclude an examination of the ways in which familiarity and habit may help produce other kinds of experience besides disorientation and simulation.

The notion of the ‘vector’ provides a link here between the discourses of retail design and those of the kind of critical theory that is helpful for discussing the simultaneously material and virtual pathways into the extraordinary everyday that are made available to the bodies circulating within Crown. In particular, Paul Virilio has developed the concept of the vector as a way of exploring the relations between technology, time, space and speed in the city. McKenzie Wark succinctly sums up Virilio’s notion of the vector as follows:

[The vector] describes the aspect of technology which interests him most and also the style of writing he employs to capture that aspect. It is a term from geometry meaning a line of fixed length and direction but of no fixed position. Virilio employs it to mean any trajectory along which bodies, information, or warheads can potentially pass. Vectors are potential trajectories.

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570 See for instance Jeffrey Cass and Dion Dennis, ‘Ground Zero: Las Vegas’ Luxor,’ CTHEORY 6 Nov. 1996, http: www.ctheory.com/e32.html. Cass and Dennis note that ‘the Luxor’s floor plan deliberately disorients one’s sense of direction . . . Finding an exit can be harrowing(3)’; and Ralph Rugroff comments on the Las Vegas strip in Circus Americanus (London: Verso, 1995) 5. For a more generative account on postmodernism and being ‘lost in space’ see Celeste Olalquiaga, Megalopolis: Contemporary Cultural Sensibilities (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992). Also see Robert Somol’s ‘Start Spreading the News,’ ANY (Architecture New York) 21 (1997): 42-47, where he berates ‘the moralism of social critics and new urbanists’ who assume that visitors to sites of Las Vegas simulation (such as New York, New York) leave in a confused state about the relation of ‘the fake’ and ‘the real.’

571 See, in particular, Virilio’s The Lost Dimension ch.1.

572 McKenzie Wark, ‘On Technological Time: Virilio’s Overexposed City,’ Arena (1988) 83. Also see Wark’s Virtual Geography: Living with Global Media Events (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) for a specific and sustained deployment of the notion of the vector in terms of four global television events.
Wark goes on to argue that technology allows ‘faster, even longer vectors, with greater and greater acceleration.’ The temporal dimension which Wark emphasises in his commentary on Virilio also offers a useful corrective to the excessively spatialised emphases of much contemporary theory on spaces like the Bonventure. More broadly, Crown can be thought of as a place of convergence where, to borrow from Chris Healy, ‘vectors of cultural force and mobility meet and disperse.’ Somewhat paradoxically, those vectoral technologies always have their origin in the walking body at Crown but articulate forms of mobility that move beyond the corporeal. In order to demonstrate how these technologies work to constitute Crown as a site of the extraordinary everyday I will now address the importance of spatial thresholds in organising the shift from the walking to the virtually mobile body. Following this section I specifically discuss two key vectors: screen and port.

II. Thresholds: from the everyday to the extraordinary everyday

To physically enter Crown’s ‘world of entertainment’ requires the crossing of a threshold that marks a passage from the everyday to the extraordinary everyday. Every twenty-four hours a certain number of bodies—currently an average of 33,000—enter this particular place on the banks of the Yarra river. While there are multiple points at which patrons can enter the complex—for example, the western cinema end, doors along the waterfront, or through the massive subterranean carpark—all of these entrances are distinguished by their shared use of threshold spaces and architectures that help to produce this sense of transition for those walking in. The most stunning example of such a threshold space to be found at Crown is the cavernous five-storey atrium located next to the hotel lobby of the complex, adjoining the eastern entrance to the main gaming floor. Architecturally, the atrium evokes the form of the theatre in its sense of a central ‘stage’ and surrounding viewing balconies; it also suggests the 1920s picture palaces through its tiled and highly polished ‘decadent’ surfaces, its sensuous curves reminiscent of an

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573 Wark ‘On Technological Time’ 83
574 Healy, ‘White Feet and Black Trails’ 56.
opulent art-deco aesthetic, and the extravagantly wide grand staircase that ascends to the next floor. The atrium functions as a hub or concentrated point of arrival and dispersal for those entering the complex from its eastern end. Crown’s overall configuration is an elaborate variation on the basic ‘dumb-bell’ shopping mall design in which two anchor or magnet stores are connected by a pedestrian mall; the west-end (with multiplex and cafe-restaurants) is one anchor, the atrium and hotel at the eastern end is another, and the main gaming floor is the connecting ‘mall’. From the dimly lit interior of the atrium, a space that marks your passage from Melbourne to a city within the city, visitors are invited to explore different possible pathways of entertainment such as the lengthy main gaming floor or the parallel strip of restaurants, cafes and retail outlets. As an ‘in-between space,’ a space of transition, the atrium endeavours primarily to produce a sense of anticipation of the extraordinary experience to follow. In other words, the atrium is not only to be appreciated as a visual feature but, more importantly, it works to produce for its users the entertainment experience that Crown identifies as its central product. Thresholds such as the atrium not only attempt to momentarily halt walking bodies and mark them with a sense of affective amplification, they also suggest that the spaces to follow will be ones which allow an extraordinary sense of (vectoral) mobility.

The production of that extraordinary experience was highlighted at the official opening of Crown in May 1997. The new complex launched itself with a lavishly staged one-off celebration that cost 14 million dollars and included a massive firework display, performances by local and international celebrities including Elton John and Ray Charles, and a half-hour broadcast on prime-time regional commercial television.\textsuperscript{576} The television show covering the opening was watched by an audience estimated at more than 1 million people.\textsuperscript{577} Perhaps the most striking image in that opening ceremony (and certainly an extraordinary moment of high camp), was that of then State Premier Jeff Kennett and Lloyd Williams, then Chairman of Crown, walking down the atrium staircase through a phalanx of croupiers. Thus, in a strange parody of a wedding ceremony, representatives of the ‘public’ sphere and the ‘corporate’ realm crossed a symbolic threshold together marking a new kind of civic ‘architecture’—an architecture.

\textsuperscript{576} Maiden, ‘Overseas High-Rollers’ 1.
\textsuperscript{577} Rachel Gibson, ‘Verdicts for the Crown,’ \textit{Age} 10 May 1997: 7.
produced by private enterprise (Crown Ltd) yet reliant on the state (the Crown) for both its impetus and direct forms of economic assistance. During the opening ceremony, and in subsequent media interviews, Lloyd Williams described himself as Kennett’s ‘biggest fan’ and reiterated that he could not have completed this project were it not for the direct support of the Kennett government.578

Insights into Crown’s often contradictory conception of its own ‘public’ were evident in the opening ceremony. While the building of the complex was billed as a ‘public’ gesture, and referred to as ‘Lloyd’s gift to Melbourne’ in the sense that it would both rejuvenate Victoria’s economy and provide a much-needed civic landmark for the ‘underdeveloped’ riverside precinct of the innercity, much of the focus of the opening celebration was on the attendance of ‘celebrities’ and ‘personalities’ and their ecstatic endorsements of the site. Eight thousand invited guests attended various parties throughout the complex and were ranked according to an A, B, and C-list. On the same night, an estimated 20,000 Melburnians braved inclement weather to line the banks of the Yarra River and watch the opening firework display. (By comparison, the recent opening of the smaller Star City Casino in Sydney was a far less ‘exclusive’ affair, centred as it was around a free outdoor concert featuring Diana Ross.) A significant proportion of those gathered on the river that opening night were there to protest at Crown’s opening. For despite its reputation as the ‘people’s palace,’ much of Crown’s opening was specifically directed towards encouraging Melbourne’s affluent middle-class population to engage with a (reconstructed) world of popular entertainment. Crown’s boldest implicit claim was that it had ‘something for everyone’: yet it did not construct itself as a ‘public’ space in that older sense of a zone in which all elements of the social body might uninhibitedly interact, but as a meeting point where a wide range of different taste cultures and consumers might be provided for at a single, yet subtly differentiated and spatially segregated site.579 Thus while a wide range of socially distinct groups may be encouraged in one sense to come together at Crown, their separate identities are simultaneously reinforced and maintained through a range of

578 Rachel Gibson, ‘We Owe it all to Kennett: Casino Chief,’ Age 5 May 1997: 1. Those associations are further evidenced in the controversial public friendship of Jeff Kennett, Lloyd Williams and Ron Walker (treasurer of the Victorian Liberal Party, business partner of Williams, and the Victorian government’s ‘Major Events’ supremo).
579 Anecdotal evidence suggests that this strategy continues to encounter resistance from segments of the local population suspicious of the mixing of traditionally class-segregated sites of entertainment.
continuing strategies including, for instance, exclusive gaming rooms for those who can afford to gamble more and different dress codes for particular areas.

The opening night celebrations continue to be replayed and reiterated in Crown’s threshold spaces. For instance, the light and noise of the fireworks of May 1997 are electronically re-staged overhead, around the clock, as you move into the building at the west end of the complex. To walk through the passageways of the west end is to encounter television screens that regularly replay scenes of the opening ceremony and its attendant parties. Thus we see that an important function of the thresholds that mark the walker’s entry into Crown is to perform the difficult task of recreating the sense of extraordinary excitement that heralded the arrival of the complex, to counter the everyday character it threatens to acquire through habitual use and experience.

The atrium continues to be produced as a threshold space in a distinctive way. Integral to the production of that atrium ‘experience’ is a computerised sound and light show entitled ‘Seasons of Fortune’ (Figs. 31 and 32) which operates for most of the day and night. This particular ‘show’ includes the projection of various representations onto walls (via a 6 million-dollar laser, 20 fifteen-thousand-dollar cyberlights and other forms of specialist lighting of the kind used in large-scale Lloyd-Webberish stage productions), a symphonic soundtrack, synchronised ‘fog’ generators, and high-tech fountains with leap-frogging streams of water. The ceiling of the atrium is a backlit sea of ‘crystal’ shards housing two enormous chandeliers that descend and ascend (also releasing fog) to mark dramatic highpoints in the show. All these high-tech components combine to produce a discernible narrative in which technologically stylised representations of edenic Victorian-Australian nature (‘the bush,’ native parrots, etc.) and its ‘natural’ seasonal cycle are supplemented by signifiers of nation in the form of state heraldry (which implicitly confirm the yielding
Fig. 31  ‘The Atrium Experience’

Fig. 32  ‘Four Seasons’ in the atrium
of local ‘nature’ to ‘culture’). The sum of those representations implicitly situates Australia as a place with an abundant ‘natural’ advantage (the ‘lucky country’) that can be made economically productive through technological enhancement.

Given that the atrium spectacle combines narratives of local and national identity, who then is the addressee? What kind of subject is being ‘hailed’ here, given that this site of entertainment is patronised by a mixture of local and international visitors (Crown is reputedly Melbourne’s most visited tourist attraction)? Part of the function of Crown, I would argue, is to produce what Meaghan Morris (following Robert Somol) refers to in her discussion of the building of Sydney’s Centrepoint Tower as a new type of urban subject, the ‘citizen-tourist.’ For Morris, Sydney Tower functions to doubly interpellate Sydney residents as citizen-tourists: firstly, they become one with ‘foreign’ tourists in their gaze at their city, while at the same time they are also ‘the potential living objects of that self-same tourist gaze.’ When revisiting the Tower, however, Morris discovers that the initial interior displays that she viewed, including those that produced a sinister racialised narrative linking tourism and the place-history of Sydney, have been replaced by a display that contains no narrative of place but, rather, simply presents ‘an itinerary of [touristic] movements about to be performed’ thus effectively foregoing any address to Sydney residents in favour of one addressed to international tourists. By contrast, at Crown, where sixty per cent of Crown’s revenue comes from those not designated as ‘overseas high-rollers’, economic imperatives ensure that distinct forms of address to a newly globalised but still local citizen-tourist must simultaneously be maintained.

However, the effectivity of the atrium can’t just be interpreted through a semiotic reading of its displays and a consideration of how these function to interpellate visitors. For the experience of the atrium is one that also functions at a sensual level. In this part of the casino the question of the gap between representation and affective power that I discussed in my second chapter is raised in a concrete way. That is, while there are certainly meanings produced through the atrium sound and light show, its cultural force is arguably derived not so much from those meanings but in its amplification of a certain sensual and affective

582 Morris, ‘Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower’ 12.
experience—how it works upon the bodies that are moving between the world outside of the casino and its interior. That affective experience is produced via the strategy of temporarily stopping those walking through this space (a thresh-hold) in order to organise their anticipated transition into the extraordinary spaces of the gaming floor.

For the atrium, through its gathering of a crowd in a quasi-public space, simulates the older (European) entertainment experience of the carnival and festival. Discussing the ongoing links between carnival practices and those of industrialised nineteenth-century entertainment spaces such as concerts, exhibitions and music halls, Jody Berland notes that in both instances audiences were themselves active producers of a form of social drama: ‘[t]hat sense of “making the scene” drew people to them and made them meaningful as spaces and as events, not only as performances or displays’. At the same time, however, those nineteenth-century entertainment practices exist at the nexus of a reorganisation of older forms of entertainment; more specifically, carnival’s perceived unruly working-class nature becomes subject to the bourgeois imperative of ‘moral improvement’. As Berland and other authors have observed, the nineteenth-century industrialisation of entertainment, enabled through the ‘increasing commercialisation and regulation’ of various forms of spectacle, functioned to ‘reconcile an invitation to indulgence with the newer forms of orderly consumption’.

At Crown, the affective dimension associated with carnival, that of indulgence and a potential sense of transgression, is articulated to economic structures. Crown’s main television advertisement itself draws on mythologies of carnival. The advertisement includes figures such as the joker and his cast of performers moving about a highly technologised landscape featuring signifiers of more recent forms of entertainment such as television, thus indicating something of the contemporary refiguring of practices of carnival. In the advertisement, viewers are invited to participate in activities historically coded as risqué or morally dubious according to bourgeois norms; yet, paradoxically, gambling at Crown is an excessively systematic and tightly state-regulated procedure both for the individual player and the institution. The particularity of Crown’s conception of carnival is

583 Berland 41.
584 Bailey cited in Berland 41. Also see Bennett, ‘Hegemony, Ideology, Pleasure,’ 140.
apparent in one of the protests staged in response to the casino’s opening. An invited guest, the internationally successful Australian actress Rachel Griffiths, staged a one-woman protest with a carnivalesque flavour when she emerged from her stretch limousine—wearing only a symbolic crown of thorns and a loin cloth—carrying a placard reading ‘Need not greed.’ In contrast to Griffith’s protest, I would suggest, any affective sense of ‘transgression’ organised through the carnivalesque bodies on display in this new environment is no longer attached to a progressive revolutionary moment but finds itself recast and re-coded in terms of a logic of social mobility. That potential for mobility finds a material symbol in the grandiose staircase that acts as a visual focal point in the atrium. While the atrium floor is usually crowded, there never seem to be more than four or five people using the staircase, which until recently was permanently cordoned off to the public and strictly supervised by security guards. From the top of the stairs you enter the elite restaurants and private gaming rooms that mark the attainment of privileged status. In the space of the atrium, ‘transgression’, in the carnivalesque sense, is shifted from being a celebration of the inversion of cultural codes into a performance of the potential for social and economic mobility. That mobility is presented as attainable via the mysterious contingencies of fortune, a force that rules both the nearby gaming tables and the rhetoric of so-called ‘free-market’ economics. In a smooth convergence, then, the spectacle enacted at Crown functions to render contemporary economics and the mechanisms of class distinction as a form of entertainment. Everyday forms of social organisation that are normally taken for granted and remain largely invisible are thus made extraordinary through spectacle. As Guy Debord put it, spectacle is not just about the proliferation of images in contemporary society: ‘it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.’

III. Screen

In her comments on the term entertainment, Berland notes that the emergence of technologies such as movies, television and popular music ‘traces entertainment’s move from a particular space to a non-particular space.’ In this

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587 Berland 47.
section I want to argue that such a transition might also be understood as a movement from the everyday to the extraordinary everyday and that the trope of the screen provides a useful descriptor for examining this shift within the context of Crown. Consider, for instance, the presence of giant television screens at several of the main entrances to the gaming areas, lining the walls of passageways, and in many of the bars and cafes in the complex. For the most part these screens show pre-recorded scenes of the gaming area only metres beyond them (Fig. 33). In these virtual representations of the space beyond, local and national celebrities gamble alongside a permanently enthralled series of ‘everyday individuals’, thereby producing the illusion of a utopian elsewhere, a classless and timeless non-place. Thus to walk through the Crown Complex becomes an experience of distraction in which the self is constantly split between a here of the casino floor and a virtual elsewhere. That split is mediated primarily through the cultural technology of the screen. While the main gaming floor, for example, appears to be a coherent space that continues on without end, it simultaneously incorporates design features such as changing decor, small bars and cafes, and clusters of lounge chairs that function to construct a number of spatial breaks—what we might think of as different television channels—that simultaneously encourage you to slow down, to stop and engage afresh with a series of micro-spectacles and potential entertainment vectors. That tele-ambience is further enhanced by masses of electronic pokie screens and blocks from ceiling lights that subtly pulse at different levels of brightness.

The trope of the screen at Crown also casts new meanings onto older forms of visual consumption, themselves the forerunners of contemporary forms of entertainment. The eastern end of the casino complex contains an upmarket shopping strip (including exclusive international outlets such as Prada, Armani, Versace and so

Fig. 33 Virtual elsewhere - television screen at casino entrance

Fig. 34 Shop window as screen
on) that simulates the experience of the nineteenth-century bourgeois arcade. A number of the conspicuous window-displays of these shops feature mannequins dressed in the stylish designer outfits of Euro-American internationalism. A psychoanalytic reading of these displays might focus on the pleasure and power of looking, and the possibilities of narrowing the gap between one’s real and imaginary ideal self through the mediation of the commodity form and the reflections produced in the glass. However, more interesting here is what these displays tell us about the relations between social and geographical mobility. It is possible to argue that the large window-displays of these shops invite the viewer to fantasise along the lines of class mobility and social fluidity by transporting them to an internationalised realm of consumer revelry. Older forms of identification, in this context, are supplanted by virtualised reveries of speed and dis-placement. Like the goods displayed in nineteenth-century arcades, ‘the shops passed in review are themselves a kind of high-speed transport, the displacement of goods produced in mass quantities in unknown elsewheres into temporal simultaneity and spatial condensation.’ The virtualised nature of this practice is also apparent in that most passers-by do not enter the shop because the windows and front entrances are, in a sense, identified as screens or electronic walls (Fig. 34)—they are something you ‘watch’ rather than ‘enter’; they invoke the pleasures of particular practices of viewing rather than (related) practices of ‘browsing’ which can be enjoyed elsewhere in the complex. Despite his hyperbolic tendencies it is still Baudrillard who captures that shift most cogently when he describes the contemporary consumer landscape as one in which ‘the scene and the mirror no longer exist; instead, there is a screen and network. In place of the reflexive transcendence of mirror and scene, there is a nonreflecting surface, an immanent surface where operations unfold—the smooth operational surface of communication.’

Screens also dominate the western end of the complex, where the principal attractions include a large multiplex cinema featuring plush wide-screen theatrettes with large recliner seats, in which you can eat ‘first-class’ food and drink champagne.

589 Morse, ‘An Ontology of Everyday Distraction’ 204.
590 It was announced in early 1998 that two stores at Crown, DKNY and Club 21, would close as, according to Lloyd Williams, ‘the two stores had failed to meet turnover targets.’ Kimina Lyall and Ben Hutchings, ‘Fashion Store Closures a Blow to Casino’s Image,’ Australian 12 Jan. 1998: 4.
591 Baudrillard 126-127.
(Fig. 35), and the two large restaurant-cafes, Planet Hollywood and the All-Star Cafe. The latter two spaces are internally dominated by screens projecting images from film and television history—Bruce Willis clips play while you eat a burger and sip a coke. Here the consuming body is trained to enjoy the simultaneous digestion of food, images, and sound in a public space. Practices previously associated with the domestic everyday—such as eating dinner in front of the television—thereby become spectacularised. These new spaces of what has been coined ‘eater-tainment’ thus mark out a new conjunction between older notions of entertainment (viewing films and television) and everyday practices of eating and drinking.\footnote{Blair 90-94.} Such a conjunction suggests a new hybrid space that combines the private lounge room and the semi-public space of the cinema or cafe.

The distinction between public and private bodies is similarly blurred on the main gaming floor at Crown but this time in relation to the categories of consumption and work. Here we witness ‘the reinvention of labor as spectacle’ in the form of a seemingly never-ending panorama of bodies at machines and gaming tables (Fig. 36).\footnote{Michael Sorkin, ‘See You in Disneyland,’ Variations on a Theme Park 228.} What initially looks like a fordist production line, instantaneously morphs into an attractive, leisure-oriented, post-industrial world. As a billboard spruiking Brisbane’s Treasury Casino and featuring an image of a pokie machine succinctly puts it, ‘Some machines make work easier, ours make it unnecessary’. What the screen of the pokie machine \textit{anticipates} in this context, perhaps, is a post-industrial world where everyday ideas about work have been problematised through its merging with leisure. At the pokie machine, the repeated pressing of the spin switch evokes the tasks of the production line or the computer keyboard; at the same time, it also signifies infinite leisure in the form of television-watching and channel-surfing (Fig. 37). These previously distinct practices are thus linked through the process of the integration of the technologised body into the wider machinic assembly that is the casino. As I discovered when learning to play Blackjack, in Crown’s ‘screened’ spaces the body is continually experienced as a virtualised form. Sitting at the table, one quickly realises that playing this game is no longer just a case of learning card values, combinations,
Fig. 35 Crown’s promise of social and geographic mobility

Fig. 36 Production lines of leisure
and probabilities, but is simultaneously about learning particular bodily performances that take their cue from the screen. The movements of the body, particularly the hands, become part of a dance performed for the camera. The croupier cannot let the game proceed until the performance is verified by the camera. To gain another card you must clearly hit the table this way. To ‘sit’ on your hand you must gesture like this. You must not hand your money to the croupier—it must be placed on the table this way so that the exchanges taking place can be recorded by the screen. In his notes on gambling, Benjamin noted that games of chance contain ‘the workman’s gesture for there can be no game without the quick movement of the hand by which the stake is put down or a card is picked up. The jolt in the movement of a machine is like the so-called coup in a game of chance.’

What linked the two movements together was the principle of shock; a defining experience of modernity according to Benjamin. Today, as Patricia Petro comments, we live in a ‘post-shock economy’ where ‘leisure as well as labour time becomes routinized, fetishized, commodified.’ At Crown, in a Benjaminian kind of process, these gambling movements performed for the camera quickly become second-nature. In the age of micro-surveillance performed by thousands of cameras, could Benjamin have anticipated the degree to which the worker’s gesture has been deftly woven into the televisual fabric of everyday life?

Finally, not only does the screen begin to condense the bodily actions of work and leisure into one, but it also electronically shores up a continuity between their often separated spaces through its surveillance functions. The more obviously placed screens in the complex are rumoured to be supplemented by (a not implausible) 3000 cameras. One anonymous croupier told an interviewer how he ‘cleans’ or opens his hands (Fig. 38) to the security cameras over two hundred times during a shift: ‘[y]ou put cash away—clean your hands; count out chips—clean your hands. It’s funny because you find yourself doing it in other situations, like cleaning the dishes at home; put away a cup, show the camera an open hand.’

Thanks to the ever-present architecture of television we witness the effacement of the divisions between work and leisure as all fields of life become subject to tele-mediation and the self-enabled

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594 Walter Benjamin, ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’ 177.
Fig. 37 Pokie screen

Image removed for copyright reasons.

Fig. 38 A croupier’s hands - new everyday trainings
scrutiny of an institutional gaze. Through the mobility and dispersal of its high levels of tele-surveillance outside of its physical walls, Crown plays a role in ensuring that the extraordinary is itself made everyday.

IV. Port

The Crown Complex (to paraphrase an observation by Michael Sorkin), rhapsodises on the relationship between transportation and geography. Here the notion of the vectoral technology of the ‘port’ is useful in providing a sense of Crown’s physical locus versus its electronic dispersal, and its role in the historical-geographical development of ‘Melbourne.’

Opposite the Crown site, on the northern bank of the Yarra River, a recently installed memorial (in the form of a small wharf and sizeable sculpture) acts as a marker of one of Melbourne’s two competing civic foundation narratives. The memorial signifies the place where John Fawkner arrived on his ship, the Enterprize, and laid claim to the stretch of riverside land that became central Melbourne. The exterior form of the Crown Complex itself resembles a ship with funnels illuminated in neon each night (Fig. 39). In any case, through its riverside location Crown inevitably inserts itself into Melbourne’s historical narrative. The semantics of ‘enterprize’ have, however, been re-aligned here: once upon a time enterprise spoke directly to the project of colonisation and the extraction of natural wealth from the reaches of empire, but now it finds itself re-articulated with a particular kind of free-market, global economics more attuned to the contingencies of information and entertainment flows.

While those entertainment flows find themselves articulated at a global level they must also be negotiated at the level of the local. Thus Crown makes its appearance felt throughout the wider field of entertainment due to its entry into a multitude of relations with other local and national entertainment institutions.

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597 Sorkin 210.
Specifically, Crown has expended much of its massive promotional budget on the sponsorship of various other sports and entertainment events and in its hiring of celebrities to perform ‘ambassadorial’ promotional work inside and outside its walls. Indeed, the relationship with sport and its ‘stars’ and ‘personalities’ is a cornerstone of Crown’s strategic insertion into the field of the local popular (Fig. 40).

However, the casino does not seek to displace sport from its centrality as a national and global entertainment product, but instead reincorporates its discourses by linking its pleasures to those of gambling. That relationship is concisely expressed in a Crown advertising billboard that features a picture of a roulette wheel imposed on the similarly circular form of the Melbourne Cricket Ground in aerial view, the accompanying text reading ‘The biggest game in town.’ The reference here is to the AFL (Australian Football League), or Australian Rules, which is the most popular sporting code in Victoria (its ‘home’ being the Melbourne Cricket Ground).

The field of sport produces some of the most peculiar conjunctions of the local and global that find a unique nexus at Crown. The All-Star Cafe, for instance, is a themed eating place that is also partly a popular museum featuring encased displays of mostly international-American sporting memorabilia. Its visible principal owners are mainly global sports celebrities such as Monica Seles, Wayne Gretsky and Andre Agassi; a local sporting hero, the cricket player Shane Warne, is also a stakeholder. His involvement as a stakeholder is spatially represented in the presence of two dining rooms, one dedicated to Warne (featuring relevant displays) and the other to the Melbourne Cricket Ground (the ‘G’), both rather obscurely located away from the main cafe area. While the conjunction of the local and global in this space comes together somewhat clumsily, so that the local appears ‘tacked on’, at other points in the complex the interface is much smoother, such as in the ‘sports casino’ where representations of American NBA players happily co-exist next to AFL stars.

599 Crown occupied a key place in the Kennett State Government’s attempt to reorient Victoria toward becoming a cultural economy known for its international events. Through the combination of development incentives and fast-tracked legislation, the state government played an extremely active role in ensuring that worldwide tele-events such as the Australian Formula One Grand Prix (managed by Ron Walker) take place in Victoria. Each of these events and attractions was part of a wider strategy that explicitly aims to circulate the sign of ‘Melbourne’ to audiences elsewhere in Australia and overseas.
Fig. 39 Port

Fig. 40 S/port
While it is now inextricably enmeshed with other local-global forms of entertainment like sport, Crown’s spaces of entertainment are both similar and different. For instance, like those older event spaces it is marked by the selective policing of boundaries between different social groups. At the same time, Crown appears to offer a newly available space of social interaction for some social subjects. For example, Phong Nguyen, the coordinator of a local Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association, made this comment on why members of the Indo-Chinese community are attracted to the casino: ‘They don’t go to pubs and clubs because they are scared of racism. They feel alienated from Australian sport, which they don’t understand.’ In this sense, the architecture of entertainment found at Crown clearly articulates with hegemonic notions of a social architecture based on notions of a multicultural society. This is not to suggest that this architecture is not racially marked—it clearly is in many important respects (for example, Crown has ‘Sic Bo’ next to ‘Two Up’ gaming tables)—but it enables quite a different mix of patrons compared to those found at older, official gambling-related entertainment sites such as the race track. Crown has quickly identified ‘target’ consumer groups that might not be attracted to its premises via an identification with sport—Asian-Australians are one of those market segments—and has mobilised various strategies to attract them (such as focused advertising and the inclusion of ‘Asian’ gambling games). Thus, at Crown, a particular representation of a multicultural Australian society takes its impetus from economic imperatives rather than those of social justice. In a strange moment of convergence, Australia’s economic push into Asia is paralleled by a cultural engagement (in a very limited and problematic sense) with ‘Asia’ within a local context.

Viewed from another perspective, the architecture of Crown resembles the low-rise form of the airport terminal which, according to Paul Virilio, is the new gateway or ‘face’ of the city that supersedes earlier gateway forms such as the port and railway station. In terms of its interior, much of Crown’s architecture also resembles the generic international airport terminal with its seemingly endless interior ‘lounges’ and transit spaces. The upmarket shopping strip with its exclusive international stores further reminds the stroller of the duty-free section of an airport terminal (Fig. 41). In the past year the Crown Complex has become something of

Virilio, _The Lost Dimension_ 9-27.
an extension of those lounges and shops with the completion of the Citylink freeway development. A key part of this reorganisation of the circulation of bodies and goods through metropolitan space has been the seamless linking of Melbourne’s international airport to the central city (and Crown, in effect) by a single freeway corridor.

Ackbar Abbas has described Hong Kong as

not so much a place as a space of transit. It has always been, and will perhaps always be, a port in the most literal sense—a doorway, a point in between—even though the nature of that port has changed. A port city that used to be located at the intersections of different spaces, Hong Kong will increasingly be at the intersections of different times or speeds.⁶⁰₂

Crown Casino, as a city in miniature, and a representation of a possible future Melbourne (but not necessarily any global metropolis), operates somewhat similarly. While the bodies of the predominantly Asian-based high-rollers who are suppose to bring in over forty per cent of Crown’s income arrive on privately leased jets, their wallets travel almost instantaneously via an exclusive international version of EFT-POS.⁶⁰³ For those who arrive at the Crown Complex by more conventional means, the promise of high-speed global travel is always—virtually speaking—just around the corner in the Las Vegas or Monte Carlo Room (Fig. 42). Yet at the same time as speed is responsible for what Paul Virilio describes as the ‘disappearance’ of urbanism and architecture into ‘the space-time of vectors’ and ‘communication machines,’ it simultaneously reinscribes and affirms more traditional notions of the city as a specifically located place. At Melbourne’s Crown Complex, that affirmation of place is based on the belief that new technologies—which find an apt metaphor in the figure of the computer port—will nullify the geographical barrier of distance that has historically kept Melbourne globally isolated, so that the city will become a nodal

⁶⁰₂ Ackbar Abbas, Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 4.
Fig. 41  ‘Airport’ interior

Fig. 42  Travel-in-place
point in the networks of vectors that organise the global exchange of bodies, capital, information, and entertainment. Plugging into the information economy is central to a process in which Melbourne and Victoria are being reimagined and concretely refashioned as a post-industrial city/state. Politically and economically this shift has been further marked by the Victorian state government’s persistent courting of investment by information industry transnationals. To this end, the State Treasurer at the time of Crown’s opening, who was also Victoria’s Minister for Multimedia, promised to assist potential investors by fast-tracking stalled planning applications.\(^{604}\) For many of these information technology companies, it seems that geographic location is no longer such a determining factor when choosing regional headquarters. The manager of one such firm, which has recently established its Asia-Pacific headquarters in Melbourne, mentioned ‘a strong airport infrastructure that made the region directly accessible’ as one of the most important factors in choosing the city.\(^{605}\) This comment reminds us more broadly that the creation of multiple forms of ‘mobility’ is a vital factor in the determination and construction of ports or interfaces between local and global networks.

**Conclusion: learning from Crown**

In both its earliest stages of planning and following its opening in May 1997, Crown has functioned as a barometer of the economic, political, and social well-being of Melbourne and Victoria in a broad range of discursive contexts. References to ‘casino culture’ have by now become ubiquitous in a wide range of public debates.\(^{606}\) While a great number of local critics have dismissed Crown’s defence of itself as an ‘entertainment complex’ rather than a ‘casino,’ in some ways their critiques are misplaced. Crown is now inextricably part of a wider architecture of entertainment (you do not have to look to hard to find Crown on television, or at the sports ground). At the same time, as those critics quite rightly observe, and Lloyd Williams has acknowledged, gambling is still the engine of the casino and is expected to generate up to 75 per cent of overall revenue.\(^{607}\) It is reasonable to

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\(^{605}\) Riley 54.

\(^{606}\) See *Place Your Bets*, eds. Cathcart and Darian-Smith, for statements from key local institutional participants in the debates. This collection also provides a useful overview of the history of gambling in Victoria.

\(^{607}\) Gibson, ‘We Owe it all to Kennett: Casino Chief’; 1.
speculate, nevertheless, that what Crown represents is an audacious attempt to reshape the field of entertainment so that gambling is relocated much closer to the centre of a new economy of leisure. As Jody Berland (following Marshall McLuhan) has noted, historically new forms of entertainment have tended to adopt the ‘content’ of their predecessors: ‘cultural hardware precedes the software that will constitute its content. As Brecht said of radio, it finds a market, and then looks for a reason to exist.’

For an affluent and predominantly middle-class segment of the local population who have regularly voiced their disapproval of the complex on aesthetic and moral grounds, Crown’s announcement in late 1998 that it was economically struggling due to the effects of the ‘Asian crisis’ and the resulting decrease in revenue from its ‘high-roller’ patrons has added further fuel to the flames of discontent. In this group’s view, perhaps, the widely circulating local story of the accidental ‘roasting’ of doves released as part of the opening celebrations by the fireballs was retrospectively poised to become a parable about the dangers of globalisation, in which local entrepreneurs and residents were barbecued by the flames of fickle international capital. More recently, the financial position of Crown has stabilised and appears likely to provide healthy future profits for its new majority owner, the Packer media dynasty. Accordingly, as I have argued in this chapter, the salient ‘lessons of Crown’ for cultural studies are not necessarily those concerning the surging and ebbing flows of capital, nor the ‘disappearance’ of place via a mobile architecture of the sign. Instead, the useful lessons are those concerning the mobility of bodies and the vectoral nature of the contemporary everyday. Crown convincingly demonstrates that the everyday might be usefully conceptualised as a realm not defined by its autonomy and separation from its phantom ‘other’ (the extraordinary), but as a series of practices that articulate and open up a range of vectors that are anchored in the here and now of the (walking) body.

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608 Berland 43.
609 While Crown has played down this story they have had an employee monitoring the top of the towers for errant birdlife before each show ever since. In its end of year summary of local events, a local newspaper ran its story on Crown under the byline (unattributed) ‘Pigeon Pyre a Pointer to Casino Culture,’ The Melbourne Times 17 Dec. 1997.
610 Maiden 5. James Packer, son of Kerry Packer, was appointed chairperson of Crown in 1999. The gross profits earned by Crown in 1999 are only marginally less than those brought in by Channel 9, the other principal asset of PBL Ltd (the listed media and entertainment group, 37% owned by the Packers).
In particular, Crown is a port of multiple vectors that is linked to a globalised network of entertainment, a field which, as a number of critics have observed, is becoming a key sector of the corporate economies of capitalist countries. Much of the impetus behind this increased production of entertainment commodities can be linked to the development of new technologies. Most significantly, the last decade has witnessed the general merger of ‘the intensified entertainment economy to the global telecommunications-computer infrastructure,’ or so-called ‘information superhighway’. Crown demonstrates—somewhat paradoxically—that getting onto the information superhighway involves learning new techniques of ‘walking’ and modes of bodily experience. That is, the body is trained in new modes of everyday mobility through entertainment practices which involve it contemporaneously occupying a series of physical and virtual spaces. While much recent urban and theoretical discourse has focused on the western shift to ‘information economies,’ the actual category of ‘information’ has tended to remain vaguely defined and unexamined. Manuel Castells has recently observed that ‘for all the ideology of the potential of new communication technologies in education, health and cultural enhancement, the prevailing strategy aims at developing a giant electronic entertainment system, considered the safest investment from a business perspective’. In light of Castell’s claims, perhaps we might reconfigure this shift toward a mode of information as being more accurately described as a move to a mode of entertainment. The forms and spaces of this mode of entertainment are not necessarily radically new or unfamiliar; rather, the architecture of entertainment, exemplified by Crown, jacks itself in to older entertainment spaces and practices to create recognisable hybrids.

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612 Breen 498.
613 Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996). Entertainment, as Castell’s notes, is one of the fastest-growing industries in western economies; recent figures for the United States, for example, show that the entertainment industry accounts for ‘over $350 billion of consumer spending per year, and about 5 million workers, with employment increasing at 12% per year’(366).
Everyday life escapes; it *exceeds*. But what is the nature of this everyday excess or banal overflow? How does it escape? Where does it escape to? What does it *do* and, more crucially, what can be done with it?

— Greg Seigworth

In a section of her essay ‘On the Beach,’ concerned with the enunciative theories of practice proposed by Michel de Certeau, Meaghan Morris discusses Maurice Blanchot’s 1959 essay ‘Everyday Speech’ as an antecedent to certain types of contemporary cultural studies work. In particular, she argues, Blanchot sets out ‘all the elements for a theoretical myth of the Evasive Everyday.’ As Morris observes, Blanchot (like Lefebvre) primarily defined the everyday as that which flees ‘forms or structures.’ For Blanchot, the everyday is in a sense recognisable through its mobility: ‘the everyday escapes.’ In Blanchot’s work, comments Morris, the everyday ‘is pure process in excess, and it is always, like “the man in the street,” *potentially* political.’

The reason why the everyday is only ‘potentially’ political is explained by Morris with reference to Margaret Morse’s observations on the changed landscapes of the contemporary everyday. As I noted in my preface, Morse proposed that the ‘escape routes’ of the everyday identified by Certeau in his discussions of ‘praxis as enunciation’ have now themselves been ‘designed into the geometries of everyday life.’ Morris’s emphasis on the word ‘potentially’ is thus crucial here for it captures the productive *ambivalence* of her intellectual position in respect of the everyday. While on the one hand Morris can not imagine a cultural studies *without* ‘a concept of enunciative praxis’ *a la* Certeau, on the other hand she recognises the
ways in which the ‘escape’ routes of the everyday are frequently recuperated and
reincorporated within the very structures and designs that they seek to evade.  

In raising these issues Morris outlines a central dilemma that has powerfully
shaped cultural studies encounters with the everyday. Indeed, the potency of this
dilemma is marked by the fact that cultural studies analyses of the everyday have
tended to be caught in an either/or situation, analysing the everyday as a site of
resistance or a site of containment. In this thesis my own response to this dilemma
has been the coining of a term, the ‘extraordinary everyday,’ that utilises this
conundrum as its organising principle. That is, I have been concerned with this
mutually constitutive relationship between the everyday (the banal routines and
assumptions that govern ‘ordinary’ practices) and the extraordinary (that which
seems in a sense to both arise from the everyday and exceed it, only, in a sense, to
be reincorporated back within it). My ‘invention’ of the extraordinary everyday,
then, represents a recognition of the interlinked nature of these terms. Accordingly,
Part One of the thesis theorised the concept of the extraordinary everyday through
an examination of the writings of three cultural theorists—Walter Benjamin, Michel
de Certeau, and Meaghan Morris—whose work is essential to any cultural studies
understanding of everyday culture. Part Two of the thesis then mobilised this
conceptual framework relation to three specific interfaces between the extraordinary
and the everyday; namely the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade, the
Another View walking trail, and the Crown Casino Entertainment Complex. Each
of these case studies worked in quite different ways towards an understanding and
elaboration of ‘walking’ as both a banal, everyday practice located in the here and
now of the body-subject and as the precondition for a vectoral mobility into a virtual
elsewhere.

In this epilogue I want to revisit some of the key themes of this thesis
through a brief discussion of three highly relevant ‘excessive’ events that can be
seen to ‘take off’ in a vectoral sense from the interfaces examined in the second part
of the thesis. These events can be classed as excessive for several reasons. Firstly,
they are excessive in terms of their contemporaneity: all three events occurred
recently and their afterimages continue to linger in media coverage and popular
discourse. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, they are ‘excessive’ in terms of

620 Morris, Too Soon Too Late 110.
their spectacular and affective impact, and in the ways in which they arise from and move beyond everyday sites and practices. Finally, these moments of excess are presented here in terms of what I referred to at the end of my preface as ‘a way of going outside,’ an ironic escape. In other words, I offer them not so much in order to inscribe some sort of definitive closure on my term ‘the extraordinary everyday’ (though they inevitably perform this function to some degree), but to gesture towards the diverse trajectories along which this term might travel in future projects.

I.

In September 2000 a record number of Australians gathered around their televisions in order to watch the compelling media spectacle of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. This broadcast was certainly an out-of-the ordinary event, a prolonged media spectacle, for it tended to throw people’s viewing patterns and everyday routines into chaos. For fourteen days Sydney became the centre of the global media universe (in the Australian imagination at least), offering a picturesque backdrop for the world’s best athletes and their sponsors. One of the most spectacular events during this extended television extravaganza was the official closing ceremony. While staged at Homebush Stadium in suburban Sydney, this particular event seemed strangely displaced—a pure media vector that might have originated from a stadium in any city of the world. Despite its ‘origins’ in a virtual elsewhere, however, this event was an unprecedented opportunity for the games organisers to perform the national for a global audience. While aspects of the various performances, speeches and displays that comprised this ritual of closure were topical and stirring, much of the national iconography brought out to be displayed on the night could only (from an Australian perspective) be described as banal and routine in its content. This was ‘banality’ not so much as a state of boredom or tedium, but banality as a practice of excess and repetition in terms of representations and cliches of ‘Australian-ness.’

Nowhere was that banality more apparent than in the ‘parade’ segment of the ceremony which, according to one television commentator, showcased a ‘grab-bag

621 Among the more topical and controversial performances of the night were rock bands Yothu Yindi and Midnight Oil who performed politically overt songs that called for a formal treaty between indigenous and non-indigenous people. Midnight Oil wore outfits adorned with the word ‘sorry.’
of modern day Australian culture.'

This parade, which consisted of groups of walkers and floats circulating around the stadium running track, presented a series of ‘everyday’ icons in the form of various Australian media ‘celebrities.’ In tandem with the everydayness of these figures, however, a sense of the extraordinary infused the context in which they were presented. For instance, the segment began with the pop-diva Kylie Minogue being literally reeled into the stadium on a giant thong (Australian beach sandal) held aloft by the curiously dated figures of the Bondi Beach Surf Lifesavers, attired here not in their traditional swimming costumes but in modest singlets, shorts and caps instead. These lifesavers did not simply march into the stadium but performed a curious prancing quickstep that suggested more than a passing resemblance to the formations of marching boys described in my analysis of Mardi Gras (Fig. 43a). While the sexual seductiveness of the Mardi Gras marching boys was absent, it was nevertheless still a camp moment. That this reading was not simply the observation of a paranoid cultural critic was confirmed when Minogue launched into her version of ‘Dancing Queen.’ Thus Minogue—herself an established gay icon—set the scene for the floats that followed her into the stadium. For instance, from inside a huge, sparkling silver and decidedly ‘queer’ shark, Greg Norman emerged to hit fake golf balls into the crowd. He was followed by the ‘fruity’ children’s television stars Bananas in Pyjamas, regular subjects of subversive floats in the Mardi Gras, who in turn were followed by a whip-cracking Paul Hogan. Balancing on a giant Akubra hat, Hogan indulged in little S and M as he lashed out at giant prawns on bicycles. Supermodel Elle Macpherson appeared atop of a ridiculously phallic camera lens that suggestively extended its length as she catwalked along it. Finally, and somewhat ironically, there came arguably the ‘straightest’ entry of this parade in terms of its presentation style—a float dedicated to the Australian film, The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert (1994), featuring drag queens on high heel shoe-shaped bicycles and the famous outback bus from the film (featuring Mardi Gras celebrity and television co-host ‘Vanessa Wagner’ preening in all her finery on top (Fig. 43b)).

The parade section of the Olympic closing ceremony certainly confirmed the argument in my fourth chapter that Mardi Gras has not only ‘arrived’ but is ‘going

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Fig. 43a  Olympic closing ceremony scene

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Fig. 43b  Vanessa Wagner - Sydney Mardi Gras presenter and Olympic closing ceremony queen
places’ in relation to its claims on the Australian national. Specifically, the simulation of Mardi Gras at the Olympic closing ceremony demonstrated that it is now impossible to think about any contemporary Australian ‘street’ performance that celebrates the national without reference to Mardi Gras. At the same time the gradual vectoral displacement of Mardi Gras from the street into the time-space of global television suggests a further stage of media proliferation for an event that began with the everyday act of bodies massing and making themselves visible in the local street. Drawing on a range of traditions from carnival, to official nineteenth-century parades, to the street demonstration, and creating a unique hybrid form in the process, Mardi Gras performs a cultural politics of exaggerated visibility—its ‘excessive’ modes of ‘walking in the street’ put everyday difference decisively and humorously on display. Its cultural politics of exaggeration are those ‘in which real practices of freedom become possible because “alternative values and their constituencies have labored to mark themselves in [everyday] discourse.”’

The excess of Mardi Gras in this sense literally embodies both the dilemmas and possibilities of the resistant versus the co-optive aspects of the everyday.

II.

The last weekend of May 2000 in Australia was designated ‘Corroboree 2000’ and included a series of events designed to formally recognise the official ‘conclusion’ of the ten-year reconciliation process between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The signature public event of Corroboree 2000, which tried to capitalise on the Council for Reconciliation’s catchphrase ‘Walking Together,’ was a march which took place in Sydney and involved a crossing of the city’s landmark harbour bridge. None of the organisers were quite sure what level of public support might be garnered for this event given the often fractious and ambiguous nature of racial politics in recent Australian history. To the organisers’ surprise an estimated 250,000 people or more—the largest march of its kind since anti-Vietnam demonstrations of the 1970s—took the opportunity to make the four kilometre journey that included the Sydney bridge crossing. As a diverse range of participants streamed across the bridge an aerial advertising company repeatedly etched the word ‘sorry’ in the clear blue sky above the city. Conspicuously absent from the march, as most media reports noted, was the Prime Minister, John Howard.

623 Morris [citing Morse], Too Soon Too Late 232.
who has steadfastly refused to issue a formal apology on behalf of the nation for past injustices committed in respect of indigenous peoples.

The extraordinary historical significance attributed to this event in media reports came from the sense that it had been initiated by ‘ordinary’ Australians. One of the most striking features of these reports were their ‘excessive’ references to ‘the people,’ ‘the public’ and ‘ordinary Australians.’ Various headlines, journalists, and commentators reinforced this reading by describing the event as ‘the people’s apology.’

Despite the participation of some well-known political figures, the media coverage tended to focus on those participants who were aligned with the figure described by Certeau in his preface to *The Practice of Everyday Life*—that is, the invisible ‘ordinary man,’ ‘walking in their thousands.’ As I observed in my second chapter, for Certeau it is the evasive manoeuvres of the ‘man in the street’ which ‘resist’ the totalising gaze of the urban planner. In the case of the bridge march, however, the opposition constructed was not so much between the small-scale tactics of the ‘man in the street’ and the grand strategies of the planner but, instead, between the ‘man in the street’ and the nation’s political leader. What also marked the extraordinariness of this event was that it reversed the logic of Certeau’s account in so far as it employed a tactics of excessive scale and visibility, rather than invisibility (Fig. 44). That visibility was enabled of course as much through the cultural force exerted by the media reports and characterisation of the march as it was by the actual physical act of crossing the bridge itself. The march-event was a pertinent reminder of the possibilities of the political power of a specific kind of mediatised urban public. As Donald (commenting on Morse) has argued, in the context of contemporary culture ‘we should think of publicness as a phantom, as an immaterial yet effective social force, rather than a lost reality or a dead community.’

The scale and ‘publicness’ of the Harbour Bridge march suggests that it was quite different to the extraordinary everyday practice of ‘just passing by’ that structures the experience of the Another View walking trail discussed in my fifth

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624 Mike Steketee and Megan Saunders, ‘Sorry: The People’s Apology’ *Australian* 29 May 2000: 1.
625 Certeau v.
626 Donald 186.
Image removed for copyright reasons.

*Fig. 44* March for reconciliation across Sydney Harbour Bridge (2000)
chapter. In that chapter my discussion of the trail focussed on how the mini-
spectacles that make up the trail installations worked to remember the specificness
of the local inhabitation of place and the presence of an/other everyday. As I noted
with reference to Michael Taussig’s commentaries on the contingency of the
everyday city face, to not recognise the possibility of a transformation of the
everyday is to continue practicing a ‘public secret.’ In contrast, the march across the
bridge was so much not rooted in the specificities of a particular (post)colonial city
but, instead, was dispersed across a (post)colonial national media space. However,
what does connect the walking trail and the bridge event is their shared recognition
of the possibilities of the transformation of everyday culture. In both cases this was
enabled through symbolic acts and gestures that recast the simultaneously material
and mediatised everyday ‘face’ of Australian culture.

III.

In September of this year, Melbourne’s Crown Casino complex hosted the
World Economic Forum (WEF). Among the 850 delegates attending the forum
were leaders of some of the world’s largest multinational corporations including
major business luminaries such as Microsoft chairman Bill Gates and Novell’s CEO
Eric Schmidt. Also in attendance were Australian politicians such as Prime Minister
John Howard, Federal Treasurer Peter Costello, and the Premiers of a number of
Australian states. Challenging the WEF’s discussions and push for further global
trade liberalisation was ‘s11,’ a loose and extraordinarily diverse coalition of green,
union, feminist, anarchist and socialist groups (among others), all concerned in
different ways with the uneven impact and effects of globalisation. In the weeks
prior to the event, s11 publicly announced their intention to blockade the three-day
WEF forum. While generally ridiculed in the media, the intentions of s11 were
obviously being taken seriously because in the days leading up to the forum concrete
barricades and a wire mesh fence with twelve main entrances ‘magically’ appeared
around the lengthy perimeter of the casino (Fig. 45a). Ironically, these barricades
seemed to assist and even encourage the protesters as they provided focal points for
their blockade efforts. Despite miserable weather and a subdued start, s11’s success
on the first day of the blockade was registered in the fact that around two-thirds of
the delegates were prevented from entering the casino. Most extraordinary, perhaps,
was their success in closing down the casino’s everyday operation for more than two
days when Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority Inspectors and patrons found themselves unable to enter the premises.

On the second and most intense day of the blockade, the protesting crowds outside rose to an estimated twenty thousand people, and police aggressiveness escalated in the form of baton charges resulting in serious injuries to both protesters and police. Celebrity delegates such as Gates were transported by helicopter onto the roof of the casino or boated in across the river. In this moment the casino inadvertently achieved its own fantasy of being an isolated global island-city. At the same time, in organising this temporary blockage the protesters arguably constructed a threshold between the everyday and the extraordinary that in a sense mimicked the design strategies of the casino discussed in my sixth and final chapter. In other words, through their blockade the protestors transformed the WEF from a routine business convention into an extraordinary media event. While the mainstream media coverage was often unfavourable towards the protestors this was a secondary issue. Of primary importance here was the protesters’ active role in constructing a global media narrative that linked past (World Trade Organisation protests in Seattle), present (s11), and future (the s26 action that would take place in Prague). As one s11 banner put it, ‘our resistance must be as global as capitalism.’

On the third day of the forum and protests, the mood swung from one dominated by the anxiety of physical confrontation to the festive. On a soundstage set up opposite the eastern entrance to the casino, music and speeches entertained a crowd who had slipped into a somewhat carnivalesque mood (Fig. 45b). Hundreds of people enjoyed the sun as they took strolls around the perimeter of the casino, spoke to strangers and friends and even to police on the other side of the barricades. At the same time, they mused over, walked by, photographed, and pointed at the astonishing variety of graffiti that seemed to have filled every possible spare surface of the casino’s outside walls (Fig. 45c). The diverse and sometimes obscure issues addressed in this graffiti confirmed that the impact of the s11 protest was not only global but was also local. Recalling the centrality of Crown in recent constructions of Melbourne’s place-identity, the s11 protest thoroughly rewrote this narrative.
Fig. 45a  Barricades at the WEF/Crown

Fig. 45b  A carnival atmosphere at the 911 protest

Fig. 45c  Graffiti referring to Kerry Packer, media magnate and current owner of Crown
However, rather than merely ignoring the casino’s temporal and spatial logic, the marchers literally ‘drew’ upon it.

In working both with, and against, the conditions of everyday life that govern the present the s11 protest suggests a connection to the writings of Walter Benjamin discussed in my opening chapter. For Benjamin was interested in how people experienced and dealt with those changes brought on by rapid practices of urban modernisation at the level of daily life ‘on the street.’ Benjamin’s writings on the emergence of modern consumer society and the *flâneur* are invaluable in their identification of the emergence of the new modes of mobility, perception, and experience that marked the distinctive everyday lives of modern city dwellers. Through figures like the *flâneur*, Benjamin speculated on some of the possibilities and problems of negotiating and living within the complex urban landscape produced through these changes. Drawing a vectoral trajectory from Benjamin to the present day, his concerns link up to the three extraordinary events I have just described. For these cultural events are stories of postmodern subjects attempting to reinscribe the everyday with markers of popular dissent and difference. However, their ‘post’-ness is also where these stories ‘escape’ a Benjaminian logic of spatial politics. The s-11 protest, for example, showed that—like the theorists of place that James Donald discusses—not just critics but ‘ordinary’ men and women ‘recognise that people’s everyday reality is no longer (if it ever was) limited to the place where they live. People have learned to live both here and there at the same time.’627 Put another way, people have learned to live in the fractured and pluralised times and spaces of an increasingly globalised and virtualised extraordinary everyday.

627 Donald 180.
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