"I'd rather not be in Marrickville:"
Aerial modernities and the domestication of the sublime

Thesis submitted for the fulfilment of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Justine Lloyd

School of Cultural Histories & Futures
University of Western Sydney Nepean

February 2000
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
Acknowledgements

This thesis began in 1993 and since then I have had a few homes, jobs and moves. Some people have been there since the beginning and others I have met on the way. I would like to thank all of them for providing the emotional and material means by which this thesis was written.

Firstly, thanks to Lesley Johnson, for her initial supervision and early encouragement, and for practical support by allowing me to use some office space during an important period of writing in 1995-6. The topic and themes of the thesis emerged from Lesley’s Honours seminars at UWS Nepean during 1992, as well as from John Potts’ subject, ‘Law, Technology and Social Change’, and Helen Macallan’s course on ‘Modernism and the City’ at the University of Newcastle in 1991. Michael Symonds provided much more than ‘temporary’ supervision and much appreciated theoretical direction and depth in 1996. And most recently, for her excellent supervision, especially for her help in sharpening and focusing a thesis that covers a very wide range of material, for seeing me through to the very last draft, and for her persistent humour, enthusiasm, warmth and support, grace to Zoë Sofoulis.

For access to and invaluable guidance through archives, I am indebted to Karyn Green at Botany Bay Library and Cheryl Williams at Marrickville Council, as well as staff of the National Library, the National Film and Sound Archive, the State Library of NSW, Qantas Historical Archives and the Australian Archives.

Although there is no direct reference to this in the thesis, a visit to Japan in 1995 and an insight into the Sanrizuka movement against Narita airport sparked off a lot of ideas. Discussion with Robert Rickets and the staff and volunteers of the Pacific-Asia Resource Centre in Tokyo in particular was very generous and much appreciated.

Anonymous reviewers of papers published in Space and Culture - The Journal, Australian Feminist Studies and the proceedings of the 2000 Australian ‘Urban History/Planning History’ conference provided useful critical comments on material that appears in this thesis. Ditto the participants at the Urban Research Program’s PhD school and the ‘Technology in the Making’ seminars, both at Research School of Social Sciences, ANU.

Staff at UWS Nepean – especially Diane Milne and Sue Batho -- were supremely efficient in taking care of administrative details. The (former) Faculty of Humanities funded part of the fieldwork component of the thesis. An internal research grant from Southern Cross
University also helped tidy up some loose ends. Fiona Allon, in her capacity as researcher funded by this grant, did a sterling job of organising images and taking the photos of the Departure Lounge when I could not travel to Sydney to do so. Larissa Moody ably gave assistance with the layout and digital imaging side of things and the finished product demonstrates her ease with technology as well as her creative flair.

Harry and Del Stone and the (ex-)residents of Sydenham gave generously of their time and were always hospitable; Sidetrack Theatre, John Skennar and Phillipa Playford made many materials available to me, without which I would not have been able to end the thesis.

Patricia Bower and Julie Langworth’s good humour and warmth as colleagues and friends helped me juggle two part-time jobs and study during 1995. Dr Soon Beng Yeap, Nani and Paul Thomas, and Michael Binz made my time at Monash University, Gippsland more than enjoyable as well as loud exhortations since to finish the project. John Tebbutt got me there in the first place and I am particularly grateful to him for passing on a book he found in a second-hand shop, the strangely invaluable publication *Air Transport in Australia*. The staff of the School of Humanities, Media and Cultural Studies at Southern Cross University gave support and shuffled some timetables in the final stages of writing up, and tolerated my absences. I would like to thank Jean Bedford in particular for her reading and comments on chapter four.

The rythym and flow of writing was helped by Massive Attack, William Orbit, Dusty Springfield, St Etienne, the Lighthouse Keepers, Liz Phair and the ‘repeat’ button on my cd player. The volunteers of 2NCR North Coast Community Radio provided many tiny moments of inspiration: long may all their kinds of music fill the airwaves.

To friends with whom ideas were discussed many times and from whom intellectual companionship was sought, a very warm thanks and a promise to do the same whenever I can, especially Wanning Sun, Kirsty MacKenzie, Sylvie Haisman, Keiran Thompson, Liz Hughes, Belinda Sommer and Fiona Allon. And a serious thanks to Shane Homan, for many many not-so-serious reasons.

And finally, thanks to all my family for their all their love and support -- and for taking me travelling -- Peter, Libby, James, Aoise and Daniel Lloyd, Peggy Blain and Dot Lloyd. And Tim Blain’s sense of humour and inquisitive spirit have always been with me throughout this project.
Certificate of Authorship of Thesis

Except as specially indicated in quotations and bibliographies, I certify that I am the sole author of the thesis. I also certify that the thesis has not been submitted for another degree.

Signature of author:

Date:
abstract:

"I'd rather not be in Marrickville":
aerial modernities and the domestication of the sublime

Since the first flights in Sydney in 1910, the problem of exactly where to locate Sydney's airport has preoccupied and troubled planners, politicians and residents of the city. This thesis examines Sydney airport as a space, site and symbol under contestation by major social forces (Zukin) throughout the twentieth century. In doing so, it seeks to question the claims of both planners and anti-airport protesters to resolve and manage large-scale urban developments.

Via a series of case studies of representations of the airport, the thesis develops an argument for understanding the airport as a heterotopia: neither sublime nor abject, but through such an extremist spatial imaginary pointing to the production of modernist space as a highly contested process. The thesis illustrates that the 'aerial' has been a symbolically central, yet spatially marginal and boundary-defining zone in modernity. Because it localises and materialises discourses on the nature and goals of progress, internationalisation and globalisation, the thesis argues that the built form of the airport is, and will continue to be, a key site of such aerial modernity.

The first section examines the role of some eccentric, yet central figures of Sydney's aerialised modernity: Houdini, the first person to fly in Australia in 1910; the aerodrome controller charged with establishing Sydney as an international capital of aviation in 1921; and Amy Johnson, the female pilot or 'aviatrix' who flew from England to Australia in 1930.

The second section investigates the role of post-war reconstruction in urban planning and development in Sydney, specifically the re-development of the airport for jet flights
in 1959. The ways in which official discourse portrayed the arrival of the jets as sublime is identified through detailed analyses of representations of jet noise in the urban soundscape. It is argued that the official denial of the negative effects of these aircraft in both noise and pollution created an ‘unofficial conscious’ (Bakhtin) that continues to contest and re-constitute this modernist sublime in unexpected and subversive ways.

The final section elaborates the contents of this ‘unofficial conscious’ of modernity. This section argues that the intense urban redevelopment associated with internationalisation and globalisation does not erase place, but fragments and unsettles the category of home. The final chapter closely reads a series of ‘airport tales’ (a film, a play, and a park) in order to consider the ways in which they rework the modernist sublime in domestic space. Finally, it is found that such stories interrogate and reconfigure the salient relationships between home, travel and the city in modernity. The thesis concludes that these stories offer a method of representing locality that goes beyond the existing understandings of locality as an essence of place. The appeal of these narratives lies in the shift that they develop, through excessive and negotiated representations of both the domestic and the sublime, from the local as essence, to locality as practice.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ...................................................................................... i

Certificate of Authorship ........................................................................ iv

Abstract .................................................................................................... v

Table of Contents ....................................................................................... vi

Introduction ............................................................................................... 1

**Check-in: Histories and Images**

1. Locations and Definitions  
   Cityscape, mediascape, technoscapes  
   Space, site and symbol:  
   locations: terminal...global...outside...traffic...  
   definitions: inter-discipline...heterotopia...chronotope  ......................... 9

**Part One: Engineering the future**

2. Inventing a geography, 1910-1919 ......................................................... 52

3. Cities of Circulation: the engineer/architect ......................................... 91

4. The impossible aviatrix ......................................................................... 130
part two: On the very threshold of space

5. War, everyday ................................................................. 175

6. The man in the glass tower .............................................. 208

7. An exciting new sound .................................................... 240

part three: Strangers within the gates

8. The new internation: arrivals and arrivals .......................... 281

9. The politics of dislocation .................................................. 317

Conclusion ............................................................................ 358

Bibliography .......................................................................... 370

Appendix 1: The Departure Lounge ........................................ 388

Appendix 2: Aircraft movements at
Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport .......................................... 395

List of illustrations .................................................................. 399
Introduction

This thesis follows encounters between the ‘space above’ and a ‘space below’ at a particular location, Sydney airport. What exactly should ‘be done’ about the problems of living near Sydney’s main airport has been debated for the entire history of the airport’s presence in the city. By examining the disagreements, debates, dialogues (and the lack thereof) that have been produced between many different people over this time, my analysis is interested in drawing out the social and spatial relations that structure these engagements. These relations draw individuals into larger formations of subjectivity that centre around the right to or denial of mobility at the same time as they explain our sense of belonging to a particular place.

For most of the twentieth century, tolerance to the kind of noise generated by the airport has been seen to be a necessary part of the training of the urban citizen. In 1970, in a three-hour debate in the New South Wales Parliament on what to do about all sources of noise in the city, and aircraft noise in particular, Mr Doyle, Liberal member for Vaucluse, distinguished between progressive, sophisticated urbanites and reactionary, unworliday rural types when he called the ‘terrified kiddies’ who ran inside their houses when aircraft flew overhead ‘country cousins’. Since this debate, urban citizens have needed to increasingly discipline their senses of hearing in order to place these sounds in the background of their environment. Indeed, the sounds of air traffic now characterise the inner suburbs of Sydney, and by the late 1980s dominated all other sources of urban noise. Since the debate in 1970 the number of flights into and out of the airport has grown at around 9 per cent per annum, representing a three-fold increase from 280 flights a day in 1982 to a peak of 800 a day in 1990. This increase in air travel has enabled the NSW Government to bid for and stage the mass spectacles of the Australian bicentennial in 1988 and the imminent Sydney Olympics in 2000, as well as the more general geo-political positioning of Sydney as a financial and tourist centre for the Asia/Pacific region.

---

This escalation of global travel and transport has created an increasing sense of violation of closed and safe space of ‘home’ for city dwellers. This noisy and intrusive technology by the 1960s exceeded government-decreed zoning standards of acceptable noise in residential areas. These local tensions have manifested in a critical discourse of locality against a technocratic and modernist version of urbanism. Over the period during which my study has been written -- from 1993 onwards -- a series of local government sponsored street protests and blockades have interrupted the workings of the airport; local print and electronic media have carried thousands of stories on the inadequacies of government policies of urban development; artists and writers have described and questioned the experience of environmental and noise pollution; and state and federal parliaments and the court system have sought to define exactly who is responsible for the problem. Despite continued opposition, the airport does indeed remain at its original site and continues to receive heavy infrastructure investment from public sources, most infamously in the opening of a third runway (six months ahead of schedule and $52 million under budget) in November 1994.3 Competing definitions of public interest, public and domestic space have been played out in these diverse and conflicting imaginaries of what it means to live in a ‘world city’.

This study adopts a microhistorical perspective in order to demonstrate the interplay between these multiple layerings of space. This study is not an explanation of the political science of airport development, nor is it a detailed case history of urban planning problems of the late twentieth century. It is rather an inquiry into the fantasies and imaginings of a society that is structured through high-speed travel and global economic exchange. I track these fantasies through the materials of a mediated society: images, texts, diaries, biographies, newspapers, films and government records. My analysis focuses on the social relationships played out in both image and written word. In order to develop an argument about the multiple and contested effects of modernisation and modernity, I suggest that these documents are strategic and tactical statements in themselves, as they often intercede in and contest, as well as reproduce, the fantasies of a society in motion.

3 Leomie Lamont, ‘PM opens runway we “had to have”’, Sydney Morning Herald, 5 November 1994, p. 7.
These chapters taken together do not make up a complete history of the site of the airport nor the entire city of Sydney. They instead demonstrate a set of traversals between local, global and national entities that are figured in the site of the airport. They map a series of shifts in the relations between these spaces that are expressed through representation. This study looks at the airport as part of a set of simultaneously symbolic and material sites in the urban: home, suburb and public space. This study questions the rhetoric of modernist space to leave ‘home’ behind, and considers ‘home’ as one of the importantly ‘othered’ spaces of modernity.

The study argues most importantly that this othering works through a set of signifying dynamics. This thesis argues an ordering of spaces, bodies and times develops through spatial arrangements and production, and, after Mary Douglas, that bodies or times ‘out of place’ pose problems of categorisation to modernist spatial practices. This study demonstrates that the production of modernist space works through the extremist aesthetic state of sublime. The sublime is understood as produced through the modernist drive to categorise and order that which exceeds representation. This sublimity has no guaranteed presence nor absence in any space, but has to be continually produced through narratives that mobilise and negate its ‘other’ extremes: the grotesque, the abject, the uncanny, the banal.

This thesis is organised in three sections that map out changes across the period of study. The chapters of each section delineates an historical case that illustrates an aspect of the domestication and negotiation of the modernist sublime. Each chapter reads an event in detail to demonstrate the moving relations between symbolic, social and physical location. Each case also constructs an account of the tireless motion of modernist regimes of representation to construct a register of the sublime.

Before approaching these separate studies, the first chapter, ‘Locations and Definitions’ develops the theoretical framework that informs the case studies firstly through a discussion and interpretation of the work of two key scholars of modernity: Walter Benjamin and Mikhail Bakhtin. This chapter considers the problematic relationship between public space and modernity, and seeks to contextualise both Benjamin’s and
Bakhtin’s work within recent scholarship. I argue that both authors offer a method that mines the productive zone between the spheres of the private and intimate and the public and collective. I consider the valuable approach to a cultural politics of public space in both authors by articulating Benjamin’s notion of the dialectical image together with Bakhtin’s sociological poetics of dialogism. Their common concern to develop a more nuanced understanding of the consumption of the common, everyday forms of contemporary culture as formations of social contestation questions and undermines the sublimity of modernity’s more spectacularised and obvious forms. In order to plot the points from which this thesis departs, the chapter then examines recent debates over representation, space and locality via a series of keywords: terminal, global, traffic, outsideness, heterotopia, chronotope.

Opening the first section of the interpretive section of the thesis (Engineering the Future: 1919–1939), Chapter Two further traces the functions of the city in modernity -- and modernity in the city. The figure of Harry Houdini (the first person to fly in Australia) provides a moment at which the heroic myth of aviation coalesced in a location, but was deeply implicated in a carnivalised, multivalent stage of technology. Houdini’s flight was for promotional purposes and thus was performed as a ‘stunt’, offering a specifically urban entertainment. This emergence of aviation in the popularised zone of spectacle and carnivalesque display has often been ignored in national and local histories. The flight of Houdini also challenges dominant histories of aviation in Australia which have focused on the nation-building and economic aspects of aviation through a ‘pioneering narrative’ of discovery and conquest. The flight in 1910 instead demonstrates the ‘other’ history of technology, that is, its function at the interstice of the imaginary and the economic, the natural and the socio-political.4

The transition that such flights produced from a perception of urban space as horizontal and serial into a modernist imaginary of a vertical and ‘aerial’ dimension is explained through early accounts of Mascot aerodrome, as the airport was first known. The

chapter concludes with the choice (or accidental stumbling across) of the site for the aerodrome at Mascot to examine the location of transistoriness in the urban in modernity. The first flight from England to Australia in 1919 is examined as a narrative in and about Australia and its relation to a metropolitan world system, but one that had to negotiate a geography of past and present, Empire and nation.

In order to set out the aesthetics of technology in the urban experience that places the airport at its centre, Chapter Three, ‘The Engineer and the Architect’, contextualises the figure of the planner as both architect and engineer in the early twentieth century. Debates about the ‘machine aesthetic’ indicate a spatialised politics that can be read through the site of the airport. The writings of Le Corbusier are read as a plan for building a ‘city of circulation’, as he sought to extend the machine aesthetic to the city, thereby rationalising and managing the urban through an ‘industrialisation’ of space. The desire to ‘cure’ the problems of the city through technocracy is also read as symbolic management of a world increasingly fluid in its boundaries and possibilities. Some local contestations of this ‘cure’ are indicated, specifically in the struggles over the site of the aerodrome in the early 1920s, when it was taken over by the federal government.

Chapter Four, ‘Air Heroism and the Impossible Aviatrix’, speculates on the gendered nature of these narratives of modernity. Using Mary Russo’s articulation -- via Bakhtin -- of the crucial connections between the sublime and the (female) grotesque, the chapter focuses on the portrayal of women aviators. The story of Amy Johnson, the first woman to fly to Australia in 1930, is closely examined through representations of her flight, and her association with Sydney as a modern capital city. The aviatrix is suggested to be a figure who complicates the infinity, vastness and transcendence associated with experiences of the sublime, and who illustrates some important disjunctures between the narratives of modernism and feminism. The chapter suggests that the aviatrix was a ‘border creature’ existing in the contested zone of women’s modernity. Especially through certain tendencies to represent the female aviator in excessive and grotesque form and for male aviators to be represented as heroic and sublime, I argue that she embodied certain anxieties about the promises of modernity, that are considered through discussion of the modernist homology between women and technology.
Part two, *On the Very Threshold of Space: 1939–1959*, begins with a discussion of the convergence of military power and the national organisation of everyday aviation in Chapter Five, ‘War, Everyday’. This chapter elucidates the changed relationship between home, nation and international space that was effected through a constitution of Australian home as a defensible site. I closely examine the changing relationships between national borders and domestic space, to argue that the reorganisation of everyday life during this period not only attempted to construct the suburban home as the national home, but also produced the domestic as a profoundly extroverted and exogenous place. The break with the earlier geo-political connection with the British Empire is emphasised through an examination representations of a decentred world in the discourse on ‘air politics’.

Chapter Six, ‘The man in the glass tower’, describes the role of urban circulation in the policy of post-war reconstruction. This is specifically examined through a study of the figure of the air traffic controller, who was posed as a solution to the problem of an intensification of flows of air traffic into Sydney. The ‘air meets surface’ equation was a central concern of the post-war airport expansion, and government documents from this time reveal an assumption that national air space would take precedence over local claims to the areas surrounding the airport. As part of the airport expansion plans, a series of evictions in 1950, conducted when housing pressures in Sydney were at their greatest, are explored as an example of the establishment of this state power over planning.

Following these conflicts and confluences between the local, the national and the global, the arrival of the ‘jet age’ is examined in the texts discussed in Chapter Seven, ‘An exciting new sound’. The anticipation and actual introduction of jet flights at Mascot in July 1959 coalesced local and national desires as mutually exclusive. While the massive noise and air pollution of the new planes fell short of the ‘jet age’ dreams of silent, smoothly functioning technologies promoted in the 1950s, the airlines and some politicians continued to deny the impact of the sound of the jet engines. This chapter argues a certain attitude to progress actually influenced how the sound of the jet was described and managed. A discourse of acoustic sublimity was elaborated by the positioning of jets as wondrous and beyond humanity. The jets were thus seen a method
of access to the sublime environment of ‘outer space’ and marked jet travel as the realisation of a narrative of spatial conquest. The heated competition between Sydney and Melbourne to be the most ‘modern’ city and ‘get the jets first’ further articulated this narrative of economic progress through spatial movement. But reports from aviation experts during this period expressed fears that, complicating this sublimity, the jets might suffer from ‘mechanical halitosis’.

The third section, *Strangers within the gates*, operates in two parts. The first part, Chapter Eight, ‘The new internation’, examines in detail the arrival of Queen Elizabeth to open the new international terminal in 1970. During this event, the colonisation of air and land were unashamedly brought together: the terminal opening on 3 May was staged immediately after and alongside the 29 April celebrations of the arrival at Botany Bay of colonial explorer Captain Cook, two hundred years earlier. The terminal’s design is analysed to reflect the new cosmopolitan public space that the airport was seen to represent for an increasingly mobile society. The introduction of bars, lounges, shopping arcades is demonstrated to represent a domestication of the terminal within the urban, and a smooth transition from building to aircraft is emphasised through the architecture of the ‘aero-bridge’. However, despite this dedication to the future progress of the nation during this period, the articulation of past and present at the site of the airport in a narrative of arrival brings the colonial moment into play with modernist space. The colonisation of Australia is here a fetishised ritual, representing a disavowed, yet foundational moment that -- no matter how far in space and time it is imagined to be from ‘the modern’ -- is the ground of all spatial practice in post-coloniality.

The spatial history of the airport, and its constant re-incorporation within narratives of modernity, is a violent example of this, but also offers the potential for further questioning of urban and national belongings. Despite the economic and symbolic investment in the new terminal in the 1970s, by 1982, the airport’s capacity was seen to be exceeded by demand. Anticipating local resistance to further development, a series of Federal Government commissioned public relations strategies were composed to persuade the residents of Sydney that such development was a communal necessity, exemplified by one of the proposed campaign slogans: “We all need a third Runway”.
These texts prepare the ground for the final chapter, which is a discussion of the dislocations that this focus on total modernism of economic progress develops.

Concluding this section, Chapter Nine, ‘The Politics of Dislocation, examines events during and after the building of the third runway. The material discussed in this chapter questions this totalising vision and instead examines some texts that juxtapose the local with the inter/national and the private with the public in a dialectical, historical relationship. Through the example of the recent Australian film The Castle -- about a family who refuse to move from their house to make way for airport expansion -- this chapter looks at how this film represents an alternative geography of Australian domestic space in global society. Finally, through a close reading of a project that is designed to replace a suburban area demolished because of its proximity to the airport, the notion of homesickness is explored as emblematic of the cultural anxiety of modernist travel stories. However, most revealingly, homesickness for those who have been displaced by the airport is posed as an impossible, grotesque gesture, realised in the imaginary urban landscape proposed for the site.

This concluding chapter examines the implications of the preceding analysis for the particular case of Sydney’s airport, but also more broadly for the crises in modernity that it seeks to uncover. The diffusion of processes of globalisation into the very fabric of cities is read as a tense and tension-building phenomenon, complicating and deferring the sense of locality that paradoxically is needed to understand ‘the global’. However, between the technophilia and technophobia that the thesis has explored there could be a possibility for re-configuring relations between dwelling, travelling and engagements with ‘other’ spaces. Finally, it is suggested that critical spaces do exist for negotiating these contradictory and multiple uses of urban environments. They are spaces that haunt the techno-colonial and remind us of what modernity tries, most unsuccessfully, to abandon.
Chapter One:

Locations and Definitions

Check-in: histories and images

In Emmanuel Angelicas' photograph, a teenage boy sits on a chair on a rooftop overlooking a sea of rusted rooves, chimneys and telegraph poles. The boy holds a model plane, perhaps one that he has put together himself. The title of the photograph (and a title I have 'borrowed' for this thesis) explains where and when the photograph was taken, and the subject's relationship to this place: 'Person who would rather not be in Marrickville, Sydney 1985'. (See Fig 1.1 on following page.)

Since the photographer first exhibited it in 1985, this image has been displayed in Sydney's cultural institutions, as well as outside them many times. The image of the boy under the flight path has been projected onto the exterior of the city's buildings, on banners, posters and postcards. Its meanings have increasingly been organised by the sites and contexts of its reception, especially as the photo has been used within debates about the development and planning of Sydney airport. The uses of this image to comment on and intervene in decisions about the airport's management and location have thus placed the suburbs under the flight path, of which Marrickville is one, alongside the location of the airport in the city.

Reappearing rather more frequently after the opening of the airport's third runway in 1994, the photo was recognised as 'art' when it appeared on posters and hoardings for 'Sydney Photographed', an exhibition at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) over the summer of 1994-1995 and on the front cover of the book accompanying the exhibition (Fig 1.2).1 In the year after that exhibition, the photograph, together with other images from Angelicas' Marrickville series, was featured in a 'photo-documentary' show at the State Library of NSW, titled 'Recent Images of Everyday Life'.2 And in its most explicit connection with criticism of the

---

Fig 1.1

'Person who would rather not be in Marrickville', Marrickville, Australia, 1985. Photographer, Emmanuel Angelicas. Reproduced by kind permission of the artist.
airport’s development, the image was used to advertise a play called ‘Plane Truth’, by Marrickville-based theatre company ‘Sidetrack’. Sidetrack’s publicity promoted the performance as ‘a requiem for democracy, an interrupted story about political deceit and its effects’. During the play’s season in 1996 the photo was especially visible on banners suspended over the main streets of Marrickville and nearby suburbs. It also was given away on free post-cards that gave a critical subtitle to the ‘Plane Truth’: ‘a spectacle about an airport and other low-flying acts’.3

This photograph embodies so many layers of experience in one moment; it seems hardly surprising that it has appeared in so many contexts. Although it was taken nearly ten years before the opening of the third runway, the ability of the image to speak to the continuing tensions of contemporary urban environments has allowed it a seemingly inexhaustible ability to represent the experiences of people who live near the airport. And in the case of the MCA exhibition it was used to stand for the experience of living in Sydney, to define a sense of urban place and time (see Fig 1.2).

Despite the politics of location implicit in the photograph, its author has said that he was not making a ‘political’ statement with this photo, that it was ‘just a photo of his brother-in-law’.4 Because of the presence of the jet in the top left-hand corner of the photo, however, this image offers much more than a portrait of an individual person and place. The jet plane, with its landing gear down, heads out of the frame of the photograph and towards a point, always just over the horizon. The fighter plane that the boy holds may be a private symbol of boyhood technics, but the plane is a public event. The momentarily arrested movement of the plane out of the photo’s frame diverges from the movement made by the boy’s arm as he pushes his propeller plane through the air above his roof. The roofline also points towards the plane’s destination. These visual trajectories draw the eye from foreground, past the in-between of the rooves and telegraph poles, eventually to a void: the sublime cloudscape of a some-place ‘just over the horizon’. The inclusion of the plane in the ‘background’ of the boy’s portrait decentres this image, and starts to explain why someone would rather not be in Marrickville.

The boy has reached the upper limit of his living environment. He is perched on a roof, one of the few places that a horizon can be seen in densely built inner-suburban Sydney. The ‘natural’ environment is visible only in a line of trees that loom on the left-hand side of the horizon. The boy, unnamed except as a ‘person who would

3 Sidetrack Performance Group, Plane Truth, a spectacle about an airport and other low-flying acts, unpublished script for a performance work by SPG with the Sidereal Project and program, Marrickville, April 1996.
4 Emmanuel Angelicas, personal communication, Sydney, September 1996.
rather not be in Marrickville', could be any child dreaming of technologies of escape: fast cars, planes, motorbikes. The 'pretend' plane he holds in his hand appears from childhood games and fantasies of ultimate power and speed, of worlds that can be endlessly reimagined and reconstituted as they are needed for particular stories. Within the borders of the image, the 'real' plane thundering overhead (and this photograph evokes senses other than the 'purely' visual) appears toylike as well. Both of the planes are not just mute objects, but also vehicles of desire, technologies of space production. Sometimes this phantasmic geography can only be delineated from the 'real' to the 'play' by virtue of scale. When placed alongside the jet, the boy's toy plane miniaturises the mobility of a world of global migration and communication. An interplay between distant contemplation of the gigantic realm of transport technology and the intimate presence of the miniature world of children's toys figures this desire for mobility that emerges within the topography of the modern suburb. Here, the citizen's freedom to travel meets a childlike modality of energetic experimentation with bodily limits and experiences. But in the encounter between the 'real' plane and the model this imaginary is historicised and embodied. The 'space above' signified by the jumbo jet becomes contested by the presence of the boy and the photo's caption. The inclusion of the plane explains the caption and creates the possibility of not being in Marrickville, Sydney, Australia in 1985.

locations and definitions

And the voice said:
Well you don't know me,
but I know you
And I've got a message to give to you.
    Here come the planes
So you better get ready. Ready to go. You can come
as you are, but pay as you go...
They're American planes. Made in America.
Smiling or non-smoking? 5

The photograph with which I preface this chapter obviously offers some explanation of the kind of split-level experience that comes from living under a flight path, where the new technoscape of a 'world city' overlays the older neighbourhoods and buildings of a colonial city. While the 'world-scale' of the airport marginalises and backgrounds domestic space, by picturing these two separate zones simultaneously the photograph manages to problematise both suburban belonging and the global

world of international travel and business. This move from the grandiose and self-contained world of aviation to the ephemeral moment of childhood play precariously recuperates the transformative potential of fantasy within the global everyday. In reading this photograph through these reversals and exaggerated dimensions this thesis draws on the work of two authors who brought such theoretical reflection to bear on popular cultural practice. The writings of Walter Benjamin and Mikhail Bakhtin have informed many studies of the relationships between the representation of space and spatial practices that re-order and contest regimes of representation.6

This study operates firstly from Mikhail Bakhtin’s understanding of cultural forms and social formations as mutually dependent, decenred or ‘dialogic’ and thus available to contestation through ‘metaphors of transformation’. Starting out within a cultural studies tradition influenced by the translation of Bakhtin’s works into English in the 1970s and 80s, my method involves close attention to the production of bodily experiences and metaphorical spaces in modernity. For Bakhtin, the emergence of the cultural form of the novel signalled the displacement of the authority of the single author and unified voice. In its place, Bakhtin offered the possibility of a ‘sociological poetics’ that situates meaning as always in contestation and interaction between utterance and response. Of most relevance here, Bakhtin’s study of the struggle between Medieval and Renaissance discourses in the works of François Rabelais posited the development of this poetics from folkloric methods of contrast. These dialogic practices sought to negate the powers and aims of key institutions (the church, the monarchy, the state) by humour, parody, and abuse, while at the same time working towards change and renewal of political structures. This ‘world turned upside down’ operated in popular cultural representations that mobilised moments of contact between the dominant and the dominated, exaggerated differences to the point of impossibility, and most potently, inverted hierarchies and cherished oppositions. This philosophical deployment of the ‘hybridity’ of the grotesque as a profoundly intermixed category in Bakhtin’s writing is paralleled by his empirical focus on its manifestations in historical and contemporary cultural practices that spectacularise the interrelationship between the small and the large, the individual and the public. Above all, a problematising of official culture is worked through in transformative imitations and symbolic play.

Bakhtin termed these aesthetic practices ‘grotesque realism’. During carnival as a licensed period of play, grotesque realism works against political forces that seek to privilege seriousness, unification, purity, and completeness. Bakhtin identified grotesque realism’s specific dynamics as a transposition of opposites, turning the ‘inside out’, substituting the ‘high’ and the ‘low’ in a ‘positive negation’. Through the hyperbole, exaggeration and fantastic embodiments of grotesque realism the collective could temporarily seize the symbols of official culture, from which it had been excluded, in order to transform it from its margins. In Bakhtin’s analysis, grotesque realism works both graphically and spatially by making the top and bottom change places, thus intentionally mixing hierarchical levels “in order to discover the core of the object’s concrete reality, to free it from its shell and to show its material bodily aspect”.

The literary critic and poet Susan Stewart in her book On Longing uses Bakhtin to analyse both contemporary and historical material, arguing that carnival persists in modern culture and incorporates such elements of fantasy as immanent critique. Her analysis of metaphor as ‘experiment with scale and the fantastic’ detects grotesque realism, not just in carnival ritual, but in consumption of everyday objects. Stewart composes her book from the appearances in literature and everyday life of the miniature and the gigantic, and the ‘reality ordering’ practices of the souvenir and the collection. Stewart perceives the exaggeratedly small, miniature object as metaphorical of the private, interiorised space and time of the bourgeois subject and the exaggeratedly large, gigantic body as metaphor for the abstract authority of state and public life. Political speech and rhetoric, for example, replay these metaphors in describing the masses (the big picture, the silent majority); or corporate power (big business, ‘the big Australian’). The disconnection between the large and the small -- in this instance figured as the separation between the governmental space of the airport and the privatised zone of the ordinary person -- can be discerned in statements such as the response of former Labor Transport minister Laurie Brereton’s response to a question by a local council representative at a ‘consultative meeting’ on the airport: “I’ve got eighty planes an hour to land, I’m not interested in the small picture”.

---


9 Comment reported by St Peters-Sydenham Neighbourhood Centre member on meeting with Brereton and deputy mayor of Marrickville during June 1995, at Community Consultative Meeting, Petersham Town Hall, 31 June 1995.
The unfolding of this dimensionally opposed and extremist spatial imagination can be traced through many texts, as my analysis of representations of the airport shows. This quest for spatial domination always holds the potential for its own symbolic contaminations and crossings precisely because it works through such extremism and exclusion. Angelicas’ deliberate undoing of the political separation between the ‘small’ and the ‘big’ picture is one clue to how this might work. The toy plane is a ‘narrated object’ of the personal in relation to the social; a manipulable, domesticated version of the ultimate contemporary experience of the gigantic, the experience of flight.

In her study Stewart notices further that the modern child’s toy resonates with the privatised mechanical models which appeared at the same time as public mechanised labour (and publicly mechanised death, in miniature guillotines):

Such automated toys find their strongest modern successors in “models” of ships, trains, airplanes, and automobiles, models of the products of mechanised labor. These toys are nostalgic in a fundamental sense, for they completely transform the mode of production of the original as they miniaturize it; they produce a representation of a product of alienated labor, a representation which itself is constructed by artisanal labor. . . . As private forms, these models must be contrasted to the public forms of display and recreation which have from the beginning marked the advertisement of industrial products.10

Here, the use of Bakhtin’s work to analyse industrial culture is enabled, underpinned and elaborated by Stewart through the work of Walter Benjamin. Benjamin’s studies of the city and the technologisation of consciousness emerged, like Bakhtin, from literary studies and the philosophy of discourse, but extended beyond linguistic concerns to engage a critical consciousness with the materiality of everyday life. This emerges most forcefully in Benjamin’s uncompleted major work, the ‘Arcades Project’ that, through an analysis of images and literary fragments of the nineteenth century built form of the Paris Arcades, “took seriously the debris of mass culture as the source of philosophical truth”.11 Benjamin, struck by the ‘Elephantism’, or overblown dimensions, of state-sponsored displays of urbanism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century at the same time as the popular fascination with children’s literature and toys after the first World War, sought to contextualise these two extremes states of bodily experience as constructed by individual relationships to massive social change:

10 Stewart, On Longing, p. 58.
It is a familiar image, the family gathered under the Christmas tree, the father deep in play with a train set which he just gave as a gift to his child, while the son stands nearby crying. If such a need to play overcomes the adult, that is no unbroken fallback into childishness. Children, surrounded by a giant world, manage play with things their size. But the man whom reality positions differently, threateningly, with no way out, robs the world of its terror through reduced size copy.\(^\text{12}\)

Although the miniature is a key to transcending worldly ‘terror’, Benjamin did not see the notion of play and the persistence of the mimetic faculty in adults as either pure or innocent. Benjamin was keen to negate any Romantic view of the play of children as signifying a stage of innocence and pre-adult truths: “One comes upon the terrifying, the grotesque, the grim side of the child’s life. Even if pedagogues are still hanging onto Rousseauean dreams, writers like Ringelstein and painters like Klee have grasped the despotic and inhuman side of children.”\(^\text{13}\) In a concrete and tangible way, the boy in Marrickville sets in tension our most modern terrors and pleasures through contact between ‘real’ plane and the model. The space of the gigantic and the miniature co-exist, as does the boyish fantasy of pure mobility with the violence of military technology and the ever-present threat of disaster from the plane falling out of the sky (the model plane is a fighter). According to Stewart, not only does the subject achieve a transformation of his or her world through the miniature, but the miniature also transforms the subject: “In approaching the miniature, our bodies erupt into a confusion of before-unrealised surfaces. We are able to hold the miniature object within our hand, but our hand is no longer in proportion with its world; instead our hand becomes a form of undifferentiated landscape, the body as a kind of background.”\(^\text{14}\)

This dimensional confusion is one of the identifying characteristics of modern spatial experience. The expansion of fields of perception in modernity offers the possible the mediation, incorporation and inhabitation of extravagantly expanded and impossibly minute spaces at the same time, of simultaneous macro- and microscopic views of the world. This blending and confusion of spaces through representation has been of great concern to a philosophy that seeks to understand the profound transformations that technologically mediated experience has had on human consciousness, and the concomitant problematising of location that this expanded field of perception engenders. Hannah Arendt in her essay, ‘The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man’, published in 1963, enquired at the height of the era of State-sponsored space exploration whether this phenomenon gigantified or miniaturised


\(^{13}\) Benjamin quoted in Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing, pp. 458-459.

\(^{14}\) Stewart, On Longing, p. 70.
humans. Her central question was “Has man’s conquest of space increased or diminished his stature?”:

To understand physical reality seems to demand not only the renunciation of an anthropocentric or geocentric world view, but also a radical elimination of all anthropomorphic elements and principles, as they arise either from the world given to the five human senses or from the categories inherent in the human mind.¹⁵

In this new age of dimensions beyond commonsense, this thesis posits the production and negotiation of locality as a form of survival. Frederic Jameson’s notion of ‘hyperspace’ -- a space that has transcended the capacities of the human body to locate itself -- is a powerful concept but must be historically situated within the will to the conquest of space that Arendt describes.¹⁶

The technoscape that Arendt alludes to, of machine perceptions of distant space, is visibly traced by the jet travelling over the roof in Marrickville, but it has only been available to certain groups in the 1990s. Though they might actually prefer to be somewhere else, not all the ‘home’ subjects who are flown over by the planes have the option of ‘being elsewhere’. The sense of erasure of status for suburban dwellers, that lacking the access to the grand scale of economic power, of always being in the ‘small picture’, keeps recurring in discussions about the airport -- discussions that intend to pose a monologism that separates, opposes, and eventually privileges the gigantic over the personal, allowing the technological imperative a larger force than city planning, and the future to be gravitational field faster, greater, more fluid than the past.

Far from being a closed, unified space, this thesis argues that ‘home’ in ‘hyperspace’ becomes the place where through which the world is negotiated. At ‘home’ the modernist sublime is domesticated, managed, put into proportion, if this were possible. Marrickville, as a suburb of a global city, and partly because of low house prices due to the flight path, has been characterised by high rates of settlement by non-Anglo--Celtic migrants, especially Greek and Vietnamese people -- as well as Anglo cosmopolitans. Such a place is an always already worldly home, where one always has a consciousness of ‘other places’ and a desire to be elsewhere. As Angelicas has described the place he was trying to picture in his series of

Marrickville photographs of which this image is part: “Marrickville is about television, video, religion, sex, unemployment and wogs.”17

A ‘person who would rather not be in Marrickville’ has a home that he stands outside of, at its edges (or above), thus dwelling in an thoroughly open relationship with the world. This is signified in the photograph by the plane in the boy’s hand -- a miniature vehicle of modernity. The connectivities, channels, linkages, and trajectories of global mediascapes, viewed and consumed in the home, domesticated in their plots and reception, present the option of ‘not being in Marrickville’. This imbrication of global space within the domestic is a crucial moment that shows up the formation of both dimensions within structures of power and domination. It is this overlap and intermingling between the high and the low, the grand and the modest, that both Benjamin and Bakhtin’s theorisations of representation and social space in modernity explain and recover for our times.

cityscape, mediascape, technoscape

As a volatile image, this photograph has truly inhabited what Arjun Appadurai calls the mediascape, the publicity-advertising-documentary imaginary that traverses domestic and urban environments in the late twentieth century. Appadurai’s work is useful here because it examines exactly this question that falls between media and cultural studies: how the mediascape intersects with other ‘-scapes’ such as those of migration, technology, capital, and ideas. In this thesis, as indicated by the title, I am measuring the confluences and disjunctures of the technological environment of aeriality with the built environment of the suburb, as they have been mediated through the mediascape.18

By investigating the mediascape within the urban, I assess how useful current theories of geography and history are for modelling processes of representation; as they are processes of political representation. In order to approach such field of knowledge as heterogeneous and in flux, I refer to Theodor Adorno’s model of theorising culture as a constellation.19 Instead of assuming a ‘step-by-step progression’ to a more abstract and ‘supreme principle’ or ‘more general cover concept’ the theoretical process “enter[s] into a constellation”.

---

17 Emmanuel Angelicas, Max Pam (ed.), Australian Visions, p. 149.
As a constellation, theoretical thought circles the concept it would like to unseal, hoping that it may fly open like the lock of well-guarded safe-deposit box: in response, not to a single key or a single number, but to a combination of numbers.\textsuperscript{20}

A constellation also indicates a set of moving entities that only come into relation with one another for a moment, before social forces may shift the fixed points of constellation and thus the concept out of this temporary frame. The trope of the constellation, most importantly, suggests that it is only in the space between theoretical thought and everyday practices that meaning emerges, that conceptual categories only come together “around a concrete historical facticity, one that opens itself up in connection with their moments, in its one-time-only uniqueness”.\textsuperscript{21} This connection between fact and theory emerges from and within Walter Benjamin’s “attempt to bridge the gap between everyday experience and traditional academic concerns, to achieve [a] phenomenological hermeneutics of the profane world”.\textsuperscript{22}

Throughout this project I will be drawing on works that critically engage and theorise this space in-between: starting out from Walter Benjamin and Mikhail Bakhtin’s critical phenomenologies of the everyday I seek to stage an encounter and re-examination of the relationships between image and architecture, technology and the city. It is this space between these symbolic, social and material forces that is at the heart of this thesis.

The point surrounded by this constellation is the encounter of the ‘space above’ and the ‘space below’, mediated through the built form of the urban network. This meeting is coalesced as a fragment of experience in Emmanuel Angelicas’ photograph, but extends this focus on the representation of experience to a series of ‘airport tales’. These stories narrate a place at the edge of the ‘global’. They locate urban and suburban subjects in conjunction with the internationalised, globalised, abstract space of the world economy. This photograph starts in train a close inspection of the legal and political realisation of this ‘space above’ through discourse, documents and images. The rarefied space of national and governmental progress works through the exclusion and ‘othering’ of spaces that both circumvent and substantiate its powers. These minor and fragmentary stories about the airport point to the existence of a ‘lived’ space somewhere between local and global, as well as illuminating many of its complexities. This point is a gap in the records of modernity, only knowable from a local perspective that challenges the panoptic claims of any totalising view.

\textsuperscript{20} Adorno, \textit{Negative Dialectics}, p. 163.

\textsuperscript{21} Adorno quoted in Buck-Morss, \textit{The Dialectics of Seeing}, p. 67.

\textsuperscript{22} Buck-Morss, \textit{The Dialectics of Seeing}, p. 3.
This lived space is also a point from which it is possible to question a certain vision of globalisation as a force ‘compressing’ and ‘miniaturising’ geographical space, and further, to separate such misleading representations from the actual and very real effects that global space has on local situations. In order to better understand the means by which ‘home’ is negotiated as a concrete, material network of objects and affects in contemporary society, this thesis draws on the work of critical geographers such as Scott Kirsch, whose theorisations of global/local spatialities signal a re-reading of the local not as a thing or essence, but as ‘lived’ and practised space:

That the technologies of accumulation [sic] are inexorably linked to an accumulation of technology necessitates these shifts in the boundaries of ‘nature’ – felt characteristically by the advent of global scale space impinging on what we know as local – is too nuanced a process, and too important to be summed up through the recycled metaphors of ‘the incredible shrinking world’ ... These metaphors... work abstractly... the local scale is presented as ‘dead space’ onto which the global is collapsing.23

As suggested by Kirsch and Appadurai, the mediascape offers a somewhere that the notion of the local as ‘dead space’ is contested and critically reconstituted in practice. Walter Benjamin, like his contemporary Bakhtin, was attuned to such moments of transformation. Both authors sought out the potential for alternative social organisation in cultural forms. Benjamin aphorised this process of the decomposition of the global within the local simply: history decomposes into images.24 This suggests that a kind of narrative entropy operates in modernity, that discourses are complex, unstable forces that will coalesce around points of resistance or instability and disappearance: “To articulate the past historically... means to seize hold of a memory as if flashes up at a moment of danger.”25 This fragmentation of master narratives explains much about the public recurrence of this photograph, and its cohesion with events taking place in the everyday life of the city. This is aerial photography, not as in ‘taken from the air’, but a practiced vision that plays with and interrupts discourses about place, movement, location -- discourses that centre around the notion of ‘aeriality’ as a will to pure mobility, a key dynamic of modern life, and grounds this will in a historical moment.

This project seeks to understand vision and hearing as active, meaning-making, socially constituted processes. While their terms and eras of analysis were different,

an understanding of cultural production as marked by duality and ambivalence is common to both Bakhtin and Benjamin. Bakhtin described all meaning, existence, communication as ‘dialogic’, that is, all meaning is produced by unique, temporally and historically embedded signifying processes. Communication here is never perfect, but always formed by, and in turn produces, intertextual relationships. The term ‘monologic’ in Bakhtin’s writing “refers to any discourse which seeks to deny the dialogic nature of existence, which refuses to recognise its responsibility as addressee, and pretends to be the ‘last word’”.26 When Benjamin posited all representation as ‘dialectic’, he reworked the Hegelian dialectic as moving towards a resolution of difference through the incorporation of oppositions in the familiar plot of ‘thesis--antithesis--synthesis’. Benjamin’s elaboration of the dialectical image is a ‘way of seeing’ that refuses vision as process of completion, resolution, cohesion, transcendence and finality. Instead, Benjamin emphasises the excess of representation: a lack of social cohesion mirrored in texts that articulate moments of dissonance and simultaneity. Susan Buck-Morss usefully explains that for Benjamin:

> These images were to provide a critical understanding of modernity by juxtaposing, “stereoscopically”, images of two time dimensions, his own world and its nineteenth century origins, according to the cognitive principles of montage... Unlike Hegel’s logic, it is “dialectics at a standstill”: “Where thought comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions, there appears the dialectical image. It is the caesura in the movement of thought. Its positioning, of course, is in no way arbitrary. In a word it is to be sought at the point where the tension between the dialectical oppositions is the greatest.”27

Through this common understanding of the repressions and exclusions of difference in cultural production both Bakhtin and Benjamin anticipated contemporary post-structuralist and deconstructive theories of thought as ultimately interrupted and troubled by a lack of self-identity. As Susan Buck-Morss comments, however, this impurity of thought and image in Benjamin’s writing is far from eternal, purely ‘aesthetic’ or ‘arbitrary’.28 The apolitical stance of deconstruction negates the transformative potential of dialectical representations, and limits ideological work to the text apart from and outside of social history. Attendant to the intersections between texts, images and their social context, Benjamin instead sought out the revolutionary potential of mass culture. Such an opportunity to centre mass cultural forms within sites of their production was exemplified for Benjamin in the cultural form of montage. Montage as practiced by photomonteurs such as John Heartfield, reconfigured content of popular culture as signs ‘out of place’, torn from

---

their original, mass-produced context and reinserted into publication and sites of display. Montage -- a French word meaning 'put together' or edited -- complicated the professed unity of images and introduced the sense of temporal and spatial simultaneity of cinema into photography. As outlined in his brilliant exposition of the relationship between cultural forms and political formations, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', Benjamin believed that in film, the technical and signifying practices of the modern work of art merged, bringing together form and content: "discontinuous images dissolve into one another in a continuous series". In the service of avant-garde socio-political movements, artists used montage to produce images that included comical or satirical captions. Such captions set text against image, word against object, contradicting their claims to singularity. The ultimate aim and achievement of montage was to make "visible the gap between sign and referent".

The connection between Bakhtin’s dialogical thought, operating through symbolic transgression and contestation in zone of the carnivalesque, and Benjamin’s materialist philosophy of history, thought through the detritus of the nineteenth century city of Paris, meet in contemporary spaces of travel and consumption in post-industrial cities like airports. Benjamin’s writings in the 1930s sought to define exactly how these new public spaces also produced new spatial practices. Benjamin’s unfinished Passagen-Werk or Arcades Project, sought to understand how the design of the arcades -- "the original temple of commodity capitalism" -- contained within its incitement to wandering and disconnection an emphasis on spatial transitoriness and ephemerality. In the arcades, the optical (visual) montage effects discussed above were also paralleled by haptic (tactile) montage because of the ways in which a walk through the arcades linked together and distributed within the same site many incompatible and fantastic spaces. These ‘passages’ that linked one shop to another, streets to shops, one time to another, created a perambulatory montage effect that could break the commodity free of “the phantasmagoria of politics". As well as taking ‘place’ in the arcades, this phantasmagoria worked through the spectacular presentation of the wonders of modernity in urbanist events such as ‘World Expositions’.

The new sites brought all urban classes into contact with each other and, in so doing, gave rise to new identities that were embodied in a series of publicly visible and representable figures: the flâneur, the sandwichman, the street-corner-boy, the

30 Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing, p. 66.
ragpicker, the dandy, the prostitute. These new figures, specularised and ‘botanised’ on the asphalt of the big city represented new kinds of metropolitan subjectivity. These figures of modernity expressed changed relationships between individual time and public time in the increasing speed of urban traffic, as well as the changing relationships between individual labour and public displays of commodities in big cities. For Benjamin, these new figures embodied new human capacities and reactions to stimuli in the metropolitan street, as he described the new ‘haptic’ and ‘optic’ environment of the big city: “Moving through this traffic involves the individual in a series of shocks or collisions.” The effect of these shocks and collisions was the development of new subjectivities, as modern “technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training”. It is important to note that these figures, especially the flâneur and the prostitute were excessive and hyperbolic subjects, as they expressed the pathologies of modern life. The flâneur was not a ‘real’ person but a figure who performed an implausible relationship to modern life. Because the flâneur ‘domesticated’ public space -- “The street becomes a dwelling for the flâneur; he is much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen in his four walls” -- he expressed the ambiguity of social relationships and products of modernity. The figure of the prostitute coalesced discourses about working-class women’s biological deviancy and fears of their newly-found visibility in public space. As Guilana Bruno has argued, such representations of the female prostitute in the metropolis reveals as much about the category of ‘normal’ femininity as she does about real women who made money from prostitution: “it is the only activity that may satisfy the desire for idleness, license, and indecency”. The arcades, both “house and stars”, and the prostitute, both “saleswoman and wares”, housed and performed the utopian time of modernity in one image, a dialectical one. Benjamin thought that these new urban displays harnessed the powers of carnival to industrial production to convince the proletariat that material progress equalled social progress, yet these events also placed the urban beyond the reach of any single individual or interest group and actually produced the collective architectures of mass culture. Benjamin’s focus on the contradictions between individual

---

33 Benjamin, ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’, p. 175.
34 Benjamin, ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’, p. 175.
37 Bruno, Streetwalking on a ruined map, p. 71.
consumption within these new public spaces and the evocation of private desires within governmental and industrial spatial forms acts as a counterpoint to Bakhtin's tendency to over-estimate the transgressive potential of the marketplace. The latter's study of the language of the marketplace in Rabelais, according to one of the major contemporary studies of post-Renaissance carnival, dangerously emphasised:

the open, extraterritorial space of the marketplace, ‘outside’ of the official local hierarchy and its languages and ‘within’ the popular festive body: it is the grotesque body at home with itself, evading the spatial constraints of the public-building (the Church, the Law-Court) and the private house. Partly because he associated it with the utopian, ‘no-place’ of collective hopes and desires, Bakhtin simplified the paradoxical, contradictory space of the market and the fair as a place-beyond-place, a pure outside.39

Far from eliding or resolving such paradoxes and contradictions, Benjamin’s fascination with the arcades circulated around exactly these ambivalences to the market-place in industrialised culture. He oscillated between understanding such spaces of consumption as either mythical places that stood ‘outside’ capitalist production and rationality, or as deeply implicated in the welding of commodity fetishism to political regression, in Fascism. Truly a new phenomenon in its “cosmic proportions, monumental solidarity, and panoramic perspectives…” the new urban phantasmagoria of Fascist Germany “dwarfed the original arcades and eclipsed them”.40 Thus Benjamin argued in ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’ that it would only be through the excavation of ‘counterimages’ and the elaboration of a ‘retrospective’ view of history that notions of history as a continuum could be challenged. Rather than the forward-looking discourse of progress, a vision that left modernism blind to its own destruction, Benjamin believed a ‘materialistic historiography’ that inserted the moment of ‘shock’ and interrupted the stable identity of the present would pose a serious challenge to the monologic drive of the “futurist myth of historical progress”.41

Walter Benjamin’s explicitly modernist historical imagination, then, sought to embrace and fascinate the critic with visual phenomena as a source of historical disruption. As Buck-Morss eloquently interprets Benjamin, the logic of dialectical image “does not form a discursive system in the Hegelian sense. The moment of sublimation reveals itself visually, in an instantaneous flash wherein the old is illuminated precisely at the moment of its disappearance”.42 With a mind to such a

39 Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, p. 29.
42 Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing, p. 146.
rethinking of the totalising tendencies of any dialectical theorisation, I am seeking in this project to particularise its history in a structure of local desires: How do image-forms narrate history and present in the everyday representations of the airport in Sydney? How have the symbolic domains of home and travel, past and modernity, what is (heterotopia) and what should be (utopia) been intertwined in moments of experience realised into images? The images that I explore in this study as ‘dialectic’ contain both of Benjamin’s terminal points of dialectical tension: the wish-images and the ruins of modernity, the expression of utopian longings and the failure to fulfil those longings. I am also position myself as a both a critic and subject of everyday life in a mass mediated world. Angelicas’ description the image-world that informs his photographic practice speaks to this contemporary situation in terms of the multiple powers of images, and their communication to us across disconnected times and spaces:

As a child growing up in a Greek household, I had one piece of special magic in my bedroom, an incongruous one. The bedroom was an anarchy of cricket bats, football gear, posters of John Travolta, Blondie and the Balmain Rugby League team. However, above the head of my bed was a crucifix and above that a very old icon. This icon was brought by my mother from Olympia, her village. It was one of the very few possessions she stepped off the migrant ship with at Circular Quay. The icon, depicting Jesus in a posture of benediction, was ancient -- a family heirloom. The icon had a power of its own. It could with a strong ‘force of visual transmission’ reach out to me from far away times locked up in another world. Where had this icon been before? Olympia? What events had the icon seen?... I still have images in my mind, images that go to the heart of the matter and which push aside the intellect.

Such images out of time and out of place -- while they do go to the ‘heart’ of the matter and (thankfully) defy academic claims to a space of pure contemplation and thought outside emotions -- also mediate, reclaim and inform personal stories and histories. The power of the double(d) vision necessarily present in the dialectical image is one that acknowledges and re-presents these ‘lost’ dimensions, without mourning their passing. Here, a non-progressive inversion of here and now to there and then produces the possibility of the undoing of a completed self in a finished space and time when one chain of signification is visibly brought to intrude on another incompatible one. For Benjamin, these oppositions are not resolved in the image, but are productively engaged to create a space of questioning or problematisation. Such a process also fascinates an audience, as the observer has to be engaged with the image beyond a simple pedagogy of didactic instruction.

---

Instead these images reflect the tensions of the everyday life of the viewing subject, and seeps into the routines of the everyday. As other critical movements of the twentieth century have sought to demonstrate, it is necessary to understand the process of visual and textual representation as socially formed and any contestations over representation as indicative of social tensions. As the Situationist slogan of the ‘society of the spectacle’ indicates, the minimum unit of analysis is not the image itself, but the “social relationship between people that is mediated by images”. This study seeks to include representations of place in an analysis of spatiality. This relationship between place, politics and social representation is explored in the next section via a series of keywords that elaborate the relationship between signification and spatiality.

spaces, sites and symbols

location: terminal

International airports are a spatial form that has become a twentieth-century commonplace. That this airport happens to be in Sydney would seem not to matter: from the perspective of the weary long-distance traveller and theorist all airports are the same, all over the world. According to some recent social theory, the airport represents a space beyond, transcendent and opposed to authentic, local places. Here, the airport is seen as the end point of a process of globalisation, erasing history and the personal: a ‘something else’ “no longer family or neighbourhood, city or state, nor even nation”, eventually “as abstract and nonsituated as the placelessness of a room in an international chain of motels or the anonymous space or airport terminals that all run together in your mind”. However, this thesis argues against this separation between these ‘non-places’ and the neighbourhoods, cities, states and nations in which they appear. The form may be familiar—indeed places that are emblematic of modernity and are ‘everywhere else’, shopping malls, restaurants, train stations can be found, or are cited in airports—but the case made here contends that a history of the airport in Sydney reveals the specific and contingent nature of Sydney’s profoundly uneven development and argues that the reactions, protests and planning problems that the airport poses must be viewed within this local frame.

Where the airport is and how it got there are not the natural, logical outcomes of planning principles applied to a planning problem. The airport’s continued appearance as a site of conflict through out the twentieth century points to -- as Sharon Zukin saw in her study of the re-zoning of lofts for residential development in post-industrial New York -- “an underlying terrain that represents a space, a symbol and a site under contention by major social forces”.47 This uneven and unruly convergence of space, its representation and local form runs across the fault lines of urban change in the period under study in this thesis, as well as before and after it. As Zukin cautioned in the early 1980s, historical studies of site-specific urban struggles demonstrate patterns of change that point to larger, more complex debates about the goals of urbanism and modernism. Thus Zukin saw that for New Yorkers in the 1970s and 80s, “the market in living lofts appears as the newest battlefield in the struggle for control over the city”.48

**location : global**

In the case of Sydney airport, this struggle for control of the ‘city’ -- putting aside the question of whether there really is a singular ‘city’ -- has brought together a set of concentrated interests, mobilised at the interface of technology and spatiality. These interests have included at different times local residents, transnational companies, urban authorities and federal democratic institutions. Each of these entities have had their own internal debates and battles, but polarities have emerged that seem to categorise the players into anti-development ‘locals’ and boosterising ‘cosmopolitans’. The range of differences between and within diverse social practices and urban communities have been erased in the debates that have followed this convergence.

While these debates have raised important questions about the nature of globalisation and its differential benefits and fundamental iniquities have come under examination, any approach that opposes local ‘place’ to global ‘space’ will not get very far. This binary opposition simply does not work in the complex urban environment of world cities. Here it is increasingly difficult to untangle claims of locality from the parallel processes of gentrification, capital and development. In Sydney, these words have their own meaning that may not apply across other cities. And even within Sydney, locality means something different whether one is in the under-developed southern suburbs, the ‘unruly’ west or the affluent north. Any

---

stable definition of locality is hard to enact in an unevenly structured ex-colonial city fully launched into the global cultural economy.

Those that have most loudly protested about the airport have often been those who have been most involved in gentrification and in their enthusiasm for the city as a world centre, have displaced others who could not afford to live in such a city. Those who have silently moved away, losing not only their homes but their businesses and neighbourhoods, have not protested about the airport’s development for many reasons: either it was easier to move because they rented their houses; maybe they simply did not have the time or the words to express their opinions; or perhaps there were other issues that were more pressing; or for all of these reasons at once.

Something more fundamental and more contradictory was going on in all this exchange than an obvious debate that could be reduced to the simple opposition of ‘pro-airport=pro-global’ and ‘anti-airport=pro-local’. Even the very words that have been used as currency in the debate, words like ‘local’, ‘global’, ‘community’, ‘nation’, ‘economy’ seemed to lose their clarity and transparency and became unstable and troubling. Who were the locals? How are these boundaries to be drawn in the contemporary city? At what point should national dependence on a world system of economic development outweigh environmental degradation and people’s suffering? Who should make these decisions and on what criteria?

To begin to unravel the dimensions of this debate, Sharon Zukin’s articulation of three modes of spatiality offers a useful way to trace multilayered and multiaccentual shifts in urban forms: firstly, these are contestations over space, as it might be understood as a ‘domain’ or ‘field’; secondly, these are discussions of symbol, or the meanings, understandings and uses made of that domain and the values associated with it; and thirdly, these are disputes over site, as the actual ‘place’ where these abstractions are territorialised and thus brought into play with other spaces and symbols.

Here, the ‘space’ produced by the airport, and under contestation by different groups which have different and distinctly uneven access to it, is the globalised, international and transnational, abstract space of the world economy as a network of exchange. This space has a history within the context of economic processes of capitalist expansion and accumulation. Henri Lefebvre has characterised late modernity as ‘producing’ of a new kind of space, indicating that new spatial forms emerge alongside new economic and technological dispositions:

Yet, I do believe each epoch produces its own space. There was a space produced from the 1960s on; it was at a world scale, based on aeroplanes,
motorways, suburbs, peripheries, the disintegration of historic centres and conurbations.  

The symbol of the airport is where this world-scale space and social practices connect, where its abstractions are ‘made sense of’ and accorded a value as either good, bad or indifferent, either idealised or trivialised. And finally, the site of the airport is the concrete, material aspect of these practices, and where this space is ‘territorialised’ and made ‘real’. Changes to one level of this articulation will have effects on the other, and as the last section of the thesis will argue, will even produce alternative, parasitic sites that express a different order of relations between each of these levels.

This study examines a series of events that have constituted the presence of the airport physically ‘inside’ the city itself, and within its imaginary, to argue that ‘Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport’ can be seen as a site which has a complex and persistent relationship to the small and large communal entities in which it is situated; to the suburbs and neighbourhoods of Sydney, to Australia as a nation, and to Australia’s international aspirations as a global city. Thus, this messy history of space, site and symbol drawn out across time and space, shows that the airport both is both central and marginal to the network of social and material relations that is a world city such as Sydney.

It is symbolically marginal to the city in the sense that it is no monument built to inspire civic pride, nor does it illustrate some nation-founding event, like a statue or memorial to explorers or war hero might. The airport also is not a public building exhibiting a moral educative function such as a church, university, museum, arts centre, opera house or parliament. Neither is it an obviously spectacular and dazzling feat of modern engineering like a bridge or dam. It also seems anomalous to the kind of hyper-modern economy that is meant to characterise the late-twentieth century: flows of data rather than goods, an economy of information rather than things, and moves towards ‘virtual’ rather than ‘physical’ environments.

The airport is central, however, to the kind of structuring forces that surround and enable this economy: intense flows of people and goods (artefacts of the information

---


50 Although the naming of the airport as ‘Kingsford-Smith’ in the 1930s was an attempt to memorialise Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith, the Australian aviation ‘pioneer’, and turn the airport into monument to him (see chapter 4). This has been partly obscured and complicated by the international standardisation of airport names, adopted in the 1970s, according to the capital city in which they are located so that the official name of the airport is now Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport.
superhighway, a highly mobile workforce and a great deal of tourism as part of a consumption economy of signs, difference, places. These flows demonstrate the persistence of the social life of things, a persistence that questions the rhetoric of the ‘information age’. These flows suggest that the information economy is still an economy of material objects, that the information ‘superhighway’ has not replaced the highway or other forms of transport, and that a focus on the circulation of information without a focus on the circulation of technologies would mistake these important processes and the relationships between them. The airport has a material presence in the cityscape that directly contradicts the projected erasure of actual spaces or localities that has characterised a certain kind of discourse on technological change. That this airport is in Sydney, not anywhere else, is what attracts these forces to it, and as will be shown in detail, is a result of deliberate and expensive efforts to keep it here.

location: outside

This methodology brings me to examine the ‘outside’ of the airport. I am reckoning that the representation of the airport has no ‘inside’, no hidden meaning that I can excoriate, uncover or prise from its shell. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* offer a formulation of the book as a cultural form with neither object nor subject, ‘a little machine’ to be opened onto other forms (as machines) to reveal the exteriority of their relations. Here, the book “exists only through the outside and on the outside” and writing has less to with signification than it “has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms yet to come.”\(^5^1\) The architectonics of the book has further relevance here for the homology between writing and spatial form: “Whereas speech unfolds in time, writing unfolds in space, and print’s formation by a process of mechanical reproduction gives the book both material existence through time and an abstract existence across a community of readers.”\(^5^2\) Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘outsideness’ of self/other relations is also spatially communal and temporally continual: [For Bakhtin] “being is always an ‘event’, an act, a process, since my self needs the other, to become an I-for-the-other, assimilate temporarily the other’s point of view, in order to be an I-for-myself (and vice-versa).”\(^5^3\) This notion of being outlines a useful approach to the intersubjectivity of social space for as a cultural form, urban space is also ‘written’ and as such can only be read from the outside.

---

Instead of looking for a singular, abstract, signified behind the real sign, I will be following the exterior of the airport, particularly as it is always articulated or interfaced with some other real and imaginary spaces, such as ‘the British Empire’, ‘the Australian nation’, the ‘inner city’, the ‘suburbs’, among others, in a series of shifts that illuminate moments of continuity and change, but rarely add up to a whole. The ‘insides’ of these spaces are empty, in this sense, as all signs are, giving over meaning to be formed in contexts, in relationships, in the ‘outsides’ of words and images. In this sense, the airport is a highly unstable site, over short periods of time and even at the same time portrayed as a dizzying technological utopia to a banal piece of infrastructure to a planning disaster zone. This externality seems to promise in this process that while meaning, place and politics are intertwined, these problems will shift again, in other unknown directions.

This analysis focuses on representation for the reason that the ‘outside’ is constructed through the public, mediated exterior of the airport, in discourses and displays of aviation, travel and migration that are carried on in public places such as newspapers, government reports, pamphlets, advertising, television, films, radio and books (and academic theses). The conjuncture between media and public is here taken not as the proof of a public sphere, but as a sign of the impact of publication (as in the act of being made public) on communal understandings of place and also the formation of community in the social and embodied acts of reading, hearing or viewing texts.

There are some restrictions to the definition of ‘public’ to mention here. Firstly, I do not want to totalise this public, as obviously not everyone in Sydney or Australia is necessarily interested in these issues, nor should they be, and would not have been paying attention to them during these debates. But the formation of connections between cities, places, people proceeds by this process of mediation, of traces of meaning building up through the official presentation and re-presentation of texts in governmental and institutional contexts, and by statements defining the powers of these bodies over certain spaces.

Secondly, the infamous definition of ‘public’ has been set up and only makes sense, as the dictionaries say “In general and most of the senses, the opposite of PRIVATE”\(^54\) Embedded in its continued use (public domains, public funding, public spaces, to name a few) is the archaic form of the word, however, from early Latin, which was poplicus, ‘the people’. This pre-modern concept remains as a tiny scrap of the word’s history in the present. Any definition of ‘public’ by what it is not makes

little sense; ‘people’ are simultaneously public and private, and the division between
the two has a complex history drawn up on lines of gender, ethnicity and class.

So, thirdly, another lost sense of ‘public’ which is relevant here is the notion of the
**popular**, belonging to the people. This belonging is held together on and through the
‘outside’, in the background of the public. In this public dissemination of texts and
images, representations are always of something, to someone, from someone. There
is no surface—depth component to this communication. Certainly we can read
between the lines, but this is only a reading between surfaces, not behind them. This
(sur)face is the only part of the airport as public space that can be tracked and
measured. The traces of this public exist especially in the different kinds of records --
letters, diaries, cartoons, memoranda -- which I examine in the historical component
of the thesis, which express a popular belonging to and critique of the airport’s
development.

To take ‘people’ out of popular culture is to ‘dematerialise’ the public. The ‘people’
have never existed as an abstract, totalised category or homogenous community, but
as a particular set of bodies in specific places. These bodies are addressed as subjects
by public planning documents, newspaper articles, advertising texts, public relations
strategies and so forth. They are a field or network of actors who are defined by their
contingent relationship to certain place and coexistence with a particular text. Such
located subjects are situated within these texts in particular modes: sometimes as
informed equals who have participated in democratic decision making processes,
even if they disagree with its final content; at other times as inexpert witnesses, who
must be moved and re-distributed within the city, not understanding the ‘big picture
of city planning’. Democracy is itself a fiction, but it is created by the very real and
material “matrix of places, times and habits” that constitutes the public sphere in any
given age.55 Constituted first in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries,
the public was formed of only certain classes of people, with the ‘rest’ excluded on
the basis of their indisposition to rational exchanges of ideas. For my purposes, I am
interested in the ways in which this sphere was spatialised as public and private
from its very beginnings:

Poised between the state and civil society, this bourgeois ‘public
sphere’... comprises a realm of social institutions -- clubs, journals,
coffeehouses, periodicals -- in which private individuals assemble for the
free, equal exchange of reasonable discourse, thus welding themselves in to a
relatively cohesive body whose deliberations may assume the form of a
powerful political force.56

55 Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, p. 82.
56 Terry Eagleton quoted in Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*,
p.83.
Seen this way, contemporary media institutions form alliances with sites of power that are simultaneously and indissolubly discursive and topographical, symbolic and social, continuously de- and re-territorialised. Urban centres and national capitals have taken on privileged positions in this discursive network, as places where all these institutions come together, and where individuals congregate in sufficient numbers and with adequate civilisation and self-regulation to form this sphere.

In the late twentieth century this civic sphere takes ‘place’, again, on the ‘outside’ and at those sites which are neither truly public nor private, but still concretise this space: streets, shopping malls, local council chambers, front yards, parks, highways. The inclusion of media texts and images in these spaces— in internet cafes, advertising billboards, car radio, television signals projected onto buildings— confirms both the ongoing externality of ‘popular’ public spheres and the radical decline of the cohesion of the public, as the speed of exchange between them builds to blur boundaries of virtual and actual spaces and the control of the public sphere is no longer available to any small group of interests.

location: traffic

By tracing the history of the airport, the very material of a society based on migration and transience, technologies of travel are put under examination. This analysis places ‘traffic’ as a crucial event, as a kind of animating force for culturally formed spaces and times which are under intersection in the site of the airport. Raymond Williams, in his essay, ‘The City and the World’, reflecting on his 1973 work The Country and The City introduced a third term, the global, to the binary rural and urban. From this new challenge to urban selves and rural others, Williams speculates that the nature of transport is a key question for cultural criticism in its aim to understand the involvement of capital in structuring consciousness.

The communications system is not only the information network but also the transport network. The city, obviously, has always been associated with concentration of traffic... But traffic is not only a technique; it is a form of consciousness and a form of social relations.57

The street, whether overtaken by the excitable crowd or the traffic jam, is a privileged site in modernity, that in its temporal (rhythms, speeds, slownesses) and spatial (alienations, externalities, proximities, distances, separations, connections)

dimensions, Williams sees as productive of and producing social relations, and most significantly, social relations under capitalism.

An important influence on Williams' reading of urban space, George Simmel's essay 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', written in 1903, identified the intensification of circulations of goods and people in the modern city as significant break with the emotional relationships of the small town. Simmel thought that the rationality of the metropolitan type was based on the new fiscal economy, as well as the individual's incorporation into a urban network: "Money is concerned only with what is common to all, i.e. with the exchange value which reduces all quality and individuality to a purely quantitative level".  

Money, for Simmel, is 'the frightful leveler', desacralising objects and de-mystifying their social relationships, turning urban modernity into a surface of appearances and display: "it hollows out the core of things, their peculiarities, their specific values and their uniqueness and incomparability in a way that is beyond repair." All relationships, including the most intimate, could be reduced to a question of 'how much?', Simmel observed, and this question started in train a constant and unrelenting transformation of labour to commodity, and transmission from one person to another, in which all 'things' "float with the same specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money".  

This process did not empty out individual subjectivity of any significance, and Simmel actually believed the opposite. His essay describes the ways in which the increasing standardisation of city forms as producing the notion of the individual. For Simmel, Nietzsche and Burke were key figures of this process, as they defined themselves as 'subjective' individuals against the new mass, 'objective' culture. In its speed of exchange and simultaneity, the city appears in Simmel as "not a spatial entity with sociological consequences, but a sociological entity that is formed spatially." Thus new kinds of interactions in the city street, their increasing speed and heterogeneity, the very moments of encounter and exchange that this constant movement has produced, constitute new forms of sensory consciousness, new forms of perception:

To the extent that the metropolis creates these psychological conditions — with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life — it creates in the sensory foundations of mental life, and in the degree of awareness necessitated by our organisation as creatures dependent on differences, a deep contrast with the

---

60 Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', p. 330.
slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the sensory-mental phase of small town and rural existence.\textsuperscript{61}

This description of the metropolis as both social and physical structure -- founded on the understanding of modern traffic as a cultural form that separates individuals in a \textit{common} mode -- re-appears in Williams writing as a 'form of settlement' intersecting the older forms of settlement such as towns, villages, hamlets, and incorporating them into a 'whole network'.\textsuperscript{62}

The theme of traffic is more than a mere symbol or metaphor in Williams essay, it is a topos of exchange that defines modernity. Caught together in a logical and textual 'chain' of transactions in modernity, money, pedestrians, vehicular mobility all 'mediate' the world, and produce new and different kinds of relationships between selves and others, public and private. What kinds of traffic there might be, and what kind of technologies extend and mediate this traffic are critical to the kinds of overlaps and disconnections that there might be between social and technological forms.

\textbf{definition : inter-discipline}

The thesis also operates from the assumption that its object, the airport, cannot be examined just from one theoretical or disciplinary perspective, and also, more importantly, that this particular (inter)disciplinary moment will construct its object. In this sense, I converge with, but do not meet a set of other disciplines, including anthropology, planning and design, geography, sociology, philosophy, semiotics, literary theory, etc.\textsuperscript{63} Rather than reading them into the airport, I have read it across disciplines to see what connections form between the their tools of analysis and the case at hand. The force that makes disciplinarity converge at this point is a series of questions about the role of culture in forming cities, and the role of cities and space forming cultures. This thesis is nominally in 'cultural studies', a field which has 'borrowed' elements of most of these disciplines, although cultural studies poses different questions and make different answers, for different reasons. Certain trajectories of thought can be detected through the history of cultural studies that appear as a sequence of borrowings and re-borrowings of concepts and theories between fields of knowledge. This congerie ends up as an assortment of tools for studying 'culture'. Edward Said follows some of these trajectories in his essay, 'Travelling Theory'. He traces the appearance of theoretical works outside the times.

\textsuperscript{61} Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', p. 325.
\textsuperscript{62} Raymond Williams, 'The City and the World', pp. 80-81.
and places that they were first developed and used, arguing that it is necessary to recognise the "extent to which theory is a response to a specific social and historical situation of which an intellectual occasion is a part". Said advocates a "critical consciousness" as:

a sort of spatial sense, a sort of measuring faculty of locating or situating theory... [aware] of the differences between situations... [aware] of the resistances to theory, to open it up to historical reality, toward society... to point up those concrete instances drawn from everyday reality that lie outside or just beyond.

A sustained reading of the airport across theoretical streams, rather than through them allows this critical consciousness to develop. The project that follows here is partial in its appropriation of disciplinarity. As I am seeking to understand the connections and disconnections between events that have formed a specific site, I have worked through a body of literature and theoretical programs that speculate on the processes of 'globalisation'. This studies suggest that globalisation as an economic and social process is never total and argues through local analysis of the effects of spatial change, that we might find many obstacles to understanding globalisation as a slick suture between places into a homogenous totality. Globalisation, urban theorists such as M. Christine Boyer and Anthony King have argued, works both through spatial assimilation and the differentiation of space. On the one hand, the economic system works toward global integration:

During the 1970s and 1980s a new network of global cities arose, taking charge of coordinating the world-wide circulation of capital, goods, labor and corporations. The name of the game in the first-tier world cities with global reach is to attract and retain the headquarters of multinational corporations and all the business services that these corporations demand, such as international banks, advertising agencies, legal, accounting and communication support.

On the other, this system is fragmented and in turns fragments city development through the need to attract business to a particular city with an 'edge' in location and environment: "In the competitive war now being waged among cities, style of life and 'livability' visualised and represented in spaces of conspicuous consumption, become important assets that cities proudly display". The will to integrate against the will to differentiate sets the urban against itself in a race to present a unique, 'globalised' face to the world, and "the forgotten needs of interstitial spaces [are]

pushed through the sieve of spatial restructuring; the unmet education, health housing and employment demands of the majority of people" that make up rest of such cities.68 This study -- by understanding globalisation as such a multivalent process, both cultural and economic, integrating and dissolving -- uses analytic methods developed for cultural studies as well as urban and social theory.

By collecting this set of tools in relation to an object, I have had to struggle with some of the constant questions for cultural studies, debates which circulate around what the 'real object' is that makes a reason for a cultural studies-'study', and what should be the 'tools' that are be employed for 'proper' cultural studies. I do not profess that I have resolved them, nor can they be resolved by a collapse of all social forms and objects into a category called 'culture'.69 The context of this study has to situate itself (or name itself as naming establishes genealogy) within the discipline of cultural studies for strategic reasons, as a study of the production of cultural forms offers a way to realise a critical consciousness. It is possible to see, as Anthony King proposes,

architecture and urban design or planning as particular cultural industries which might be compared, for example, with other major spheres of cultural production such as the film, video, or music industries, the realms of television or advertising; the image projecting and consciousness-transforming industries, all those industries which... contribute to the constitution, confirmation or reconstitution of human subjectivity and cultural identity.70

If the arrangement of urban space structures consciousness, as I agree it does, then it might be one of the tasks of cultural studies to examine on the many levels at which this might work: starting with the question of how different political, economic and social forces might transform cities, then how these spatial forms transform consciousness and finally how both of these processes could affect subjectivity, communal identity and agency. This is an open-ended, unfinished project for cultural studies. Of prime concern here is the need to outline a method which can take in the materiality of these processes, while keeping an attitude that there is more than material, more than just things, but that this cannot be found without reference to the historical and contingent arrangements, visible and invisible that produce them.

Cultural studies methods were developed from an interest in local debates and specific struggles over national cultures in post-war Britain and so emerged from a

69 Ian Hunter, 'Setting Limits to Culture', New Formations, 4, 1988, pp. 103-123.
desire to transcend, as Stuart Hall as expressed it, “the inadequacies of available theorisations for thinking together, in any convincing or concrete way, the relations between the ‘social’ and the ‘symbolic’”. In this cultural studies has a privileged ability to seize hold of these relations within the fragmentary, the particular, the embodied, and the proximate. This makes cultural studies critically empowering in an era when world-wide circulation of symbols signals an expansion of fields of Western, and particularly north-American, cultural orders and systems. By avoiding a centre-periphery model and taking instead a simultaneously large-scale and close-up view, these processes can be apprehended as always at least two-way and fundamentally mediated by interplays and exclusions of subjects along categories of gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, and location. My use of cultural studies in this project -- rather than the selection and deployment of an approved set of universal ‘tools’ -- works as a modest frame to show, as Jane Jacobs has suggested, how “the fundamentally deconstructive space of the local” works to unravel the grand narratives of imperialism and globalisation. Jacobs’ argument, following the work of Foucault, Said and others, is that “by taking the local seriously, it is possible to see how the grand ideas of empire become unstable technologies of power which reach across time and space”. The strategically essential position of the ‘local’ forces encounters with totalising narratives, and indeed with any global claims of cultural studies itself. Further, it might be only be possible by standing among the messy ruins of post-colonial and post-imperial cities to see how symbolic order is continually re-made and re-constituted through ‘technologies of power’ such as city planning, a key discourse of modernisation that is examined throughout this study.

**definition: heterotopia**

Following the important links that Walter Benjamin drew between emergence of the railway station and the Paris arcades to the historical circumstances of the nineteenth century, the airport can be seen as an ‘other space’ or ‘heterotopia’ of twentieth century modernity, as described by Michel Foucault in his essay ‘On Other Spaces’. Foucault argues that sites such as gardens, prisons, theatres and cemeteries could be seen as ‘othered’ spaces in modernity, places that express an “alternate ordering”: the “heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several

---

73 Jacobs, *Edge of Empire*, p. 158.
74 Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, *Diacritics*, 16, 1, Spring 1986, pp. 22-27.
sites that are in themselves incompatible." The airport is heterotopic in its claims to represent globalised space: "the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world".

Heterotopias also figure 'heterochrony', that is different 'slices of time'. The heterochronic relations of modernity, the high speed of international travel, is embodied in the site of the airport. This speed is not available to all people, all the time, but access to the heterochrony of the airport -- often represented as the space of the future -- is made through a "system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable... the heterotopic site is not freely accessible... Either the entry is compulsory... or the individual has to submit to rites and purifications." 

As an 'other' space, the airport says more about the production of the modern self than it says about the airport per se. In continuity with Walter Benjamin's work on the function of the arcades for the emergence of modernist figure of the flaneur, figures that emerge in the heterotopic relations of the airport offers as an example of how transport history is intermingled with social history. Like Benjamin's Arcades, the airport points to an international style of modern architecture, a common space, hence part of the lived experience of a worldwide, metropolitan generation. In this interaction between the personal and the social, I am concerned with how public space, the airport, even when I have not been travelling has entered my consciousness. Never very far from the world in which I grew up and the institutions in which I now work, actual and possible air travel constitutes a sense of self and urban identity. To work as an academic in the late twentieth century is to be involved in a very highly internationalised industry. Parts of this thesis have been written for international conferences, and published in Australian and international journals and books. Ideas circulate as much as objects and people in the world of long-distance air travel.

So, in this project, I am also interested in how travelling actually defines 'home' itself as heterotopia and how modernity constructs identity through 'homes'. As Edward Said, citing Gramsci, explained of his personal investment in his writing on 'Orientalism' I have ended up in elaborating in this work an 'inventory of traces' that the production of history leaves on the self. Gramsci wrote in the Prison Notebooks that the "starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really

---

78 Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', Diacritics, 16, 1, Spring 1986, p. 27.
is, and ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory”. As Said adds in Orientalism (correcting an omission in translation from the original Italian to English) writers of cultural history should heed Gramsci’s caveat that “therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory”.\textsuperscript{80}

If this inventory of history is a method of ‘self-knowledge’, or an epistemological move, it is also an ontological one. Not only does history ‘deposit traces’ of thought, but it creates the possibility of being. Thinking subjects are always inter-subjectively constituted, that is, the traces of history determine both how we think of ourselves and the spaces in which we are able to constitute our identities. The production of international space that I follow ‘retrospectively’ has created lines of knowing and being that literally inscribe the self in place and onto place. In what follows I set out some of the events that have created my self and other selves as located in this world of migration, intellectual tourism and travel as labour as well as leisure.

Airports are images of modern life but they also produce a particular way of seeing modernity. As well as the everyday reality of mobility and movements produced by jet travel, the airport is a tactical installation enabling a variety of possible events. From enacting Sydney as a world city (where like other ‘world’ cities, perhaps the Olympics could take place), to placing Australia in a sphere where migration shapes the population and international capital shapes the environment, the airport organises space for particular subjectivities. Lefebvre’s conception of post-1960s spatiality as characterised by a world-scale space of movement and speed, was not only produced from post-war technologies of transport and communication, but already evident in Simmel’s fluid metropolis. Access to and separation from the world-scale space of the airport constitutes the spatial relations of Australian society in the 1990s. This space of traffic has been inhabited by a series of historical subjects with increasingly expanded territories, from Benjamin’s flaneur to the post-modern intellectual, the jet-setter, the refugee and the world citizen.

Most of all, the airport is a place of transience, it cannot be a home. Like de Certeau’s description of the frontier it is where order is suspended, “A middle place, composed of interaction and interviews, the frontier is a sort of void, a narrative symbol of exchanges and encounters”.\textsuperscript{81} Clifford uses the image of the hotel as airport terminal in ‘Travelling Cultures’, to locate the modern for contemporary anthropology, as


\textsuperscript{81} Michel de Certeau, ‘Spatial Stories’ in The Practice of Everyday Life, University of California, Berkeley, 1984, p. 127.
“somewhere you pass through, where the encounters are fleeting, arbitrary.”\textsuperscript{82} Even at high speed, the airport is still the place at which national borders are made. As heterotopia, it marks the boundaries of importation and exportation, national inside and global outside, national selves and ‘alien’ others. Before beginning to examine this ordering, this introduction makes a final examination of how the practice of movement figures spaces and times in modernity.

\textsuperscript{82} de Certeau, ‘Spatial Stories’ p. 76.
definition: chronotope

The tidal current runs to and from in its unceasing service, crowded with the memories and ships it had borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud... Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! ... The dreams of men, the need of commonwealths, the germs of empires.\(^{83}\)

An example of a crucial plexus of relations between subjects as spatial agents, and notions of environment as reflecting materiality of space and time is contained in this figure of the boat awaiting the tide on the river Thames in Joseph Conrad’s novel Heart of Darkness. Conrad’s choice of the river as a setting for imperial conquest puts the notion of traffic, as discussed above, at the heart of the story. Conrad begins with an oral tale within a written book, and in this tale the river, a place of transit and migration, becomes a “line of time as well as space”.\(^ {84}\)

Firstly, the river’s history as a junction of colonial histories is invoked by Conrad: “nineteen hundred years ago – the other day...” it was a route leading Roman soldiers upstream into one of the previously ‘dark places of the earth’, ancient Britain.\(^ {85}\) By telling the story ‘backwards’ Conrad momentarily problematises the notion of Britain as the centre of the world, reversing the ‘commonsense’ identity of self and civilisation for his early twentieth century English readers, as London as a ‘heart of enlightenment’ radiating out of its metropolis to the ‘darkest’ corners of the British Empire. His inversion of the associated oppositions of centre/periphery, light/darkness, civilised/primitive, begins his tale re-told of a journey down the Thames and into the ‘heart’ of another continent, Africa, to investigate another darkness. Although Imperial explorers believed they carried the ‘spark from a sacred fire’ in their self-defined task of civilising savages through colonial conquest, by the end of the book and the journey the metaphors of darkness and light are entirely undone, and this heart of the darkness is uncannily unlocatable, somewhere in the power relations and structures of colonialism itself.

Conrad’s writing is considered here not to make a point about his literary intentions, but to outline an image which helps underline these connections between space, symbol and site in the urban network. Conrad makes clear in his text that the river

\(^{85}\) Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness, p. 18.
has become an arrangement of space, a geography that is intrinsic to imperial discourse. Conrad’s colonialists and the colonised are both embedded within a geography which hinges on the river and sea travel for its becoming. The (intended British) reader’s comfortable world view is ‘made strange’ for a few moments through an alternative way of ordering: experiencing the river journey through eyes of Roman colonists. The territory produced by sailing ‘up’, rather than ‘down’, the Thames becomes, rather than ‘home’, another ‘blank space’ at the disposal of (the Roman) empire. Thus, the landscape of the story is not pre-existing and pre-determined in its effects, but the river offers an opening between a ‘here’ and a ‘there’. What you see as here and what is there are questions of power and representation, a notion that Conrad entertains from the first few pages of his novel.

This representational quality of landscape is formed by a particular understanding of space in all narrative as ‘chronotope’, or a time-space matrix. The notion of the chronotope comes from Bakhtin’s history of the novel but I am proposing it will also be useful to ‘borrow’, or travel with, to examine objects certainly outside literature: the city, the nation, suburban landscapes. Narratives in and about such spaces has been analysed by many writers, from Homi Bhabha work’s on narratives of the nation, to Edward Said’s writing on the textual constitution of Empire and Orient, to Elizabeth Wilson’s feminist analysis of the city and its gendered narratives. What generates these spaces is fundamentally a question of culture, of what forces construct what stories, about what, for whom and when. Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘time/space’ of narrative has much work to do here to unravel all the cultural forces that form the ‘more than metaphor’ that he terms the ‘chronotope’. Proposed in his essay in The Dialogic Imagination, ‘Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel’, the term is a translation of the Russian ‘time-space’. Bakhtin offers it as new term for “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature”. The notion works to foreground the materiality of texts, of the “immediacy with which these categories are felt.”

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully-thought out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.

---

88 Mikhail Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel’, The Dialogic Imagination, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1981, p. 84.
As a map of the relationship between temporality, spatiality and textuality at any given time ‘chronotopology’ — like ‘heterotopology’ has much to offer a cultural studies of that is focussed on the ‘real’ but not blind to the equally real, excessive-to-the-real, structures of mythologies, historical narratives, incorporated stories that compose geo-political imaginaries. A history of modernity sensitised to both space and temporality might better be able to negotiate some of the problems that have been identified with social theory that has privileged either time or space as analytical categories. Historians critical of this situation have produced a large body of work that seeks to ‘re-introduce space’ into critical social theory, to “spatialise the historical narrative”. Many geographers have similarly argued for a return of history to geography, to see geography as ‘cultural’, as marked by a “plurality of cultures, each of which is time- and place-specific”. The differences between the disciplines of geography and history can be overstated and elide the differences within each field, but they point to a constraining division of intellectual labour in each field.

For many writers, the parallel development of history and geography as tightly bounded areas has been a denial of the ‘other’ dimension, which meant that each discipline analysed events as though they occurred in either the dimension of time or space independently. In an interview with the editors of a journal of Marxist geography, Michel Foucault enquired of the history of History:

A critique could be carried out of this devaluation of space that has prevailed for generations. Did it start with Bergson or before? Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic.

This is a revealing observation of how histories became History, but instead of veering off in the other direction by simple over-valuing of the spatial at the expense of the temporal, a better approach might be to question the purity of this separation. Perhaps the spatial dimension has been repressed rather than expelled from historical narratives. Certainly, the spatial tends to return even within those texts that situate the ‘historical’ as primary. And conversely, it proves impossible to eliminate history from a spatial narrative.

---

This view of the currents of modern thought as such a divided stream - one being able to deal only with the temporal and the other only with the spatial - excludes some eccentric characters and works that ‘smuggled’ across the well maintained borders of both history and geography material that was infused by disciplinary ‘otherness’. This critical opening has been seized upon by sociologists and historians who wish to put space on the agenda, and geographers have used it to bring history to spatiaility. In all this cross-disciplinary traffic, the work of previously ‘minor’ figures such as Bakhtin and Benjamin has been widely read and cited because of their sensitivity to the temporal and spatial shifts in culture. Foucault does not mention these writers, as their very existence goes against the narrative of the separation of space from history and vice versa. Both Benjamin and Bakhtin attended most scrupulously to the odd places that modernity has thrown up, cast outside, and cannot explain: for Bakhtin, the transformations of public spaces in carnivalesque literature in the early Renaissance, and for Benjamin, the petrified dreams of the nineteenth century metropolis contained with European capitals, that suggested the nightmares of the twentieth. Rather than allowing both time and space to inform a theoretically unified and therefore totalising perspective, Benjamin proposed to use an disintegrating, allegorical mode and Bakhtin developed a ‘historical poetics’ to ‘matricise’ time and space.

Both these models of the interweaving of space and time are helpful to urban histories and make for a productive discourse on the forces at hand here (globalisation, mobility, urban change) as they do not leave either dimension aside, managing to give a complex account of everyday life. The strength of this understanding makes writing about culture a practice which relies on materialising history, turning the invisible narrative of time into ‘solid memories’ and showing the spatial dimension (linearity, trajectory, distance, proximity, dimension) to be fundamental to understanding the processes of time. This is not to develop a tightly compartmentalised set of time/space formulations, but to show how forms of space are imbricated in lines of power, how modernity creates a sense of the historical that erases its traces, and constitutes material again and again, putting time and space at the disposal of politics. Although, this appears as the steady, inevitable motion of progress, a cultural politics (Barthes, Benjamin) strives to show that the ideology of progress is a narrative constituted through the time/space of the nation. For Benjamin, the phantasmagoric architectures of the commodity in Paris - world fairs, shopping arcades, railroads, public works - offered the promised arrival in utopian modernity to the masses just as class structures became solidified in distinctly dystopian relationships. What can be seen in each of these architectures are instances

92 See Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*. 
of ‘matricising’ of relations in chronotopes: in the world fair, between the margins of empires and their imagined centres, and in ‘primitive’ time meeting modernity; in the arcades, labour distanced from the commodity, making it appear as a magic object; the ambling pace of the flaneur out-of-step with the perpetual rush of the traffic of horse and carriage and the mechanical speed of the railway; and in the railroads themselves an industrialisation of time and space, an ordering and co-ordination of many different times into a unified timetable, and the production of a metropolitan network in which the country side became a panorama when approached at speed from the windows of the train.93

So, instead of the reassertion of space into history and history into space as representing an inevitable, natural re-coupling of two dimensions, that stereoscopically forms a more comprehensive picture of the world and its processes, this intersection should in fact expose the conditions that limit the picture, as I outline below. Rather than an attempt to make a perfect model of the world, Bakhtin offers an ‘anti-’ or ‘metalinguistics’, that looks for devices within narrative for dialogue and play, rather than total understanding.94 The frame of the chronotope opens up the ‘thingness’ of time and the ‘temporality’ of things. Indeed, “History becomes a chronotope only through operations that orient, situate and temporalise.”95

Paul Carter in the Road to Botany Bay stresses the need for an understanding of space as constituted by action, a continual process rather than a static thing: he works against what he calls the ‘diorama’ method of historical geography which presents events as though they occurred on a stage that was already set. Instead he poses a model of spatial history, which is not a strictly a ‘geography’ nor a ‘history’ as it catches the explorer in the act of writing space. Carter proposes that “What is evoked” by a spatial history “are the spatial forms and fantasies through which a culture declares its presence. It is spatiality as a form of non-linear writing…”96 The practices of both history writing and discovery of countries fatally coincide: the history writer is metaphorically linked to the ‘explorer’ of unknown territories if she or his lacks self-reflexivity and de-politicises the production of space. Carter’s method, as it reveals space as the hidden apparatus of history, offers a more modest form of history writing that choreographs space and time rather than ‘discovering’ it.

93 Wolfgang Schivelbusch, The Railway Journey.
From this focus on the temporising of space I outline shifts in representations of the site of the airport in the context of broader reconfigurations of the history and geography. These shifts have produced, for example, national subjects who operate through clearly defined national geographies, rather than colonial subjects originating from Imperial centre. I ask what happens to spatial relations when they are increasingly technologised, and what kinds of new relationships are mediated through these technologies, when, as suggested above, mediations of space are productive of new forms of consciousness. From the space-time of Conrad’s nineteenth century narrative, with its chronotope of the river as a space mediating between land and sea, past and present imperialisms, and a narrative space of suspension while awaiting the tide, the transition to a chronotope of air travel illustrates some similarities and divergences in the forms of traffic moving agents.97 Rivers and ports have functioned as places of exchange, structuring space for societies based on maritime technology, a technological network that about to be ruined when Conrad wrote Heart of Darkness. When seen against the chronotope of the airport and the time/space of aviation, the mode of sea travel seems impossibly slow: “The departure of a ship is slow, celebratory, mournful. It gives time to think and the proper space in which to let fall one’s lesser salt into the greater below.” 98 In modern air travel, departure blurs into arrival, as the disjunctive between biological time and geographical time produces jet-lag. The body’s clock remembers the place of departure, and a ‘lag’ between that and the destination is felt physically in the body’s rhythm’s during the period before the former catches up with the latter. The chronotope of the airport is not biological time but technologised time, which outstrips body-time, creating a place where ‘best practice’ is operation twenty-four hour a day.

Modernism imagined that technology signified the human triumph over space and time and that the ‘barriers’ of geography could be reduced to geometry in maps, to the mathematical measuring of vectors in time rather than distance. Paul Virilio’s aphorism that this “loss of material space leads to the government of nothing but time” captures the uneasy aura of such modernist space, but far from being ‘lost’

97 This is not to say that women are not involved here, rather they alternate between invisibility and overexposure in the aerial imagination. As Cynthia Enloe has argued women’s labour has been essential to tourism, globalisation and international space, despite the image of the global public as predominantly masculine: “public life is constructed out of struggles to define masculinity and femininity”, Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making feminist sense of international politics, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1990, p. 195. The constitutive role of and continued exclusion of women from the spaces of aviation is addressed in the fourth chapter of this thesis, ‘The impossible aviatrix’.
material space is constantly recouped and refigured in modernity. Current as well as past forms of travel need material space to function, even as metaphor, as I argue in my analysis of the traces of the modernist imaginary of travel in the present. The argument advanced here is that rather than a telos of post-modern dematerialisation and immateriality, such modernity should be understood as always stemming from a “connection with that which has already been there”.

The next chapter, ‘Inventing a geography’, begins the first section of this study, *Engineering the Future*. Each chapter of this thesis investigates in detail the emergence of specific figures at the site of the airport, and the shifts in representations of the sublime that each of these figures authorised. The next chapter examines the flight of Houdini, the nineteenth century carnival performer, as representations of his flight demonstrate the emergence of aviation within the sites of popular pleasure and entertainment in the early nineteenth century.

The transition from technologies of travel based on natural forces such as animal locomotion, tides and winds to mechanical (and eventually electronic) traffic is marked in this project as an important ‘in-between’ stage of material culture. Wolfgang Schivelbusch in *The Railway Journey* calls this process ‘mimetic’ to capture the way that the new technological forms mirror the forms that they displace.

When such technologies become ‘dead’ they either to evoke romantic and nostalgic subjective states that parallel their initial and sublime construction at the ‘edge’ of the future. Sharon Zukin notes in her study of the recuperation of ‘lofts’ in New York were a rejection of the principles of modernist design. Such ‘eccentric spaces’ were valued in the 1970s because they “suggest a time when form still identified ‘place’ rather than ‘function’”: “We visit the docks in London but not in Rotterdam because commerce is romantic only when it has vanished.”

Houdini’s flight is romantic and poetic to late twentieth century readers because he embodies a ‘dead’ form of public entertainment in carnival. The flight of Houdini sketches the interconnections between the modernist sublime, the spatial and temporal displacements of Imperialism and mass migration, and urban sites associated with travel and transit.

As one last point of entry to this focus on material cultures of travel, in a book that the author says is a lament for the old city of Sydney, the Australian social realist author Ruth Park, describes the function of the city’s harbourside a place of transitory displays and travel spectacles at a key threshold site of modernity. In her *Companion Guide to Sydney*, written during the massive redevelopments and influx of

international capital of the 1970s that rendered the old laneways and arcades of the city obsolete and eventually demolished to make way for skyscrapers and freeways, Ruth Park calls Circular Quay Sydney’s ‘doorstep’.103 The harbour had been the principal point of entry to the city in the age of maritime technology. Even as Park was writing in 1972, Sydney, like most cities, had a new kind of ‘doorstep’ - an international airport. A ‘leftover’ space from an earlier technological era, the harbour has become a site of travel as spectacle, in which Imperial trade and colonialism can be re-staged as nation-building journey, a ritual event to be re-enacted on Australia Day, or most spectacularly in 1988, the destination of a Bicentennial flotilla. No longer an urban threshold mediating domestic and foreign trade and travel, harboursides are almost universally a trivialised space for shopping and promenade: in essence, a space for travel as consumption rather than travel as production. This interplay between production and consumption, doorsteps and departure lounges, representation and location, material culture and temporality articulates neither a ‘loss of material space’ nor its assured survival. Modernist technological space has not displaced the urban, but has certainly profoundly altered it. Benjamin’s invitation to see the urban ‘anew’, through in mass media as an ‘other geography’ describes the task ahead: “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 travelling...”104

part one:

Engineering the future
Chapter Two:  

Inventing a Geography  
1910-1919

The built environment is not only a space in which technology is used, but is itself a technological form.\textsuperscript{1} Taking urban infrastructures as technologies that produce certain kinds of space and time, this study examines an international airport in a large city as a concrete expression of dominant temporal and spatial values. In this thesis, through closely examination of the continual interface between technological space and urban form, I draw out over time exactly how a discourse on aeriality as space of modern sublimity has been formed and deployed in the Australian imaginary. This historical examination of the space of the airport seeks to politicise the spaces that this urban vision has both produced and negated, as well as offer some visions of alternative urban futures that have been ignored or forgotten in the linear narrative of ‘progress’.

Since the nation-wide network of aerodromes were established in Australia as part of an aviation industry after the first world war, narratives about travel have been crucial to imagining both national geographies and Australia’s location in a larger world system that has been produced by international cultural and economic exchange. To ‘theorise’ a site is to ‘see’, or ‘contemplate’ it within broader structures. Vision is a selective and subjective process, and any theory, as a ‘way of seeing’ will emphasise particular areas and influences, thus constructing its object’s effects, dimensions and outlines. In order to ‘see’ the means by which aviation has been made part of official culture in Sydney – the ways that the aerial has been territorialised within governmental spaces – my theoretical approach is founded in a need to pluralise and problematise visions of modernity, to engage multiplicity and difference in order to see the spatial exclusions and inclusions that such visions might construct and effect.\textsuperscript{2}

The accounts of various historical actors who were authorised to control -- and appropriated -- a place for aviation in the city offer a way of theorising, and therefore visualising, this history. In order to understand how the prototype of Sydney’s


\textsuperscript{2} Theory, n. from Greek θεωρία (theoria), “a looking at, viewing, contemplation, speculation... also a sight, a spectacle”, Complete Oxford English Dictionary, p. 3284.
international airport, the Mascot aerodrome, expressed and structured a certain kind of urban spatiality in the early twentieth century, this chapter examines the first descriptions of flying in Sydney through the case of Houdini, or Eric Weiss in 1910. I then look at how and why the suburb of Mascot was chosen as the site of the aerodrome firstly by commercial aviation companies, and later by the Department of Civil Aviation in the early 1920s. To explain the site selection process of the aerodrome in 1919, I focus on the personal records and newspaper reports of the developments at Mascot. These accounts illustrate the connections between new technologies and the urban environment that produced a modern spatiality. ‘The production of space’ can best be expressed by Henri Lefebvre’s thesis that “Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology or politics; it has always been political and strategic”.3 In what follows, I analyse the strategies of unification and discourses of technological space that produced the site and space of the aerial in the urban network. These strategies are reflected in the airport’s ongoing spatiality and symbolic formation as a thoroughly modern place of order and control.

Since the aviation industry established a presence at Mascot at the end of the first world war, the repeated articulation of the city with air travel has actually defined Sydney as a modern city. This definition of the modern city emerges from culturally and historically specific values embedded in modernist architecture and the modernist embrace of spatial and temporal movement as an aesthetic quality of and in itself. The modernist emphasis and fetishisation of spatio-temporal practices of travel that produce senses of simultaneity, rupture, dislocation and alienation have had material effects on the built environment. The next chapter will further explain and map these effects in Sydney. This chapter, following the understanding of modernity as simultaneously spatial, symbolic and material developed in the previous chapter, connects the modernist emphasis on spatial and temporal movement with the emergence of a discourse on the sublime.

Over the period studied here, many different versions of what modern life and its spaces should be about and involve have been imagined, re-imagined and contested. There have been some heavy costs involved in this dominant imagination of modernity and its spatial rhetorics; costs which are still being felt as these discourses are being rewritten and questioned in accounts of the interplay between city and technology, and the history of the city itself as a ‘technology’.4 Of particular interest


4 M. Christine Boyer describes this process in terms of loss; “traditions have been so thoroughly invented or homogenised, and history so absolutely marketed or commodified, misrepresented, or rendered invisible, that any appositional potential rooted in collective
here, a recent trajectory of these representations emerge from a decline of faith in the continual process of ‘keeping up’ with technological change, and a characterisation of such change as negative and destructive. Secondary to this, and of relevance to this discourse of decline examined this project, are the reexaminations and subsequent complications of the myth of absolute freedom and mobility through travel. Both of these shifts can also be read through a decline and questioning of the sublime as an aesthetic category.

The following sketch of the establishment of the aerodrome relies on personal written accounts of the main actors, newspaper reports and other ephemera that dealt with ‘the swift new method of transport’ and its continuities with the city. These accounts show that the form the airport has taken was not the logical outcome of technological advances; that planning has not been a centralised, monolithic, rational discipline when practised in relation to Sydney airport; and that the kinds of stories told about and at the airport have had productive effects on its location. The airport is, and has been, a place which has been charged with some very powerful representations and definitions circulating and structuring its meanings, and these meanings have in turn been inscribed in the lives of people who live in Sydney. Although I am focusing on the practical origins of the airport, I will be emphasising the deployment of the modernist symbol of the airport within these stories, which say much about how technology, geography, nationhood, and the city have been articulated in this century. At the core of my concerns are the connections between mobility and modernity, and the shifts that have taken place over the last eighty or so years in configuring the relationship between these forms of travel and the urban imaginary. This analysis of the ‘invention’ of the future airport calls into question a grand narrative of the possibility of boundless travel and a sense of unending historical progress in discourses about modernity.

Beginning in 1910, well before the existence of the legally defined, bounded and regulated site of the aerodrome, early experiments in aviation in Sydney suggest the connection between spectacularisations of travel and narratives of progress. As Meaghan Morris has described it, this welding together of spatial domination and history writing establishes a narrative of nationhood, through “Rhetorics of movement, loss and alienation ... in modern Australia, a nation created by and for trade flows, transportation, immigration and anxious dreams of conquering space.”


Blainey’s 1966 book *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia’s History*. Against this tendency in national self-representations to emphasise travel narrative, and thus a narrative of lack, producing a ‘loss’ of place and nostalgia for a home, this chapter slightly displaces the ‘sublime moment’ of origin that this kind of spatial history evokes, to insert a more modest erotics of travel, that instead emerges from a carnivalised, performative, syncretic understanding of modernity.

**defining the spaces of modernity**

As Raymond Williams traces in his *Keywords*, there have been major changes in the meaning of the word ‘modern’ since its earliest senses in English as “contemporary, in the sense of something existing now, just now”. Williams refers the reader onto other words that construct the meaning of ‘modern’ by association or contrast: “See improve, progressive, tradition”. His brief but perceptive discussion illuminates the local versus general problems of the word’s usage to describe ‘improvement’ without real change: “It is often possible to distinguish modernizing and modernization from modern, if only because (as in many such actual programmes) the former terms imply some local alteration or improvement of what still, basically, is an old institution or system.”

The latter, modernity as a complete revolution, rather than a local one, is emphasised in as Marshall Berman’s study, titled *All that is solid melts into air*. Berman documents the “experience of modernity” in the key sites of modernisation and modernism in Europe and America: Paris, St Petersburg and New York. Berman describes modernity as ‘a will to change’, a process that “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, [and Berman uses as the title his book] Marx said ‘all that is solid melts into air’”. Mass migrations, continual reordering and restructuring of physical and social environments, as well as the arbitrariness of national borders are examples of this ‘will to change’ on a spatial level in modernity. This ‘will’ pushes relentlessly beyond nationhood to place the global citizen after the modern national subject on a continuum of progress from tribalism to the global village. This politics of material and political change, portrayed by Berman as “a state of perpetual becoming” has only been called

---

7 Williams, *Keywords*, p. 209.
8 Williams, *Keywords*, p. 209.
‘modernisation’ during the twentieth century. Berman distinguishes between the spatial and physical processes of ‘modernisation’ and the political and aesthetic attitudes of ‘modernism’, a crucial differentiation that indicates, as Raymond Williams does, that it might be possible to have one without the other.

To look at what these two different kinds of forms of change offer, and what effects they have had on the built environment, I here investigate the extent to which the discourses of space, travel and mobility have constructed a particular kind of ‘modernised’ subject, that is a mobile one. I focus on the initial uses of this subject as it appears in the early representations of air travel. This archetypal modern subject engages in a spatial practice of moving beyond the present into an uncharted future. In the case of aviation in Australia, this utopian future was to be achieved through a shift of consciousness to an ‘aerial zone’ of ‘airmindedness’. As this focus on this mobile subject continues throughout this thesis, its shifting forms and realisations illustrate the possibilities that representations of the future hold for mapping the relations between popular enthusiasm for air travel and public organisations of those desires. This construction of a modern ‘beyond’ emerges through the exercise of political and economic power and the imagination of political territories. In examining architects’, engineers’ and planners’ attitudes to the material world they were constructing for such modern citizens by developing an airport, I suggest that this particular imagination of modernity has posed the modern as a sublimity both beyond and superimposed on the ground of local urban environments.

Marx’s phrase as translated by Berman -- all that is solid melts into air -- encapsulates the process of modernity as it figures in representations of modern urban life, but it is also a way of seeing and experiencing modernity itself as a place. This place is somewhat paradoxical: it is continually built and torn down in this turmoil of development, but it is a location nonetheless. It is a contingent place, a site characterised for Berman by a “[f]luidity and vaporousness [that] will become primary qualities in the self-consciously modernist painting, architecture and design, music and literature that will emerge at the end of the nineteenth century.” This fluidity was the declared aesthetic principle of Futurist architects such as Sant Elia and Ugo Nebbia when they wrote in 1914 that “We must invent and rebuild ex novo our Modern City like an immense and tumultuous shipyard, active, mobile, and everywhere dynamic, and the modern building like a giant machine.” The Futurists represent one extreme position of relations between the social uses of technology and the politics of modernism with their seductive manifesto. For Marinetti, the author of

---

10 Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 16.

the Italian Futurist Manifesto, the speed of new technologies was the first step to
overcoming the static air and immobile spaces of the nineteenth century:

Up to now literature has exalted a pensive immobility, ecstasy, and sleep.
We intend to exalt aggressive action, a feverish insomnia, the racer's stride,
the mortal leap, the punch and the slap...
We say that the world's beauty has been enriched by a new beauty; the
beauty of speed... We want to hymn the man at the wheel, who hurls the
lance of his spirit across the Earth, along the circle of his orbit... Time and
Space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, because we have
created eternal, omnipresent speed... we will sing of the multicoloured,
polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals;... and the sleek flight
of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to
cheer like an enthusiastic crowd.12

The Italian Futurists, as well as the Russian Modernists, in their declared antipathy to
both the sites of the preservation of culture in museums, libraries and academies, and
the professions who made work from doing so, "professors, archaeologists, ciceroni,
and antiquarians", were dedicated to ending the stultifying 'worship of the past'.
Places of dwelling, home, and memory, were not meant to survive the violence of
speed and turbulent change exemplified in the design of airplanes, railways, and
automobiles. The Old cities of Europe and their cultural treasures held back the
future, Marinetti believed, and he asked his fellow Futurists to will the future into
being through destruction: "Take up your pickaxes, your hammers, and wreck,
wreck the venerable cities, pitilessly!"13

This expulsion of the domestic from such a purified, aggressively masculine modern
space has been a central problematic of modernity, and it means that the exteriorised,
public space of the urban modern has becomes a metaphor for modernity itself.14 The
need for location and 'homelessness' has not gone away, however, and the production
of home within this perpetual will to movement has manifested within displaced
forms of the domestic such as Anthony Vidler describes in his study of the 'Modern
Unhomely', The Architectural Uncanny.15 For Vidler, this paradox of place becomes a
metaphorised in a series of textual sites that re-cite the past within and alongside the
modern, betraying modern social forms as profoundly troubled by their omissions
and repressions. Thus the experience of urban life, technological change and political

12 Marinetti, 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', [originally published in LE FIGARO
13 Marinetti, 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', p. 43.
14 James Donald, 'Metropolis: The City as Text', in Robert Bocock and Kenneth Thompson
(eds), Social and Cultural Forms of Modernity, Polity Press & The Open University, Cambridge,
p. 419.
15 Anthony Vidler, The Architectural Uncanny Essays in the Modern Unhomely, MIT Press,
revolution has been re-examined by social theorists after the 1960s to try and take account of the complexities and elliptical movements of modern urban worlds. Berman’s modern people experience the materiality of the world as fleeting and transitory, and his ‘modernists’ somehow try to make themselves at home in the modern maelstrom “to move within its currents in search of the forms of reality, of beauty, of freedom, of justice, that its fervid and perilous flow allows”.16

This experience of shock in the rapid flows of people and goods within modern public spaces is beautifully described in Walter Benjamin’s predecessor, George Simmel’s 1903 essay ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’. As noted in the previous chapter, Simmel argued that the mental energy expended by the city dweller to deal with the “swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli” created the psychological condition “upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected”. Material urban change fuels psychological transformations, producing modern subjectivity through “...the rapid telescoping of changing images, the pronounced differences within what is grasped at a single glance, and the unexpectedness of violent stimuli”.17 This ‘shock effect’ of urban modernisation is repeated and replayed throughout discussions of the new urban space that air travel created. The aerodrome (and later the airport) was to become a machine for extending the modern city’s borders across space and so intensified of the sense of transitoriness that defined the modern urban form for Simmel.

As a psychological condition and new language, the ‘modern’ was a key term for writers, artists and architects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who sought to break with a continuous past as it enabled a radical split from established styles. The perceptual shocks created by the new modes of transport, city form and technologies of representation all contributed to this mode of modernity. Walter Benjamin’s study of Baudelaire, the only section of his Arcades project published during his lifetime, elaborated this new mode of being as first described by the poet’s allegories of modern life in Paris.18 Baudelaire’s contemplation of Paris itself as a subject for poetry was an attempt to represent la vie moderne in a new, modernised system of representation that emphasised the breaks and discontinuities of modern life. Baudelaire attempted to describe the fluidity, vaporousness, transitoriness and transparency in his spatial relationship to the city, arguing that the only way to depict this new world was to “set up [one’s] house in the heart of the multitude,

16 Berman, All That is Solid Melts into Air, pp. 345-346.
amid the ebb of flow and motion” by becoming “one flesh with the crowd”. Thus habituated to such flows, eventually the artist of modern life would so embrace these new urban spaces to become “a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness”.\textsuperscript{19} Fuelled by the modernisation process the artistic and political modernist movements were initiated: “it was above all from the exploration of enormous cities and from the convergence of their innumerable connections that this obsessive ideal was born”.\textsuperscript{20}

Even at the time of his reconstruction of Baudelaire’s world in the 1930s, Benjamin believed that conservative politics would appropriate this modernism, without fully engaging with these challenges that technology posed to the ossified relationships and outmoded forms of the nineteenth century city. Postmodernist discourse has underlined this alliance between modernity and stasis, with its portrayal of the modern as a cosmetic surface, caught in a cycle of fashion to be superceded yet another surface. Postmodernism thus perceives the aesthetisation of technology as a profound disconnection from the radical aims of modernity as a state of permanent change and progress. The sense of an ‘end’ of modernity has also appeared at the end of a sense of such movement. In this configuration of change, politics and aesthetics modernity is instead assimilated to the end point of a total history.

What starts to become apparent here are the strategic uses of this term ‘modernity’: that it has come to mean various contradictory things, all encased in the single word. Firstly, modernity is a political process associated with democratisation and the re-distribution of political power throughout society, rather than centralised power embodied in a king or dictator. On an material/economic level, it also means the integration of technology into production, distribution and consumption networks, thereby the speeding up processes and shortening the gap that separates the moment that any good or commodity is created and its consumption and use. On a socio-cultural level, it expresses an emphasis on fragmentation, spatial and temporal simultaneity and the breakdown of realist modes of perception. So the term ‘modernity’ is so broad that it will not signify the same process to all people, all over the world, all the time.

The debates over the beginning, middle and end of postmodernity further signal the complexity of the term, as do recent reformulations of the modern such as Marc Augé’s notion of a ‘super-modernity’ which is almost a pure modernism, resting on a virtual or ‘non-place’. To Augé, the movement of modernity has erased any possibility of location, place-ness: “The traveller’s space may thus be the archetype of

\textsuperscript{19} Baudelaire quoted in Berman, \textit{All That is Solid Melts into Air}, p. 145.
\textsuperscript{20} Baudelaire’s Introduction to \textit{Paris Spleen}, quoted in Berman, \textit{All That is Solid Melts into Air}, p. 148.
This non-place rests on a universalised and totalised version of modernity, a problem for any study which seeks to question the ways in which this ‘traveller’s space’ has actually been materially constituted within the fabric of everyday life. Instead of a super-modernity, it may be better to pluralise this single ‘place’ of modernity and to see it instead as but one instance of the modern amongst a collection of ‘modernities’, all competing for a defining position. The fact that there are a series of ‘past’ modernities, of modernities that have only temporary currency and then disappear in the face of their subsequent disapproval or obsolescence, underlines the tenuous place of ‘the modern’.

Most importantly, by emphasising the negotiated and fluid nature of such a complex structure as ‘the modern’ we might open up a critical space for discussing what urban environments still lack and what their futures could be. By questioning some of the oppositions between future movement and past stasis, urban mobility and pre-urban settlement, it might be possible to in rearrange relationships between them. Imagining the ‘aerial’ modern as simply part of the steady advance of the twentieth century city towards ‘non-place’ is both depressingly immovable and far too unstable. The moment at which different modernities have conflicted and coalesced during the past ninety years of aviation in Sydney characterises each event that I detail in this study, and so it is with a figure who is both eccentric and firmly locked within this modernising narrative that I begin: the flight of Houdini in Sydney in 1910 as instance of aeriality as movement as play rather than domination.

Sydney 1910: Houdini learns to fly

On February 6, 1910, Erich Weiss, known by his stage name as Harry Houdini, arrived in Melbourne, Australia. He had been invited to tour Australia by Harry Rickards, an Australian impresario and theatre promoter. Rickards had offered Houdini the highest salary ever for a theatrical tour in Australia, and asked him to 'perform' record flights in his bi-plane as a means of promoting his stage performances. If he could achieve a sustained flight and successful landing, he would officially be the first man to fly in Australia.

At the turn of the century, aviators overseas and in Australia were linked to mythological figures such as Icarus or most commonly, portrayed as natural, organic, ironically pre-technological, by descriptions of the bird-like qualities of the new technology. A newspaper article published in Sydney on 18 April 1910 after Houdini's flight was headlined 'The Bird Man: Houdini's latest feat' and Houdini drew on this image in his interviews, saying "in the process [of learning to fly] you acquire the bird sense somewhat, feeling dangers instinctively rather than seeing them".

In Australia in 1910, airplanes had little to do with travel from one place to another: they were instead spectacular props in a mass entertainment which emphasised the fantastic aspects of the new technology. Aviation's military capabilities were imminent in design and form -- at the time some writers mentioned the military uses of the airplane as a possible future, but the dangers of travelling by plane at the turn of the century limited it to "an instrument of exciting sport". As the Sydney Morning Herald reported of Houdini's 'thrilling' second flight in May, air travel promised thrills through spectacularised terror "The public gasped while a number of women screamed, for it seemed as if the aviator was rushing towards certain destruction".

---

23 Some very short flights had been attempted in a Wright aeroplane and a Bleriot monoplane during 1909, and were reported as ending 'disastrously', when pilots crashed their craft into fences and sleepers: 'First public flight of perfect working model aeroplane at Melbourne Town Hall', The Age, 23 October 1909, p. 17; 'Wilbur-Wright aeroplane in Sydney', The Age, 20 November 1909, p. 12. The Wright aircraft had also been imported by theatre promoters, J. & N. Tait.
24 'Nero and the Aeroplane', Letter to the Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, 12 May 1910, p.5.
26 'Kingdom of the Air', Sydney Morning Herald, 7 May 1910, p. 12.
27 'Houdini in the air', Sydney Morning Herald, 2 May 1910, p. 12.
The airplane promised something that Houdini had been seeking in all his escape acts: a liberation from gravity, a utopian event seemingly consummated through the new technology of aviation. Against a background of enormous technological change in the late nineteenth century, change which was constantly negotiated and variably successful, airplanes were performances of modernity, proof of technological progress. Houdini’s career as an ‘escapologist’ had been associated with the emergence of new technologies of aviation, after the first powered flight by the Wright Brothers in 1903. He recognised the potential of the new technology to draw crowds, and in 1908 Houdini had offered $5000 for the use of a Wright Brothers plane, from which he planned to be flown over the West End of London and parachute, while escaping handcuffs, onto Picadilly Circus.28 After ‘technical difficulties’, he decided against the Picadilly trick. He did not buy the American plane, but instead a French bi-plane, the ‘Voisin’, which he practised flying on a German airfield before making the six-week journey to Australia by boat. At the performances that took place on his tour (and they were theatrical performances -- events that were attended by thousands of spectators), Houdini flew in his Voisin biplane for up to seven minutes at Diggers Rest in Victoria, and for three and a half to four minutes in Sydney at Rosehill Racecourse.

In this mode of aviation, the portrayal of the aviator as modern hero, as the ‘doer’ of great deeds and master of technological knowledge, emerges as continued theme of later discussions of aviation in Australia. The figure of ‘aviator’ (as differentiated from the later form of the ‘pilot’ who simply guides the machine and is far from heroic)29 is marked by a fascination with the sublime in modernist literature and cultural forms, Marinetti being only one among many who practised aviation as a means of actualising the sublime. Modernity’s promise of a pure and elevated space of being, through a separation from the messy and contingent space of the body, is here materialised in the machine-man complex of aviation. This aerial being inhabits a homogenous and unlimited space, characterised by an ‘ascensional psychology’ that takes the poet and his reader to a domain of pure reflective thought: a sublime utopia which is the achieved through height.

When Gaston Bachelard described the ‘aerial psyche’ in his classic analysis of metaphors of flight in literature, Air and Dreams, he realised in a psychological subject the ideals of the Futurist manifesto. For Houdini, the practice of flying did indeed take him to this space, in Bachelard’s words one of “positive ascensional

29 ‘Aviator’, from Latin combining form avi- meaning ‘bird’ with -ation, i.e. one who acts like a bird and ‘pilot’ is merely one who guides or steers, from Greek peda, rudder, Macquarie dictionary, 1981.
psychology... the conditioned reflexes that causes us to make associations with values of elevation: height, light and peace.”

But, as Bachelard’s analyses of the deferral of ‘fall’ necessary to a positive ‘aerial psyche’ demonstrate, the earth was also intimately connected to the air, but only as a space of abjection: “the imaginary fall leads us to metaphors that are fundamental only to a terrestrial imagination.”

Bachelard, in describing such an aerial psyche in the philosophy of Nietzsche and the poetry of Shelley, noted that for such writers contact with the earth involved only “A long fall, a fall into the black pits, the fall into the abyss...” For Houdini, the earth was similarly invested with significance as a site of incarceration, claustrophobia and loss of self: in such extremity the opposite of the modernist sublime can only be earthly abjection.

In late 1909, Houdini had been intensely depressed. He thought constantly of death, a dominant theme in his diaries and letters that many biographers have commented on as central to his motivation to perform his theatre acts. In November, he was playing in Hamburg, Germany when, as he tells in his diaries and letters, he saw a demonstration flight and his depression lifted. After buying his own plane and engaging a mechanic, he flew for the first time and as described by a biographer -- “His black depression had gone; he was jubilant and exhilarated. He had escaped the earth, from the pull of gravity. Never in his life had he felt so free.”

Houdini himself said of his first flight in Melbourne: “...I knew I was flying... all the tension and strain left me... all my muscles relaxed, and I sat back feeling a sense of ease... a delicious feeling of being independent of space and time... I shouted with joy.” For Houdini, the practice of flying took him to this space, in Bachelard’s words one of “positive ascensional psychology... the conditioned reflexes that causes us to make associations with values of elevation: height, light and peace”.

What is lacking in this portrayal of flight, both as metaphor in Bachelard and as kinaesthetic experience for Houdini, is a historical contextualisation of the aviator, and by extension, this aerial subject. This historical subject, formed through access to and use of technology, and founded on a split between terrestrial and aerial is always in danger of slipping back into the imprisoned and contained abject. The aerial

---

32 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 15.
33 Fitzsimons, *Death and the Magician*, p. 79.
34 Australian Archives MP550/1, 21/1/99 (1), Items *
35 Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, p. 15.
AEROPLANE FLIGHT AT ROSEHILL.

Fig 2.1  Houdini flying at Rosehill, Sydney Mail, 20 April 1910.
subject in the case of the aviator is only a product of many interacting parts: social change brought about by new technology, a dependence on a whole network of technological knowledges and a collective experience of space as a total and homogeneous realm and completely accessible to the aviator. The aviator was a realisation within the everyday of the Romantic sublime, and Houdini’s descriptions of his flight and Bachelard’s analysis of images of aeriality both need to be placed within the important trajectory of the sublime as a modern category of experience.

The word ‘sublime’ came into English via a translation of Longinus’ *Peri Hypsos* that substituted the Greek noun *hypsos* with the Latin adjective *sublimis*, meaning ‘raised up’ to a threshold, especially of a door or lintel. This meaning was literally carried into its earliest uses in English, where it meant ‘set’ or ‘raised aloft’, as well as ‘high up’, ‘of things raised up’. The word was first used in English to describe the senses of flight or towering buildings.

The emergence of a fully formed discourse on Sublimity in the eighteenth century Europe took place firstly with Addison’s essay ‘The Pleasures of the Imagination’ published in 1712, Burke’s lengthy distinction between sublimity and beauty in the 1750s, and was followed by Kant’s ‘Analytic of the Sublime’ in 1790, elaborated the mixed emotions of a subject at its limits. Unable to describe phenomena and environments that were neither ugly nor beautiful, sublimity emerged within industrial culture as both a description of the modernist project and an real experience. The industrial revolution had created a world held in tension between awe an horror, in which ‘man’ became witness to scenes of creative destruction that animated strong emotions of both fear and desire. From its first uses in English and throughout this period, the sublime was above all an aesthetic of (upwards) movement rather than the static -- an internal ‘vibration’ in subjectivity which was brought about by a rapid alternation of repulsion and attraction to the same object.

The modern subject’s interest in the sublime as conceptual space beyond reason, but

---

36 Rosalind Williams notes that Longinus’ essay “was re-discovered and translated in the sixteenth century, neglected during most of the seventeenth, and then revived in the eighteenth in French translation by Boileau”, *Notes on the Underground*, p. 84.

37 As used by Dryden in 1697, “Two Poles turn round the globe, the first sublime in Heav’n, the last is whirl’d Below the Regions of the nether world”; Billingsly, 1657: “He’d rost her quick, and after throw her down/From the sublimest tower in the town”. ‘Sublime’, Oxford English Dictionary, vol. 2, 1971, p. 30.


41 Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 115 (Ak. 258).
still explorably, productively foreign, and about-to-be-made-useful, was based on a recognition of that which might be beyond human control, and at the edges of the humanist universe. This exterior limit to the humanly knowable is constructed through an interiorisation of a will to dominate and make productive territory (and others). The sublime erupts at the point immediately after reason meets a ‘block’ and the mind’s expansion is momentarily arrested. This movement of ‘block’ and ‘release’ is exemplified in Kant’s examples of the mathematically and dynamically sublime.

Kant’s first definition of sublimity, the mathematical sublime occurs in a ‘vast magnitude’ that the troubles the Enlightenment determination to map, describe, enumerate or categorise every possible earthly and heavenly phenomenon. The mathematical sublime needs as its pre-condition a magnitude that can be apprehended, but not comprehended. Kant poses as an example of this in the concept of infinity, which is apprehensible, but ultimately unrepresentable. In the Kantian mathematical sublime, nothing that could be an object of the senses could be sublime. Objects can be counted, positioned, diagnosed and categorised. For Kant’s Enlightenment subject, a human sensorium only recently equipped with microscopes and telescopes, everything that had previously been considered categorically small could now be transformed into an entire world, and that which had been previously seen as categorically distant, could now be demonstrated as relatively distant, further provoking attempts to map and understand the universe. These new technologies of perception revealed a contradiction in the subject that in its pleasure and pain revealed a sublime moment: “Our imagination strives to progress towards infinity, while our reason demands absolute totality.”

In parallel with the mathematical sublime, the dynamically sublime appeared when humans encountered nature as mighty, gigantic force, but were able to aestheticise that power as, after its liberation from myth, a force that had no dominance over man. This was explained by Kant to be present in the sensation of being fearful, without being afraid — as a non-aestheticised sensation of fear exhibits a relationship of dominance over man: “it is impossible to like terror that we take seriously”. So access to both the dynamically and the mathematical sublime proceed through recognising that which blocks or constrains, proving the superiority of mind over nature. The sublime’s persistence in modernity marks foundational need for a reaching towards limits of understanding in order to move forward, and thus deeply implicates the sublime in modernist narratives of progress. The sublime as a limit

---

42 Kant, Critique of Judgement, p. 108 (Ak. 250).
43 Kant, Critique of Judgement, p. 120 (Ak. 261).
experience of the bourgeois, male subject emerges within what Ann McClintock has called “dreams of dominating not only a boundless imperium of commerce but also a boundless imperium of knowledge”.

Emerging within the Romantic movements of the eighteenth century, an aesthetics of the sublime functioned as a repository for the inexpressible feelings and emotions that were tied to and exceeded the development of the modern individual by sublimating the individual’s relationship to nature. The most represented form of the sublime in the Romantic age was the icy peak of an unreachable mountain range, in particular the Swiss Alps, a conceptual space significantly distant from the world of science and reason, and a site that worked metonymically to express the sublimity that was fast disappearing in an age of documenting and explaining previously mysterious phenomena.

The Romantic sublime was a powerful discursive moment that reflected broader cultural obsessions with elevation, purity, the remote, the inexplicable and the ephemeral. However, the Romantic sublime was never beyond reason, but appeared exactly when reason confronted its own limit. The Romantic sublime appeared at the moment of the constitution of the modern individual subject. As this subject was defined as male, the sublime must be considered as a limit experience of masculinity. Indeed, a key text on the sublime at its peak in the Enlightenment era, Edmund Burke’s treatise published in 1759, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, distinguished between the sublime as a category of exteriorised experiences of the terrors and powers of nature and the merely beautiful as an interiorised, picturesque, domesticated aesthetic. This gendered interpretation has been perpetuated by twentieth century philosophers, such as Bertrand Russell summarising Kant through a set of familiar binary oppositions “Night is sublime, day is beautiful; the sea is sublime, the land is beautiful; man is sublime, woman is beautiful and so on.” The emergence of a discourse on a modern sublime within industrial culture has been noted by historians of science and technology, for instance in the recent studies by Rosalind Williams and David Nye. The sublime transforms the possible banality of urban environments by bifurcating modern space into a split spatiality and ordering of two opposed spheres: associations of private, domestic interiors with the contained qualities of femininity and beauty versus public evocation of masculinity and sublimity through the grand scale of engineering

---

and industrial projects.  

As Rosalind Williams has written of the emergence of ‘underground aesthetics’ of the early nineteenth century, the introduction of the iconography of the sublime in representations of the new industrial landscape by artists and writers provided a passage from natural sublimity to technological wonder. Noting that “sublime emotions are submissive ones”, Williams argues that the rhetoric of the sublime, when used to describe modern technology “implies technological determinism”.  

The evocation of sublime emotions in observers of modern engineering, construction and mining projects thus rests on two crucial emotional conditions, that are also political choices. Firstly, the ‘elevation’ of a political and social process of technological development into an autonomous, separated sphere. Secondly, a ‘distancing’ of the observer from any negative and threatening effects of this development. This elevation, intrinsic to the meaning of the word ‘sublime’ as noted above, combined with sensation of distance turns technology into an effect of ‘natural’ forces, and any disaster and destruction caused by such change into a ‘spectacle’ of progress.

The spaces that early aviators described and experienced were fantastic landscapes that miniaturised the city and its inhabitants and produced a panoramic field of vision. This landscape was formed by the aerial subject’s embeddedness within and access to both technologies of vision and technologies of travel and movement. Then, as now, air travel offered a moving subject mastery over the traversed space. This homologous ordering of a social space of domination, a psychical space of the self-contained subject and the technological space of travel along a vertical axis in Bachelard, means that, according to him, the higher one goes, the more one is able to avoid the modern psychical dysfunction displayed in neurosis, depression and phobia. He ultimately finds in his work that the modern subject needs a “courage to live in opposition to weight -- to live vertically”.  

Bachelard’s establishment of “the dialectical play between vertigo and victory” is a familiar one from modernist narratives of a separation from urban space that display a fear of proximity to and involvement with the space of the street and the crowd. To Bachelard, this aerial psyche is healthy and normal: “We will value the meaning of a healthy straightening up, growing tall, and carrying our heads high.”  

In the remaining section of this chapter, I want to suggest that the new technologies of flight that afforded exactly

---

49 Williams, Notes on the Underground, pp. 88-89.
50 Bachelard, Air and Dreams, p. 15.
51 Bachelard, Air and Dreams, p. 15.
these sensations reflected such an imagination of mobility. This was not for
transcendent, mythical reasons of psychological ‘growth’, but instead because they
produced mastery and indeed were developed to dominate space in such a literal
way.

aerial distraction

The facts of Houdini’s flight trace the first stages of the incorporation of aviation
technologies into the twentieth century quotidian: an initial excitement and focus on
the fantastic, spectacular aspect of the new machine-form followed by a
transformation of exactly these phantasmagoric, dream-like, magical elements of the
new into a managed and less risky attitude. This transformation of abject terror to
sublimity and eventually banality, from irrational ‘risk’ to rationalised ‘normality’
took place through a performance that demonstrated the successful human mastery
of the machine. Here, the theory of ‘distraction’ proposed in the writings of Siegfried
Kracauer demonstrates the changed function of sublimity in twentieth century
popular culture, as well as a critical angst over its decline and a resulting association
with the popular sublime as an emasculated, domesticated aesthetic.

Kracauer noticed that the new technological events of film exhibition were ‘framed’
in modern city spaces by the old-fashioned trappings of the theatre. This location of
cinema dissipated the ‘shock effect’ of technologically-mediated space on the viewer
through an excess of ‘distractions’ away from the screen itself. Kracauer, in an article
on ‘Berlin’s Picture Palaces’ in 1926, depicted the design of the picture theatre as a
‘reflex’ protecting the urban subject from the profound temporal and spatial
displacement attendant in any fully-felt perception of the cinematic experience:

A correct instinct will see to it that the need for entertainment is satisfied.
The interior design... serves one sole purpose: to rivet the viewer’s attention
to the peripheral, so that they will not sink into the abyss. The stimulations of
the senses succeed one another with such rapidity that there is no room left
between them for even the slightest contemplation. Like life buoys, the
refractions of the spotlights and the musical accompaniment keep the
spectator above water. The penchant for distraction demands and finds an
answer in pure externality; hence the irrefutable tendency, particularly in
Berlin, to turn all forms of entertainment into revues and, parallel with this
tendency, the increasing amount of illustrations in the daily press and in
periodical publications.52

These rituals of cinema reception mediated the implications of modern terror and urban disorientation. Especially by framing cinematic space within the outdated form of the theatre, the rapidity of sensory stimulations and the focus on the ‘peripheral’ kept the spectator anchored ‘above’ any sublime dissolution of the boundaries between of the reality and representation. In an essay on the destruction of the Linden Avenue arcade that was also a tribute to Benjamin’s ‘Arcades Project’, Kracauer noted that it was “a meaningful coincidence that two travel agencies flank the entrance to the arcade”. This tendency to unveil the radically new within the frame of tradition was a strategy that ‘masked’ social and spatial disintegration according to Kracauer. In close dialogue with Benjamin, and influenced by Simmel, Kracauer urged city folk to ‘see through’ this distracting frame and “aim radically toward a kind of distraction that exposes disintegration instead of masking it”.

Yet to reach its eventual habituation within the space of the city, the newness and strangeness of aviation was thus doubly coded within such pre-war performances as both utopic and dangerous. As ‘mass ornaments’, the flights of early aviators, if Kracauer is correct about such distractions, contained the potential for exposing the disintegration and fluidity of previously closed national boundaries that flying offered, while simultaneously potentialising the repressive tendencies the new technology that was foreshadowed in the increasing technologisation of war.

In 1925, Kracauer wrote about the growing enthusiasm for air travel in the 1920s that just as dance had “been transformed into a mere marking of time”, travel “has been reduced to a pure experience of space”. Kracauer believed, along with other cultural critics including Benjamin, that the technological change manifest in new cultural forms of “radio, telephotography... the expansion of land, air and water traffic... and speed records” was founded on a displacement and re-constitution of human sensory capacities through mechanical means. Travel and dance therefore were “the essential possibilities through which those in the grip of mechanisation can live... the double existence that is the foundation of reality”. As a new kind of

---


57 Kracauer, ‘Travel and Dance’, p. 70.

'distraction', such a popular embrace of speed and mobility explained for the masses their everyday displacements and dislocations at the same time as keeping them in their subordinated place. These accelerated cultural forms displayed the wide-spread social "addiction to a mere change of place or tempo" as a side effect "of the imperative to master in every sense the spatio-temporal realms opened up by technology (albeit not by technology alone)." Of relevance here, Kracauer believed that the 'spatio-temporal passions' of travel and dance delivered a "liberation from earthly woes, the possibility of an aesthetic relation to organised toil, [corresponding] to the sort of elevation above the ephemeral and the contingent that might occur within people's existence in the relation to the eternal and the absolute." The intimation of such a 'Beyond', immanent in technological diversions, within the Here and Now, offered a moment of sublime wonder within the everyday spaces and rhythms of early twentieth century. Kracauer and others saw the conquering of 'time within time' that new corporeal speeds of air travel offered the urban masses as a significant marker of the new proliferation and popularised forms of the sublime in the nineteenth century. I will further discuss the implications of this fragmentation of the sublime throughout in later chapters of this thesis, but to define it as Kracauer does, as an aesthetic relationship between self and object marked by spatio-temporal distance and alterity (beyond and unfamiliar). In its modern forms, the sublime was now immediately accessible through spatio-temporal practices such as travel. Yet Kracauer ultimately distinguishes between such a popular sublime and a 'real' sublime along the lines of authenticity -- the 'real' sublime is only available through contemplation. In contrast the speed of modern travel produces only an 'inauthentic' experience of the sublime in distraction.

The feminist Bakhtin scholar, Mary Russo, has lucidly argued in her book, *The Female Grotesque*, for an alternative reading of such distractions as instances of a carnivalesque and eccentric side of the sublime. She identifies the 'aerial sublime' a simultaneously "historical and imaginary" zone. An historically contingent space, it belongs "to the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century preoccupation with modernity and the specific technological contents of those Futurist aspirations for progress, associated with spectacle". The appeal of the 'aerial sublime' also rests on its imaginary potential as a site of diversion and distraction from the "very constrained spaces of normalisation", as well as a displacement of such constraints constituted within that very same version of modernity. In continuity with Kracauer, Russo perceives that this particular 'minor' version of the sublime has special appeal

59 Kracauer, 'Travel and Dance', p. 73.
60 Kracauer, 'Travel and Dance', p. 72.
62 Russo, *The Female Grotesque*, p. 11.
for marginalised subjects as it positively operates to “posit a realm of freedom within the everyday”. Yet Russo, in contrast to Kracauer does not pose any ‘real’ or authentic form of sublimity against this minor formation. Such a notion of distraction and diversion as a ‘domesticated’ sublime informs my reading of representations of modern travel and urban forms well beyond the historical context identified by Russo, because, no matter how far I have departed from Houdini’s flight, in both its indestructible optimism and joyful embrace of such technological diversions and refusal of a grand narrative of technological sublimity, as well as in its spatially specific dynamics -- of a triumph over technological claustrophobia and agoraphobia -- crops up over and over again. As later chapters argue the grand narrative space of the sublime is appropriated for national imaginaries of progress, making even minor sublimity complex and variously successful in its effects. The key to recognising the limits of such a minor sublime are in recognising the implications of the grand sublime as constructed through a changed relationship to death and the body, especially in its claims to transcend human death and its will to annihilation. This minor sublime, rather that a spectacular fascination with the death of the other as the ultimate moment of sublimity, constructs a contingent and humorous relationship to death through ‘necromimetic’ acts such as high flying and stunts. This is the sublime desacralised, desanctified: without its halo, stripped of its aura. As Marshall Berman describes Baudelaire’s prose poem ‘Loss of a Halo’, “in which the hero’s halo slips off his head and rolls through the mud -- rather than being torn off with a violent grand geste, as it was for Marx… -- evokes vaudeville, slapstick, the metaphysical pratfalls of Chaplin and Keaton”, modernity is a drama of desanctification. Berman demonstrates that the consumption and performance of art on the boulevard challenges the purity of the sublime. Drawing on Marx, Walter Benjamin wrote in the 1930s that the proximity of mass-produced, everyday the work of art through mechanical reproduction revealed that the artist was never a genius in direct communication with god or nature, but, less sublimely, cultural worker like any other “paid wage-labourer”.

63 Russo, The Female Grotesque, pp. 11-12.
64 Berman, All That is Solid Melts into Air, p. 157.
escapology

First performing in sideshows and circuses, during the late nineteenth century Houdini had come to be “known the world over as the ‘Handcuff King’” after he had made his ‘name’ pursuing the limits of mortality through various forms of escape, and acts which tested the threshold of life and death in most ingenious ways: throwing himself manacled into rivers, escaping padlocks and chains while immersed in tanks of water. He had done feasibility tests on a ‘buried alive’ trick, a near-fatal experiment that he would later attempt in Hollywood, which involved being buried while handcuffed under six feet of earth in a specially constructed coffin.

Especially sensitive to the publicity value of death in these gothic diversions, Houdini recognised that the new public spaces of the modern city offered new ways to appear to large numbers of people:

I knew, as everyone knows, that the easiest way to attract a crowd is to let it be known at a given time and place someone is going to attempt something that in the event of failure will mean sudden death. That’s what attracts us to the man who paints the flagstaff on the tall building, or to the ‘human fly’ who scales the walls of the same building.

His interest (some biographers have called it an obsession that paralleled his obsession with death) in aviation came at a time when he had mastered a variety of magic tricks, and they were becoming familiar and less shocking to his audience. Flying by itself was novel enough to make a man flying an attraction on its own, but Houdini also used the flights over Sydney and Melbourne to draw large crowds to his theater shows. Performances of the aerial, distracted sublime, the flights mediated and transformed the abject moment of death into an experiment with the fantastic, just as his other stunts had promised.

This passage that Houdini offered for his audience, and possibly for himself, from abjection to sublimity via carnival, are reflected in three events from Houdini’s visit to Australia which mediated and confused the certainty of any boundaries between death and life, the organic and inorganic. Firstly, Houdini’s trip to Australia, was partly motivated by the possibility of a respectful visit to the grave of an American

67 Brandon, The Life and Many Deaths of Harry Houdini, p. 146.
magician that Houdini idolized during the latter part of the 1890s. While in Sydney, Houdini did in fact locate and pay for the ongoing care of the grave of William Davenport, one of the 'Davenport Brothers', who had died while on tour in Australia in the late nineteenth century. Secondly, and less expectedly, Houdini had to negotiate the far more corporeal presence of death when on 18 February 1910, watched by twenty thousand people, he jumped into the Yarra River from Queen's Bridge in Melbourne. The impact of Houdini's plunge into the river dislodged a decaying corpse that bobbed to the surface and caused some of the spectators to think he had drowned. When Houdini re-surfaced it frightened him so much that he could not swim away and had to be hauled into the boat by his assistants. Thirdly, as he dedicated himself to gaining the prize offered by 'Taylor's Aerial League' to the first person to fly in Australia, Houdini used the plane to conquer his own 'depression and morbid thoughts'.

While he lovingly tended his plane and looked forward greatly to each flight, he eventually realised that it was an 'unhealthy obsession', when he was unable to sleep unless he was actually next to the aircraft at the airfield. At the end of the Australian trip, Houdini packed the plane away and never flew again to prevent further escalation of this mania. He wrote in his diary as he left Australia "It is time I had the plane packed, or it would have given me nervous prostration" and "Have not had much sleep for two months and seem now to have lost the habit." Several Houdini biographers psychologise these comments to explain Houdini's fascination with flying as an antidote to the claustrophobia he suffered, and further, associate his sublimation of such a fear of enclosed spaces with the Victorian spatial sensibility expressed in the stories of Edgar Allen Poe. In one Houdini biography, Bernard Meyer, a psychoanalyst, notes that Poe's Gothic sensibility infected even his stories about air travel, and when analysing Houdini's mania for flight, Meyer mentions Poe's story 'The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfall'. Elaborating the connection between air travel and death, Meyer makes apparent the repression and transformation of the abject, and immobile, moment of death in the sublimation of movement when Poe's "narrator explains that he had undertaken his aerial voyage as an alternative to committing suicide":

It was not that to life itself I had any positive disgust, but that I was harassed beyond endurance by the adventitious miseries attending my

---

situation... I determined to depart, yet live -- to leave the world, yet to continue to exist -- in short... I resolved... to force passage, if I could, to the moon.74

In both the imagined flight of 'Hans Pfall' and Houdini's real one, the practice of flight makes visible the subject's transcendent double -- 'to leave the world, yet to continue to exist' -- and brings an encounter with an 'other', uncanny space, not the entombed 'cellar' or 'grave' of as the territorialisation of Victorian fears of death, but the aerial beyond of modernist travel stories. These transformations mark a shift from nineteenth to twentieth obsessions, and illuminates the continuities and breaks that reflect the historical contingency of bodies, spaces and their limits. As well as marked by the 'aerial sublime', Houdini's interest in exploring the ultimate limits of the body in many forms of near death also marks the threshold of the uncanny in the modern city. Popular interest in Houdini's acts, and his own fascination with them, was founded on their status as liminal activities that invoke, yet also blur and confuse boundaries between self and other, life and death.

These practices are thus linked to the modernist sublime of air travel, and the production of a distinctly modern aerial psyche, from its very beginnings. In the sense that Houdini figured and materialised a discourse of bodily exhilaration by 'conquering' death, he is imbricated in the techno-spatial practices of modernity. In order to displace the narrative of aviation as an 'official' and ordered practice ever so slightly, I outline the pre-history of Houdini's trip to Australia in the context of necromimetic entertainments of the carnival. From this perspective, it is possible to see flying as a specifically modern instance what Marcel Mauss would call a 'technique of the body'.75 This embodiment within technological space mimes a practical topology of transition and spatial play outside of the territory of the technocrat. Houdini, and other stunt pilots, subverted the tendency to include aviation as official culture for the ways in it could produce national space.

Houdini and his acts must be located in diaspora of carnival that took place in Europe from the seventeenth century onwards, and his person as Houdini, rather than Erich Weiss is deeply implicated with the history of the freak and the site of the fair in European culture. Houdini exemplified the self-made man: like the prostitutes described by Walter Benjamin in his study of Baudelaire, he also configured the new relationship between subject and object, commodity and seller, as placed his own body in the circuit of production and consumption and thus became of seller and commodity in one person. His performances, in the tradition of other performers

---

who displayed their unusual physical abilities for money, were labours of the self. This new relationship between body and commodity is touchingly described in a letter from John Brooks, a nineteenth century carnival performer, whose life Houdini studied closely for information about his carnival tricks:

To Mr. T. Dibdin, Esq. Prietor of the Royal Circus.
May 1st, 1817.

Sir:
I have taken the Liberty of Writing those few lines to ask you the favour if a Greeable for me to Come to your House, as I Can do a great many different things i Can Sing a good Song and i Can Eat Boiling hot Lead and Rub my naked arms With a Red hot Poker and Stand on a Red hot sheet of iron, and do Diferent other things. – Sir i hope you Will Excuse me in Riting I do not Want any thing for my Performing for i have Got a Business that will Sirport me I only want to pass a Way 2 or 3 Hours in the Evening.

Sir i hope you Will Send me an Answer Weather Agreeeple or not.
I am your Humble Servant,
J.B.
Direct to me No. 4 fox and Knot Court King Street Smithfield.76

Houdini was a dedicated historian of the tradition of strong men and women, stone and sword swallowers, fire walkers and poison eaters. He paid tribute to and carried out detailed studies of other carnival performers in the West from ‘Madame Girardelli: The Celebrated Fireproof Female’ to ‘Chamouni, the Russian Salamander’. The latter was described by a contemporary as “insensible, for a given time, to the effects of heat”:

He was remarkable for the simplicity and singleness of his character, as well as for that idiosyncrasy in his constitution, which enabled him for so many years, not merely to brave the effects of fire, but to take a delight in an element where other men find destruction. He was above all artifice, and would often entreat his visitors to melt their own lead, or boil their own mercury, that they might be perfectly satisfied of the gratification he derived from drinking these preparations. He would also present his tongue in the most obling manner to all who wished, to pour melted lead upon it and stamp an impression of their seals.

At the Argyle Rooms, London, in 1829, Mons. Chabert, the Fire-King, exhibited his powers of resisting poisons, and withstanding extreme heat. He swallowed forty grains of phosphorus, sipped oil at 333° with impunity, and rubbed a red-hot fire-shovel over his tongue, hair, and face, unharmed.

On September 23d, on a challenge of 50 pounds, Chabert repeated these feats and won the wager; he next swallowed a piece of burning torch; and then, dressed in coarse woollen, entered an oven heated to 380°, sang a song, and cooked two dishes of beef steaks.77

As Stallybrass and White observe in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* during the nineteenth century, the fair was symbolically split into two separate spaces: on the one hand a low, dirty and extraterritorial zone pleasure of hybrid and polluting pleasures and, on the other, a nationally economically useful urbanising force of consumption and display. Thus a problematic site and time for British political institutions well into the twentieth century: “the emergent middle classes worried away at it [the fair], particularly striving to separate and consolidate the binaries which the fair so mischievously seemed to intermix and confuse”.

While some fairs were banned for their tendency and potential to encourage licentiousness and debauchery and other moral evils, the fairs that survived and proliferated in the nineteenth century Britain successfully incorporated the new economic relations of a consumer society that needed a space of interconnection and circulation of goods and services that the fair could offer.

Occurring at the cusp of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Houdini’s trademark acts as an escapist speculated the now outmoded apparatus of a disciplinary society. Houdini’s escape acts were still extremely popular at the time of his flight in 1910. In Houdini’s stage acts, the acts that were advertised and promoted during his flights, the signifiers of juridical and bio-power, of the state’s increasing monopoly of violence, were marked physically on his flesh and then spectacularly overcome. In the photographs that remain as traces of his acts involving handcuffs, chains and ropes, the entire system of signification of class discipline and slavery is doubled and fetishised by the excessiveness of his displays and the poses that he choreographs for the camera. In a speech reported in *The Sydney Mail* after his Sydney flight Houdini announced that he had completed his project to ‘conquer’ the four elements: “Fire, water, earth and air”:

- Fire – when I leaped handcuffed and manacled into boiling malt – be sure I did not stay there long.
- Water – when I leaped handcuffed and manacled into icy rivers, where it was death if I missed my dive – death if I could not get free.
- Earth, night after night, mastering the resistance of matter to the flesh and the will.
- Air – when I made the first sustained aeroplane flight in Australia; others invented the aeroplane, but as long as there is Australia, I am the first to fly in Australia.

Here, I would like to suggest that the handcuffs and chains -- and the aeroplane itself -- become fetishes of the sublime and the abject in the sense that Jean Baudrillard has

---

78 Stallybrass and White, p. 31.
79 Houdini, ‘Aeroplane flight at Rosehill’, *Sydney Mail*, 20 April 1910, p. 28.
described in his essay on ‘Fetishism and Ideology’ in For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign. Significantly, and against the dominant psychoanalytic model of the fetish as associated with ‘lack’, Baudrillard sees fetishes not as intrinsically psychologised and sexually alienated objects, but positive and productive of signification in itself. Baudrillard saw the inherent superficiality and excess of the fetish as its key characteristic: a prop in a mimetic process that is ultimately bricolage rather than reification. Baudrillard points to the etymology of the word ‘fetish’ as displacing the psychoanalytic model of phallic symbolism, because the word means ‘fabrication’ in its most material sense, and thus explains its historically specific practice as labour of appearances and signs. Houdini’s performances of bondage and escape, although they might well have originated from a personal drama of sexual fetishism for him as an individual grappling with problematic Victorian pleasures, his displays of such punitive fetish objects in the public and exteriorised sites of the city questions any readings of performance as being entirely about private, asocial, sexual desires and dysfunction.

Curiously, and most importantly for underlining the position taken by Russo towards the sublime, and a position that seems more useful than an insistence on the sublime as a unique and transcendent category of knowledge, Susan Sontag in her influential essay ‘Notes on Camp’ identifies the essence of ‘camp’ as the love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration that which is overdetermined by culture, deliberately and scrupulously fake. This labour of signs, particularly of re-inscribing dead signs with aesthetic significance, works by recalling fashions that are no longer fashionable, thus transforming the purely outmoded and use-valueless category of ‘kitsch’ to the more exchange-valued ‘camp’. Useful here in tracing the relationship between fetishes, the sublime and technological distraction, Sontag has said that writing her essay she had first started from the problem “how to name a sensibility” and then looked for an object of the senses to fit within the problem: “notes on morbidity was my first choice”, and this focus produced her essay titled ‘Notes on Camp’ rather than ‘Notes on Death’. Thus in Houdini’s real fakery, an architectonics of punishment and thus a ‘renunciation of spatio-temporal fixity’

---

80 Jean Baudrillard, ‘Fetishism and Ideology’, For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, Telos Press, St. Louis, p. 91. The noun ‘fetish’ derives from the Portuguese ‘feitiço’, which means ‘artificial’ and is thus derived from the Latin ‘factitus’. The descent of the verb to ‘fetishise’ from the French verb for ‘doing’ (faire), is evident to Baudrillard in the crucial emphasis on exteriors and surfaces in fetishism, related to a Spanish word, ‘afectar’, which means to make-up, to paint, to adorn, to embellish. See also Ann McClintock, ‘Psychoanalysis, Race and Female Fetishism’ in Imperial Leather, pp. 181-187.

81 Several biographers read these performances as signs of Houdini (or rather Erich Weiss’) sexual impotence, in particular Ruth Brandon, The Life and Many Deaths of Harry Houdini.

(Kracauer) is displaced onto a minor and camped aesthetics of the aerial sublime.

Calling himself a ‘Liberator’, rather than a magician or a performer Houdini enlisted the discourse of modern democratic liberation to triumph over the distinctly outdated and rather medieval signifiers of royal subjectification and bondage that reappeared in his acts in the fetishised objects of the torture chamber: chains and handcuffs. Occurring immediately after what Michel Foucault’s observes as the trend towards non-corporeal punishments in the name of patient welfare in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Houdini’s acts fetishised the technology of punishment. Foucault’s analysis shows that punitive spectacles -- especially public executions which were the most spectacular form of pain or painful form of spectacle -- disappeared from urban public spaces around one hundred to fifty years before Houdini started using them in his acts. When the reformist emphasis on shaping men’s souls that emerged in the nineteenth century displaced the previous medieval punitive model that marked men’s crimes onto their bodies, pain itself as punishment and spectacle was eliminated from the public sphere.83

The ways in which Houdini performed his body in this newly fetishised technological zone also marked the end of the specifically medieval version of the grotesque body-in-becoming that Bakhtin discerns in Rabelais, and which Houdini so deliciously describes in the his Miracle Mengers book. This grotesque was embodied especially by the carnival performers who appeared to eat cats and dogs alive and then reproduce them whole from other orifices as easily as they swallowed boiling oil and sang bawdy songs. In Bakhtin’s writing, this devouring and leaky grotesque body is opposed to the classical body which has no orifices thus remains closed, static and distanced from the world. In the aerial sublime practiced by Houdini and so fascinating to his audience, the classical and the grotesque bodies cannot be opposed: here, the grotesque body transforms into an architecture of surfaces and planes. Handcuffs, chains and straightjackets turn the performer’s body into architecture, matter from which to be liberated. Houdini performed his practice of ‘liberation’ from the body through his strategic retranslation of body as depth, with entrance and exits, into surface. He refigured the transgressive body of the grotesque as he wriggled and stretched the boundaries of his body by expanding and contracting the volume that he displaced in air, water or earth.

The moment at which the new technologies of representation interface multiple spaces and times within the frame of the everyday constitutes the moment at which the topology of the self offered by the grotesque body-in-becoming ends. It is here

that I seek to map the profoundly shift in spatiality that contests the conditions of
distance and passivity that produce the sublime and camps, trivialises and
domesticates its grandiosity. As Russo notes, it is not quite the Bakhtinian
carnavalesque body of grotesque realism, the body that Stallybrass and White
describe as “multiple, bulging, over or under-sized, protuberant and incomplete”,
but another kind of performance that Houdini offers, which affirms and troubles the
sublime’s claims to transcend body and history. The body that Houdini performed
and materialised in his tricks and eventually in flight was over-coded as contained,
cultured, disciplined and individualised. This body stands against what Bakhtin
called grotesque realism, in the semiotic practices of carnival rituals that
deconstructed both abjection and the sublime by casting down pomposity, loftiness
and seriousness into the earth and re-commencing the process of life: the grotesque
body articulated life with death. The grotesque, unlike the sublime, constituted death
as a positive process through its serial structure of birth, death, and re-birth.

Houdini’s hard body was ‘impervious’ to the spectacular punishments of modernity,
and survived flying, yet he reached into the grotesque by the excessive nature of the
acts he attempted. Like the transformation of abjection by playful and make-believe
heroic acts such as the Chinese Water Torture Cabinet, the Buried Alive trick, flying
in the early twentieth century relocated the human body to a hitherto un-liveable
environment. This environment had previously been associated with certain death
and destruction.

Such modern performances question the human relationship with organic ‘nature’ by
embracing technology as a ‘second nature’, particularly in technological means of
habitation and travel. Still founded in carnival ambivalence, yet profoundly
transformed by technology, Houdini’s flight was located in the transit between
binaries of human and technology, nature and culture. This twisting, folding, and
bending of social space, which devalued flying as lofty and serious pursuit, unfixed
and unmoored the sublime from its relegation to a silent and static beyond and
brought it into dialogue with the everyday pleasures of bodily and perceptual
movement. This camping of the sublime was constructed within the eccentric yet
everyday spaces in which Houdini performed. Houdini knew that such excessive
states of feeling were best framed within liminal places of the city: the fairground,
the theatre and the bridge. They could not operate in everyday contexts but neither
can they be so distant as to be entirely sublime. Retrospectively, Kracauer’s
characterisation of travel and dance as a kind of alternative topography of the urban
figures a modern topology of affect that this ‘aerial’ sublime might be executed
within.
As Houdini concluded of the domestication of the itinerant fireproof females and human salamanders and their consignment to a trivialised popular culture in dime-museums in the late nineteenth century, before vaudeville established another ‘other’ space of popular pleasures:

The dime museum is but a memory now, and in three generations it will, in all probability, be utterly forgotten. A few of the acts had sufficient intrinsic worth to follow the managers into vaudeville, but these have no part in this chronicle, which has been written rather to commemorate some forms of entertainment over which oblivion threatens to stretch her darkening wings.84

Joy flights and air shows have been persistent forms of distraction well beyond the early twentieth century, but Houdini’s first flight stands as first instance from which such spatio-temporal spectacles have been derived. Houdini’s flight, for all its welding of the new spatio-temporal passion for technology to the older forms of the carnival stands as a ‘dead’ form of entertainment, and has now been relegated to the ‘dime museum’ of aviation history in Australia. It is very rarely mentioned by aviation historians, who instead begin the narrative of air travel within the frame of the nation, claiming air space as a continent discovered by Australian explorers rather than a side-show freak.

the city and the aerodrome: over the city

Subsequent descriptions of flying as a modern activity further articulated discourses on the sublime with the modern city. In Sydney, however, the construction of places for this new practice was not easily achieved. Air travel, as a modern phenomenon, from its earliest appearances in the 1910s troubled the modernisation process.

Firstly, there were no formal places for aeroplanes to take off and land, posing significant problems for planners and flyers, as the landing grounds were crucial to the smooth operation of the technology. In the case of Sydney, the Ascot racecourse was used by visiting aviators to perform short flights such as the Sydney Morning Herald reported in May 1911.85 The writer begins his article with the reflection that “[s]ome years ago visionary prophets foretold that the day would come when men would fly over the city of Sydney and circle the Post Office clock.”86

84 Houdini, Miracle Mongers, p. 240.
85 Ascot racecourse was near the present site of the airport. According to C. E. Johnston in 1921, “The Ascot Racecourse trams run to within half a mile of the aerodrome”.
86 ‘Over the city...’, Sydney Morning Herald, 5 May 1911, p. 13.
While the ‘prophets of modernity’ are themselves fascinatingly mythical figures—dreaming into existence flying men—these flying men embodied specifically British and Imperial desires for an aerial mobility that was needed as colonial empires and trade routes expanded. This mobility was realised in the twentieth century in the form of mechanical flight. The formative alliance made between the movement of the aviator’s plane and his perspective on the city is an extension of this mobility into the realm of aesthetic and psychological experience:

The aviators... enjoyed the finest panoramic view of Sydney Harbour that has ever been vouchsafed to a living soul. Balloonists have gone up a few hundred feet and have gone into raptures over the prospect. But no one had yet seen the city and its waterways under such ideal conditions.  

Until this moment, the lofty position of the aviator was an experience that could be pictured, described, and imagined, as Bachelard’s study showed, but could not be consumed on a mass level until the 1910s. The aviator took up the gaze of the tourist, looking down on spectacles of natural beauty from towers and mountains, but he was also able to express the vision of the planner and mapper of the city. The aviator moved above the limited view of the horizontal to perform the “imaginary totalisation” of what Michel de Certeau calls the “panorama city”. The recording, reproduction and dissemination of such visuality was crucial, as newspapers and photographic publishers sold the aviator’s vision to eager audiences.

The 1911 flights were at first unrecorded from the viewpoint of the aviator, but not for long as the Sydney Morning Herald reported that it “was understood Mr Macdonald will make a flight along the coast at 9 o’clock this morning, when he will take a photographer with him.” The aviator’s point-of-view in panoramic space as he flew over the landscape, represented the city as a form that could not be apprehended by the individual at ground level. Walter Benjamin, in his ‘Work of Art’ essay attributed this need for mass reproduction to the need to ‘see’ the masses: Mass movements are usually discerned more clearly by the camera than by the naked eye. A bird’s eye view best captures gatherings of hundreds of thousands. And even though such a view may be accessible to the human eye as it is to the camera, the image received by the human eye cannot be enlarged the way a negative is enlarged. This means that mass movements, including war, constitute a form of human behaviour which particularly favours mechanical equipment.

87 ‘Over the city...’, p. 13.
89 ‘Over the city...’, p. 13.
When this imaginary totalisation of the mass takes place, representation places the city as a whole in the realm of disembodied experience. The 'othered' and totalised mass inhabits the city seen from the air and offers the individual a position of mastery through technological perception. Stephen Tyler has called this visual 'matrix' or pictorial view “the ultimate thought picture of Western desire”. The construction of city-dwellers knowledge of their own city, and thus themselves as a mass, through aerial photography was promoted by newspapers that featured accounts and pictures from the flights by Hammond, as well as many later aviators. On 10 May, the *Sydney Mail* reported on the union of 'Aeroplane and camera' in an ascent by their photographer on a foggy Sydney morning: “Across Botany in a fog: what the eye of the camera had to pierce...’ The eye of the camera could barely penetrate the all-enveloping fog, but it is possible to pick out the general ‘scheme’ of the landscape, and, such as it is, the photograph might well represent all that a military aeroplane could achieve under favourable conditions.”

At this stage of aviation, flying was not specific to any one site, but planes landed where ever they could, usually on racecourses and sporting fields. During the May flight, the crowd waiting at Ascot racecourse anticipated the spectacular landing of the aviator: “guessing his [the pilot Hammond’s] whereabouts... Handkerchiefs were fluttering, hats waving and the crowd inside and outside the grounds cheered madly as the bi-plane sped nearer”. At an earlier flight in April -- “not a high one as flights go, but... a wonderful demonstration of the art of aviation” -- a large crowd paid admission to the racecourse to watch the demonstration and as did “some several thousands of people on the neighbouring hills, while many others were perched on fences and on the tops of houses”. Both events were framed as sporting events held on a playing ground rather than as a form of travel that needed a station similar to that of a railway (the report of Hammond appeared in the sporting section of the newspaper next to an item about European golf tournaments: ‘Golf abroad - French player’s superiority’). Flights during this period were more about travelling

---

21, p.244
92 ‘Sensational Flight over Harbour and City’, *Sydney Mail*, 10 May 1911, p. 29.
93 ‘Sensational Flight over Harbour and City’, p. 29.
94 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 April 1911.
Fig 2.2  'Sensational Flight over Harbour and City', *Sydney Mail*, 10 May 1911, p. 29.
Fig 2.2

‘Across Botany in a fog: what the eye of the camera had to pierce…’, Sydney Mail, 10 May 1911, p. 29.
over the city than travelling from one city to another; they did not yet serve the purpose of city gates linking a metropolitan network, but were instead an extension of the visual space of towers and panoramas.

The conditions that made an aerodrome necessary were to come after the First World War with the establishment of an aircraft company in Sydney. Nigel B. Love, an Australian war pilot who had fought in France, returned to Sydney in September 1919 after negotiating an agency agreement with a Manchester aircraft company The agreement included as a business objective to “establish an aerodrome in Sydney”95. Love’s function as “the first member of the new partnership to arrive in Australia [was] to proceed to investigate the prospects setting up an aerodrome as close as possible to the city of Sydney”.96

Love, in his biography, explicitly describes his project as a mission to bring Australia out of the “backwater of Western civilisation”.97 His narrative describes his own euphoria in flying and his own pleasures in seeing the city as a panorama. After leasing a bullock paddock for flying operations at Mascot, south of the city on the shores of Botany Bay, and incorporating the company in October 1919, he awaited the arrival of the planes:

My special interest of course was the arrival of the Avro’s from England. To know that I had a brand new aerodrome already established in a wonderful spot and all ready to be used, naturally made me feel most anxious for the arrival of the machines so that I could once more get my hand in on the joy stick and have a look at our fair city of Sydney from the air.98

Gradually the aerodrome was made part of the city after 1919, and was integrated into an urban network of transport and connection between places. This traffic function of the aerodrome rested on the incorporation of air space into the urban network. The modernist urban “language of movement, not monument”99 that was to characterise a particular urban vision, and echo the Futurist manifesto with its emphasis on speed and mobility, directed aesthetic and bureaucratic attention alike to places of transit and exchange like aerodromes. The urbanist principles of planning that Walter Benjamin described in the Arcades Project whereby “[r]ailways penetrated to the heart of Paris, and railroad stations took over the function of city gates”100 were also influential on the establishment of an aerodrome “as close as

possible to the centre” of Sydney. As a distinctly twentieth-century form of transport, air travel superceded railways as the nineteenth-century ‘modern’. Faster than rail travel and able to negotiate previously inaccessible routes over sea and high mountains, air travel reflected a new phase of modernity, though like rail travel, spaces of technologised travel “were the referent, and progress the sign, as spatial movement became so wedded to the concept of historical movement that these could no longer be distinguished.”\textsuperscript{101} The form had shifted, but not the narrative, as progress was again imagined in terms of speed conquering the ‘distance’ and tradition. By opening up flight paths to other countries, the distance between England and Australia was imagined to be ‘annihilated’. Sydney as the State capital of a recently federated nation was still the primary node in a metropolitan network that was connected with London as the Imperial centre and a point in European urban network. The choice of Sydney as the capital of Australian aviation was not arbitrary, but one that was drawn to an already existing system of international cultural and economic exchange, ‘the British Empire’. This new technology of space constructed a sense of urban location that was “beyond both city and nation in their older senses” as Raymond Williams has remarked, and thus reflected and stabilised new and open social, economic and cultural relations within the frame of the declining Imperial network.

The first event to produce the aerodrome as city gate to Imperial space was with Ross Smith’s flight from England to Australia in November 1919. Nigel Love enthused that “The successful achievement of this flight was of the highest possible significance to Australia as Ross Smith and his gallant band did, in reality, blaze the trail of man’s first flight between Europe and this country, surely an historical event of the first magnitude to us.”\textsuperscript{102} This ‘gallant trail-blazing’ came after the Australian government offered a £10,000 prize to the first successful flight. Ross Smith’s flight was originally planned not to land in Sydney but to go directly to Melbourne. The possibility of Melbourne acting as the terminal to the new urban network caused concern to NSW state politicians who were promoting their metropolitan vision:

> As you may readily understand this caused considerable consternation in political circles in New South Wales and W. Holman, then State Premier, made it his business to see that an invitation was extended to visit the mother capital city of the Commonwealth on route to the Southern city.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing*, p. 91.
Fig 2.3 First international flight arriving Mascot, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 February 1920.
The A.V. Roe company, the company Love worked for, also sent a telegram to the international flight extending “an invitation to land at its aerodrome at Mascot, position extreme Northern corner Botany bay landing ground marked with a white circle”. After colliding with a hawk and subsequent propeller damage in Queensland, the first international flight arrived at Mascot on 11 February 1920 (see Fig 2.3).

Love praised the heroic actions of these aviators in his biography. He described them as:

the magnificent pioneers of this wonderful science of man-made flight. What courage and vision these people all had and what personal sacrifices they made in search of that brilliant goal of theirs, the annihilation of distance, particularly over the world’s oceans.  

This construction of the air explorer-hero was a powerful agent in conjuncture of the political and economic forces that produced the means for international flight. The pioneers were not lone adventurers discovering new routes to distant lands, but were rather effects in a new constellation of forces which had necessitated and contributed to a technological system of air travel. The aerodrome was an important installation in this ‘annihilation of distance’, and represented a new kind of space for the city. Somewhere between a railway station and a sea port, the aerodrome became a place for performing ties with the centre of the Empire from its furthest periphery. This flight consolidated Sydney’s status as a world metropolis in the age of air travel. The imagination of Sydney as such a modern place expressed a global embrace of technological space of aviation, but had specific local effects that I will explore in the next chapter, and unfolded across the rest of the twentieth century.

* * *

In this chapter I have outlined the pre-history of the aerodrome, as it was constructed between 1910 and 1919. The centrality of the sublime to modern categories of experience raises questions about the construction of the modern within (and by) a desire for travel. The establishment of the aerodrome in the 1910s and 20s worked out some of these desires within a built form and a symbolic one. The first flight by Houdini in Sydney, and in Australia, was analysed as a popular, distracted version of the sublime: the ‘aerial’ sublime.

This historical formation of the desire to fly, to experience the mobility afforded by

aviation technology depended upon an experience of space as transparent and vertically accessible — something that the advent of technologies of travel such as airships and planes contributed to. It also rests on a conception of space as immaterial, a persistent notion that becomes extremely problematic when it evacuates any real people or things from the space that is traversed, allowing an unsituated observer to maintain a view from nowhere.

In further chapters I will be exploring in greater detail other modern figures in the construction of the aviator as hero (and the relative absence of the aviatrix). For now, the aerodrome was firmly established in the heroic mode of urban and world-scale space, as has been shown from the documents I have analysed in this section. In tracing the development of the aerodrome as such a space, in further chapters I will be tracing both its disintegration and continual recuperation as ‘modern’, and as the construction of Australia’s imaginary relation to global space at the site of the airport.

These complications have given rise to practical questions — how was a large, busy, international airport built in a place that would obviously pose problems for people who lived close by? How has it remained in this place, and how has its operation been ensured since this time? What other possibilities might there have been than the state of things now? The notion of Sydney, and other capitals, as a ‘world city’, productive of, and embedded in, a global system of exchange has developed in tension with local movements which attempt to develop a sense of place and locality based on an awareness of particular environments and historical forces. ‘Essentialising’ the local will never encompass in any particular site heterogeneous and complex social relations into a singular, unitary, total space. Taking these questions as indicative of an instability in modernity itself, throughout this analysis I emphasise the location of the airport as accidental rather than planned. The persistent problems of its integration into the larger built environment of Sydney counteracts any claims that such spaces are made in the name of order, rationality and totalising objectives of a complete urban design.
chapter three:

Cities of circulation:
the engineer/architect and
the grand plan

... in less than ten years the whole world could fly.¹

The defining characteristic of the modernist cultural movements that emerged in early twentieth century Europe was their embrace of a radical new aesthetics of machine forms. The Italian Futurists were not alone in their enthusiasm for a fusion of the human body and technology through a dissolution of the boundaries between the ‘subjective’ world of the artist and poet and the ‘objective’ world of the aviator and engineer.

Modernist architects in particular, especially aware that spatial design shaped human activities, sought to re-shape the built environment for mobile modern citizens in a new age of movement and speed. The aesthetics of the interwar period was defined by this new mobility: although whether such mobility was allied to further entrenching domination by powerful elites, as imagined in the Futurist manifesto, as an expression of an explicitly anti-feminist and pro-military politics that resisted any real change to existing gender, class and racial categories; or whether the new fluidity was going to challenge oppression, as the Communist-inspired art movements desired, was a political question. In 1920s and 30s Germany, National Socialist architectural discourse especially criticised the degenerate ‘nomadity’ of left-wing modernist architectural designs. In a series of articles published during the 1932 election campaign, the editors of the leading National-Socialist architectural journal declared the Bauhaus the “cathedral of Marxism” and rejected their designs as ideologically and structurally faulty:

They believed that ‘the house is an instrument like an automobile’...
Thus these men reveal their character as typical nomads of the metropolis,
who no longer understand blood and soil... The new dwelling is an
instrument for the destruction of the family and the race... Bolshevism, the

The slogan ‘the house is a machine for living’ had been popularised during the 1920s by Le Corbusier in a series of calls for a ‘new architecture’ founded on the new speeds of modern traffic. As a progressive and modernist architect allied with the European Left, the French architect, Le Corbusier imagined the future city as much improved and profoundly democratised by a universally available mobility. Le Corbusier’s designs for modern buildings introduced the spatial transparency that new construction materials -- concrete, steel and glass -- offered to mass housing, not just the bourgeois home. Through daily living inside such houses all inhabitants could experience modern spatiality. Le Corbusier’s designs worked to dissolve the opacity of walls and rooves in order to create a sense of inner and outer spaces as fluid and continuous. Not only in the buildings themselves, but through a discourse of urbanism, in an application of engineering principles to the organisation and layout of cities, Le Corbusier expressed the modernist cultural program through architecture to offer all citizens this new mobility. While the memory of, and potential for, wartime uses of aviation still troubled Le Corbusier, and other modernist designers, his vision of aviation and other transportation technologies was assuredly utopian, allied to peacetime activities of travel for pleasure and economic exchange. Although he would moderate his initial ideas on the nature of the relationship between urban mobility and urban dwelling over his lifetime, Le Corbusier’s writings in the 1920s and 30s placed primary importance on the former rather than the latter.

In early twentieth century Australia, as in other countries, the new technologies of mass production offered the potential of a new machine age of cleanliness, tidiness, convenience and control for all urban citizens. At the same time as troubling established spatio-temporal orders, new technologies also functioned to maintain the order of modern space. Especially prominent in the modernist urban imaginary, transport technologies, as well as introducing a new fluidity, were imagined to help maintain boundaries between self and other, home territory and foreign matter. As a sign and agent of the new mobility, aviation technology took a privileged place in the articulation of modern urbanism. This relationship between healthy, ordered modern space and aviation was increasingly represented in advertising and popular culture after the end of the First World War. In September 1919, an advertisement for ‘Hearne’s Bronchitis Cure’ from the Sydney Morning Herald showed a young woman

---

3 Le Corbusier, Towards a new architecture, p. 100.
flying a plane (see Fig 3.1 on following page). Below the plane’s undercarriage was a gigantic bottle of the bronchitis cure and she was ‘bombing’ germs named ‘chest trouble’, ‘colds’, ‘coughs’, and ‘croup’ while looking ahead and casually piloting her plane.4

Drawing an analogy between the technology of modern war and modern medicine, the battlefield and the home, the aerial ‘cure’ shows the ‘mother’ destroying childhood ailments by aerial bombardment. The clean and proper space of the body is maintained, and its invasion by diseases prevented, by a crucial interplay between the technology of war and domestic space. The modernist spatial strategies of the ‘city of circulation’ advocated by Le Corbusier sought to achieve a similar effect of healthy bodies and homes, by introducing light, space and movement into the urban plan. Through a discourse on the separation of the spheres of domesticity, labour and leisure and the technologisation of movement as a key to linking them together, Le Corbusier believed that such a ‘properly designed’ modern city would produce healthy mass culture.

As the new form of air transport became available as a potential vehicle for transporting goods, and as a mode of travel for the general public, the problems for urban planners and building designers became pressing. The question faced by city planners in the age of flight was exactly how to introduce and manage such a new kind of space in the city, the space of technological flows. The nineteenth century city had been planned for monumentality, offering its citizens spectacular vistas to civic spaces and buildings based on the planning concept of the ‘City Beautiful’. The resulting urban form was not a ‘city of circulation’ as imagined by Le Corbusier and other progressive architects. The modern urban network needed to give space for and manage mass mobility, in automobility as well as interurban and international flights, and new kinds of buildings had to be designed for housing air travellers and planes. After the spectacular performances of Houdini and other flyers before the war, Australia’s ‘conquest of the air’ had begun, but a stable connection between the new empire of the air and the modern metropolis had yet to be forged. Aviation

---

4 ‘A plain fact...’ (advertisement for ‘Hearne’s Bronchitis Cure’), Sydney Morning Herald, 18 September 1919, p. 5.
Fig 3.1  A plain fact…’ (advertisement for ‘Hearne’s Bronchitis Cure’),
*Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 September 1919, p. 5.
technologies needed somewhere to interface with the terrestrial city, or Sydney itself as an urban centre would be obsolete.

This chapter argues that the construction of the new ‘city of circulation’, even as it dissolved old boundaries, was an articulation of new kind of social order that rested on the separation of urban spaces and the maintenance of their resulting uniformity. By examining the establishment of the aerodrome in Sydney as a project of such spatial separation and disposal to modernist ‘circulation’, this chapter examines the ways in which the governmental drives to thus ‘monologise’ the space of the aerodrome could not be perfectly realised from their very inception. The assertion of local rights to space and some political doubts about the proper place of ‘airspace’ in such a national project are closely investigated as they cast doubts upon the possibility of such a unification of the city.

constructing the engineer/architect

We may then affirm that the airplane mobilized invention, intelligence and daring; imagination and cold reason.5

To Le Corbusier and other architects of the Bauhaus, the citizen who could fully participate in the new age of the machine had to embody the qualities of self-discipline and the technical sensibility needed to survive and master the speed of propellor travel. In this particular understanding of modernity, the formal qualities of the modern technology such as aeroplanes were seen to produce a profoundly changed aesthetic for the twentieth century: modernist aesthetics became enamoured of machine mobility and its attendant sensations of speed. The technical rationality that guided design and artistic practice was founded on what Hillel Schwartz has called ‘a new kinaesthetic’.6 Schwartz argues in his essay ‘Torque: The New Kinaesthetic of the Twentieth Century’ that a series of inventions at the turn of the nineteenth century -- the zipper, the automobile, the escalator, the conveyor belt, the phonograph, the typewriter, ‘the photographic gun’ -- “made possible a significantly different sense of physical movement”.7 These sensations were disseminated in the application of technology to the sites everyday life (clothes, shopping, work, leisure), and as they became more cheaply produced, were consumed on a mass level.

5 Le Corbusier, Toward a new architecture, p. 101.
Looking back to the first appearances of flying in the city, a persistent problem is underlined in that the *technological space* of aviation preceded its smooth territorialisation in the *spatial technology* of the airport, posing design problems for modernist architects, some of whom envisaged an entirely different future from the eventual sterile, engineered built form that the airport has become. Walter Benjamin’s notion, influenced by a surrealist poetics of the mundane, of modernity as something both rational and ‘dreamt’, conscious and unconscious, real and imagined offers a way of understanding the ways in which this problem has been managed. Early representations of aviation illustrate the differing imaginaries of form and function that expressed the fundamentally altered relations of the modern world for architects and planners. Their designs were the product of a new kind of architecture, one which ‘emulated the past’ through incorporating design elements that reflected the transitoriness and ephemeral nature of the new world. The new sphere that this architecture opened up constructed the modern architect as not just concerned with style and beauty of the built environment. The architect’s teleological commitment to the technical now made him also an engineer. Benjamin noted that the buildings which defined modernity were “connected with transitoriness in both the spatial sense (as railroad stations, places of transit) and the temporal one (as galleries for world exhibitions, typically torn down after they were closed)”. The Eiffel Tower epitomised this style; it was built for the 1889 Paris Exposition, but remained after the fair because it was used as a tower for radio broadcasting. Like the aerodrome, the tower served a practical function, but it also served as a site for performing the ‘new heroic age of technology’, reflected in the stripped back, unadorned aesthetic of engineering embodied in the tower.

The early Futurist architect Sant’Elia, in his *Messagio,* which was published as the *Manifesto of Futurist Architecture,* foreshadowed this convergence of the mundane and the visionary with his notes on the transformations that this kinaesthetic introduced into urban architecture (see Fig 3.2 on following page). He perceived that the role of the architect in this new kinesthetic city would be radically different from the elitist architectural imperatives of the nineteenth century: “We no longer feel ourselves to be the men of cathedrals and the ancient moot halls, but men of the Grand Hotels, railway stations, giant roads, colossal harbours, covered markets, glittering arcades,

---

8 Quoted in Buck-Morss, *Dialectics of Seeing,* p. 130.
reconstruction areas and salutory slum clearances.”

Sant’Elia and Marinetti, as discussed in the last chapter, had described the Futurist city as a place of modernity. The Futurist city would be a sublime environment of transitoriness, ephemerality and extreme speed: “We have enriched our sensibility by a ‘taste for the light, the practical, _the ephemeral and the swift...’”

This new sensibility was an engagement with the sublime in an urban setting. As Le Corbusier wrote in the foreword to _Towards a new architecture_, he witnessed the speed and intensity of vehicular traffic at the end of a Paris summer. This primal scene of technological sublimity was also the birth of a new terrain for architecture:

On that first day of October, on the Champs Elysees, I was assisting at the titanic awakening of a comparatively new phenomenon, which three months of summer had calmed down a little -- traffic. Motors in all directions, going at all speeds. I was overwhelmed, an enthusiastic rapture filled me. Not the rapture shining coachwork under the gleaming lights, but the rapture of power. The simple and ingenious pleasure of being at the centre of so much power, so much speed. We are a part of it. We are a part of that race whose dawn is just awakening. We have confidence in this new society, which will in the end arrive at a magnificent expression of its power. We believe in it.

The modern architect’s concern with sites of movement in the city anticipated the increasingly specialised functions of the town-planner. The problems of transport and the scale of the city had been developing throughout the nineteenth century in the peripheral vision of architecture. As Le Corbusier believed that architects in the 1920s did not know how to build for such modernity: “Engineers have been busy with barrages, with bridges, with Atlantic liners, with mines, with railways. Architects have been asleep.” The Futurists were the first to identify the new architectural sphere in 1914 with Sant’Elia’s _Citta Nuova (New City)_ but Le Corbusier’s _Ville Radieuse (Radiant City)_ of 1933 developed this manifesto in to “a doctrine of urbanism to be used as the basis of our machine-age civilisation”. The new kind of architecture was not just of an isolated building, nor an ensemble of

---

13 Le Corbusier writes in _Towards a new architecture_ that only when architecture is genuinely appropriate to its environment did it “give a pleasing sensation of harmony that was profoundly moving. Only when this was so... did I feel the presence of one essential factor; TOWN PLANNING, a word I only learnt later.” p. 4.
14 Le Corbusier, _Towards a new architecture_, p. 105.
15 Le Corbusier, _The Radiant City_, Faber and Faber, London, title page, 1964 [1933].
buildings, nor even a whole housing estate. As Le Corbusier wrote in *The Radiant City*, "here we set the play of consequence in motion; everything is connected. Modern times are coming!" The modern architect considered not just buildings but movements in his attention to modes of transport and their terminals. The connection of ‘everything’ urban meant that public and private spaces were in correspondence and all urban elements were brought into a homogeneously designed space.

The project of ‘complete’ modernisation of the urban network had commenced. Following the efforts of Hausmann in nineteenth century Paris, who designed the boulevards to give “urban perspectives” and allow mass movements unavailable in the labyrinthine, medieval city, the modern architect participated in a new kind of urbanism, in which centralised planning attempted to cohere “every individualistic part, every autonomous development of the city”. The modern architect had become more than a designer of beautiful and gracious buildings, his vision was now extended to become a discourse on the sublimity of modern life. The modern architect was now a technician of space on a massive scale.

For ‘progressive’ modernist architectural programs such as the Bauhaus and the International Style assembled as the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM), the key to a new social order was a new spatial order based on the benefits of technological progress. “The Four Functions” of modern architecture defined in CIAM’s Charter of Athens of 1933 represent a significant declaration of intent by modernist architects and planners to design for a new mass mobility. The monumental aspects of urban built form took an equal, if not lesser, importance in such designs to the mechanics of public transportation: railways, roads, pedestrian zones. Le Corbusier, as a member of CIAM and one of its most high-profile architects, saw the need to envision the entire scale of entire city design for the guiding principle of flow. As well as being an architect of individual buildings, Le Corbusier saw the need for urban designers to become architects of movement. CIAM’s Athens Charter guided Le Corbusier’s urban design well into the 1960s, and he particularly identified the charter’s ‘Fourth Function’, urban circulation, as crucial to his architectural philosophy. The notion of circulation was also instrumental in linking together the other three ‘Functions’ of the modern city, spatially distributed

---

16 Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, p. 60.
18 CIAM, ‘Charter of Athens’ in Jose Luis Sert, *Can Our Cities Survive?*, Cambridge, 1942, pp. 246-249. Interestingly, the architect and planner Cornelis van Eesteren, who was chairman of CIAM at the time that Congress drew up the Charter was responsible for the ‘modernisation’ of the Linden arcade in the 1920s that Krakauer lamented in his essay, ‘ Farewell to the Linden Arcade’ reprinted in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, pp. 323-342. The ‘modernisation’ of such nineteenth century spaces in Weimar-era Berlin prompted Benjamin’s research into the arcades as a ruined cultural form.
and ‘contained’ in areas of living, working and leisure:

The force of this Charter lies in giving the first place to the dwellings: the environment of living — the family under the rule of ‘24 solar hours’.

The second place is given to working, which is the daily act of human obligation.

The third is the culture of the body on one hand and an intellectual leisure on the other.

When all these goals have received their definitive containers, it is possible to give to each of them a respective rightful place and at this moment can interfere the problem of realizing the contacts: that is ‘circulation’.

This new discourse on the political and social dimensions of transport technology inaugurated the modernist urbanist attempt to transpose temporal social processes into spatial functions and ‘fix’ them within the city’s structure. This new ‘city of circulation’ had as its goal the clear definition and separation of urban environments into exclusive zones of domestic, labour and leisure activities. New transport technologies offered the means to distance areas of work from housing, and work from leisure, and thus to solidify the modern city’s order for its citizens.

Le Corbusier, like Sant’Elia, saw his role as forcing the populace out the old forms of the nineteenth century by applying the machine logic to the problem of the house and the city. These techniques were formulated to extend the vertical space of the city and introduce transparency into the traditionally gravid forms of the house. This focus on vertical space and disciplining families to embrace the new empty spaces of modern housing took place through slum clearance as well as the ‘Manual of the Dwelling’ that Le Corbusier published in *Towards a New Architecture*. The ‘Manual of the Dwelling’ was a list of demands that Le Corbusier believed mothers should make to their landlords that would reformulate the ‘dwelling-house’ as tidy and proper place for modernity: “The existing plan of the dwelling-house takes no account of man and is conceived as a furniture store.”

The architectural avant-garde contributed to the continued revolution by modernism against the perceived solidity and stasis of the nineteenth-century city. Le Corbusier’s student and ardent admirer Sigfried Giedion similarly sought to introduce into architecture a sense of a total viewpoint. This totality did not see isolated grand works or buildings in a city but instead a network, a schematic machine of flows and energies. Giedion praised Le Corbusier’s first application of

---

21 Sigfried Giedion [J. Duncan Berry, trans.], *Building in France: Building in Iron, Building in
these techniques at Frugés housing estate in Pessac-Bordeaux, constructed between 1924 and 1927:

the solid volume is eaten away wherever possible with cubes of air and rows of windows suddenly passing into the sky... There arises – as with certain lighting conditions in snowy landscapes – that dematerialisation of solid demarcation that distinguishes neither rise nor fall and that gradually produces the feeling of walking in clouds.\(^{22}\)

Dematerialisation of solid forms, aerial and sky-bound architecture: the sensation of a complete transparency between outside and inside was also an erasure of the border between above and below, mirroring the ‘upward’ mobility of the modern city into sublimity. The sublime in the modernist city is exemplified in the form of the skyscraper “the celebration of tallness itself as an instrument of urban density and verticality as the primary orientation of urban flow”\(^{23}\).

The speed of travel and the new fluidity of urban forms eliminated the need for ornamentation and details (and furniture according to Le Corbusier). As Benjamin described the new urban architecture in 1930, inspired by a poem by Brecht, this dematerialised world was a ‘place without traces’: “That was something for which Scherbarnt [author of another modernist architectural text, Glass Architecture] with his glass and the Bauhaus with its steel have opened the way: they have created spaces in which it is difficult to leave traces.”\(^{24}\) These new urban spaces “together with telescopes, airplanes, and rockets, were the precondition for transforming the humanity of the past into ‘new creatures worthy of notice and affection’”.\(^{25}\) The new architecture, all its ‘decorative’, individualising and extraneous functions stripped away by the velocity of technological travel, produced a new kind of person. The subjectivity of this new person was characterised by their passion for the new kinaesthetics and their ability to feel ‘at home’ in its flows.

This machine aesthetic was also a contingent reaction against the nineteenth-century desire to ‘disguise’ industrial forms by ornamentation, a desire that Walter Benjamin detected in the nineteenth-century ‘thirst for the past’ and mimicry of classical styles. The tendency that Benjamin found in pre-modern mythic stages of technology (and which can be seen in ‘post-modern’ urban forms that ‘citate’ historical references)


\(^{22}\) Giedion, Building in France: Building in Iron, Building in Ferroconcrete, p. 169.

\(^{23}\) Douglas Cooper, ‘Delirium’, Grand Street, 54, special issue on ‘Space’, p. 36.


frustrated the mathematically and technically driven vision of Le Corbusier. In *Towards a New Architecture*, Le Corbusier instructs his contemporary readers that they should not see new technologies within the frame of nature “...above all we must learn to see in an airplane not a bird or a dragon-fly, but a machine for flying”. Le Corbusier thus posed his vision of the ‘essential technological’ as a corrective to the futile ‘wish image’ expressed in designs that tried to emulate nature through technology: “To wish to fly like a bird is to state the problem badly, and Adler’s ‘Bat’ never left the ground”.

Rather than such wish images as ‘false consciousness’, Benjamin actually saw this modern tendency to ‘cite’ the natural within the technological in the ways as exposing fundamental contradictions in industrial society. For instance, Benjamin thought that in the ‘framing’ and display strategies of the Paris Arcades the “new is intermingled with the old in fantastic ways”. There, in the Arcades, artisanal labour and the work of the hand was displaced by mass-produced commodities which in turn tried to appear like handcrafted objects. Benjamin, following Marx, saw the replacement of the new form of production by the old as a process of imbrication and intermixture of fantasy and fact, exposing the commodity’s alliance to myth and irrationality, rather than a clean break from one epoch and progress to another more ‘rational’ one. Any attempt to represent the technological within the organic was thus an attempt to make sense of the ‘modern’ by styling new technologies through anachronism and outmoded materials.

The distinction between tradition and modern that Le Corbusier made in *Towards a New Architecture* rested on a distinction between authenticity and kitsch, that refused the notion that the modern was its own style. To admit that the ‘modern’ might itself one day be outdated was not possible in Le Corbusier’s totalising perspective. He instead held throughout his career as an architect that the essence of technology, marked by the fusion of imagination and cold reason in the aeroplane, constituted a rationality based on an autonomous principle of mobility. The modernist architectural embrace of such a technological rationality points only attempts to materialise and actualise a fantasy of control and endless spatial conquest, rather than a move beyond fantasies of animal, organic forms. The engineer’s aesthetic embodied by Le Corbusier’s designs was not just a logical progression from the old to the new -- a way of stripping away of the outdated mask that the modern had to wear to be accepted -- but a mask of its own. Because “a coherent machine style provided as well [as novelty] a sense of security amidst rapid change, a feeling that

---

everything was under control" it also concealed an ambivalence to modern machinery itself.

The fusion of the engineer with the architect invoked sublimity in the form of machine-logic beyond human control. The engineer/architect claimed to cohere the incredible changes to cities and nations before and after the first world war into a plan for more functional cities based on the guiding principle of technological function. Such cities, however, were reforming and disintegrating without the plans of architects and engineers, as both war and the movement of capital transformed the cityscape. In his account of futurist architecture Stanford Kwinter suggests that the cultural space occupied by this machine obsession was always an ambiguous one, encompassing both the destructive and productive nature of technology. The machine logic was founded on purity and perfection. Urban space was to be emptied of its grotesque, ambiguous, untidy, disordered and somatic elements. This displacement of the perverse and unruly elements of the city signalled spatial strategies that were profoundly problematic in their insistence on the primacy of singular uses and unity over multiplicity. These contradictions were to play themselves out in appropriation of the technically guided imagination of the engineer-architect by the urban administrator. The urban administrator became the paradigmatic operator in control of the spaces of modernity. As the architect of the road, the railway station and the aerodrome, he figures as the exemplar of the ambivalent attitude to collective and public places within urban space that has shaped the mobile city.

**aerodromocracy**

Imagine a muddy field, surrounded by market gardens, a few houses and a marshy wetland leading out to a wide, flat bay. The field is enclosed in a fence of the kind that might be seen at a racecourse, low and painted white. Within the fence are some corrugated iron hangars and sheds. This is what Captain Johnston, newly appointed Superintendent of Aerodromes, would have seen from the air at Mascot when he conducted an aerial investigation for suitable sites for an aerodrome for Sydney on 5 April 1921. Rather than a sublime vision of a streamlined spaceport floating in the sea (see Fig 3.3), the privately owned aerodrome was located in a marshy wasteland surrounded by cattle and noted for its unpleasant odorousness when the fumes from ‘the boiling down establishments’ (glue and tallow factories) were blowing in the

wrong direction. The image of aircraft flying over Sydney was becoming increasingly common, but these aircraft needed somewhere to land (see Fig 3.4).

After completing his aerial survey of Sydney in early April, on 28 April 1921 Captain Johnston reported to the Controller of Civil Aviation, Colonel Horace Brinsmead, that:

... the only suitable site within a convenient distance of Sydney is that land at Mascot now used by the A.A. and E. Co., and known as Mascot Aerodrome... this land is property of Kensington Recreation Grounds Co... and is, I believe, held... as a reserve racecourse site... As (this is) the only suitable site within reasonable distance of the GPO, I would strongly recommend that it be procured even if this necessitates resumption.  

The report added that Avro Aircraft and Engineering Company (A.A. and E. Co) would require compensation for any money they had already spent on improvements and fencing since buying the site in 1919. The company also considered that they should be compensated for the cost of advertising that had made Mascot known throughout New South Wales as ‘Sydney Aerodrome’.

The site at Mascot had been used in 1920 for Australia’s “first big flying carnival” in November 1920. The New South Wales Section of the Australian Aero Club felt that such an event was needed to restore “public confidence in the safety of aviation” after every single one of the ‘short range aeroplanes’ used to promote the Department of Defence Peace Loan Appeal in 1920 “came to grief”. Sea, Land and Air blamed the failure of the planes used in the Appeal on the lack “of suitable landing grounds”. As a result of the public’s negative perceptions of the new technology after the Loan Appeal the Aero Club and companies at the aerodrome wished to demonstrate that Mascot was an excellent venue for flying. Over ten thousand spectators attended the display, “nearly everyone who is anyone at all in

---

WHO OWNS THE AIR?
Riding the International Skyways :: Nations' Sovereign Rights :: How Young Air Gods Have Set the World Thinking

A mass-meter landing ground of the future.

Fig 3.3 'Who owns the air', Evening News, 27 October 1930.
Fig 3.4 Front cover ‘Sea, Land and Air’, 1 September 1921, vol. IV, no. 42.
the flying world made his way to Mascot" and Australian aviation was given "a much-needed boost... succeeding beyond all possible exaggeration."^32

Captain Johnston's choice of the site was explained in his report by reference to its location and potential for expansion:

The greater part of the surface is already cleared and ready for use the remainder being covered with low scrub. The 20 acres not included in the aerodrome (proper) is mostly used as market gardens... Unless this site is procured it will be necessary to go beyond Parramatta... the whole object of rapid aerial transport is defeated if the terminal aerodrome is any considerable distance from the centre of population or if the means of communication with that centre is poor.^30

Captain Johnston's report was instrumental in establishing the aerodrome as an important site in a city of circulation, a world capital of the twentieth century. Both the city of Sydney and the Australian nation needed an aerodrome to participate in the civil uses of aviation, no longer prohibited by a military monopoly on flight.

Johnston's authority to report to the Controller of Civil Aviation, and so to the Federal government, came from the recent introduction of the Air Navigation Act, 1920. The Australian act brought the nation into uniformity with other signatories to the international Convention for the Regulation of Aerial Navigation, signed in Paris at the end of the war in October 1919.^34 After this Act, the powers to administrate aviation came under the Federal Department of Defence. This new national dominion over airspace was established in order to deal with the new dimensions of the nation: modern nations now extended their sovereignty over physical land and sea borders, into the vertical dimension of national air-space. As an instrument of official travel and entrepreneurial exploration, the new technology re-politicised and called into question the existing geographical boundaries of the nation. This new 'vertical' boundary required new methods of regulation and policing to ensure that other nations did not infringe national airspace and thus transgress national boundaries.

With the acquisition of the Kensington Recreation Grounds by the Department of Home and Territories in June 1921, Sydney officially became a terminal in a national

^32 'New South Wales Aerial Derby -- Public Confidence in Aviation Restored', Sea, Land and Air, January 1921, pp. 623-625. Spectators were "invited to estimate the varying speeds of an Aero in four flights across the aerodrome" to win a prize of free flight over Sydney Harbour, perhaps not the most attractive prize to people who were afraid of flying.


and global air transport network. This governmental site was administered by a kind of public figure who had not existed before or during the war: the Civil Aviation bureaucrat. Both Brinsmead and Johnston were employed by the Federal Defence Department and they retained their military titles as Colonel and Captain respectively. Their civil administration techniques also drew on military techniques of the Royal Air Force through application of established methods for recording, regulating and controlling movements at the aerodrome. Drawing his authority from the Department of Defence, Johnston did not draw distinct boundaries between civil and military aviation in his report, and in his taking up of the new technocratic persona of ‘Superintendent of Aerodromes’.

On 2 March 1922, the Controller of Civil Aviation wrote to Mr T. Trumble, the Secretary of the Defence Department, that works costing over £3,000 were urgently needed to level the Mascot site and build a road to the aerodrome. These works were necessary, the Controller wrote, because:

Sydney is the terminal port for both the Sydney-Adelaide and Sydney-Brisbane aerial services which are due to commence early next July, and it is anticipated that the aerodrome will be also largely used by visiting machines and for instructional purposes. It is very necessary that the surface should... give sufficient area to allow machines to have a clear run of 450 yards in any state of wind...36

The plans to improve the aerodrome, as limited as they were, were the beginnings of ‘a grid of intelligibility’ that understood Sydney’s place within the nation as one among other inter-state capitals, as well as the final destination for international air travel by enabling ‘visits’ by international air travellers. Although the Australian Federal government was located in Canberra after the 1920s, the establishment of regular interstate air services increasingly constituted Sydney as the city in closestproximity to the new network of overseas aviation and its theatres of war as well as trade. As Sydney was a State capital, not a Federal one, the legislation passed in 1920 was also explicitly designed to supersede the State of New South Wales’s rights over airspace, and incorporate the aerodrome into national territory. After 1920 individual states and territories could not conduct exchange by air with other nations: a federal space was created for and from the technologically mediated space of air travel. The new territory of airspace was a supra-local zone that brought the nation together as a singular entity. This provoked particular discontent in New South Wales before the legislation was passed, and for several months the NSW Premier, Mr Holman, would

35 Johnston, Mascot Aerodrome: Notes on early History, p. 2.
36 Johnston, Mascot Aerodrome: Notes on early History, p. 3.
not accede that the Australian Constitution gave the Commonwealth the exclusive rights to airspace. Because the Act of Parliament that created the Australian Constitution had been drawn up in the late 1890s, before such territorial rights to airspace existed, the Constitution made no mention of a Commonwealth power to control aviation. The only relevant reference in the Constitution Act was to "external relations" powers that was interpreted by New South Wales as not extending the Commonwealth power over civil aviation within the States.

These intranational divisions had already been actualised in the infamous situation of each State designing and building deliberately incompatible rail gauges. The ending of each rail network at the State border caused interstate trains to terminate at state borders and passengers to change trains well into the twentieth century. Although this lack of national coherence began as an example of pre-Federation State resistances to a unified, national network of trade and exchange, these gaps in a national transport system continued to reflect the uneven reception of national development projects in post-Federation Australia.

Eventually, the Premier of NSW agreed with other State Premiers in January 1920 that the power to control civil aviation should be referred to the Commonwealth.38 But he did so on the grounds of better safety for pilots and travellers rather than a natural ‘right’ of the Australian nation to the State’s airspace. Despite these intentions, with the exception of Tasmania, none of the States ever formally passed statutes referring these powers to the Federal Government, a situation that caused problems throughout the inter-war period. In 1934 lawyers defending a ‘dare-devil stunt pilot’, Henry Goya Henry, challenged the right of Civil Aviation officers to charge him with unlicensed flying under the Act.39 This case highlighted the inconsistencies between the Constitution and the Air Navigation Act, and after being referred to the High Court in 1936, eventually resulted in a referendum to be put to the electorate in March 1937 asking for an amendment to the Constitution to enable it to make laws with respect to “air navigation and aircraft”. This move was widely supported, but, in keeping with the negative result of almost all Australian referendums, voters in a majority of states voted ‘No’.40 Finally, in April 1937 the inconsistency was resolved when the State parliaments introduced uniform legislation across Australia and extended the Federal regulations to their State jurisdiction.

38 Premier’s speech 7 January 1920, reprinted in Aircraft, 1927, p. 80.
39 D.M. Hocking and C.P. Haddon-Cave, Air Transport in Australia, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1951, pp. 77-79.
40 D.M. Hocking and C.P. Haddon-Cave, Air Transport in Australia, p. 79.
Even before the era of mass jet travel and discussions over noise control and compensation, this negotiation of the relationship between airspace and the political entities that form, control and utilise it in the name of the nation show that such a production of space has not been an inevitable and completely realised process, but highly contested and ambiguous. The nation’s territorial borders were not easily accepted as co-extensive with its airspace, as the NSW administration’s reluctance to allow such a Federally controlled territory within its borders shows. The narrative of the national ‘right to the air’ was an expression of a particularly modern spatio-temporal understanding of the world: a ‘new’ undiscovered, uninhabited space which was awaiting a nation to claim and exploit it. The Federal government used legal and administrative techniques to order this space and mark it out as ‘national’, and only national institutions and agents were authorised to ‘colonise’ the new technological space of the air. The ‘right to the air’ extends the imperialising discourse of global territorial exploration, but even from this originary moment the State had to contend with other competing narratives and their attendant chronotoposes, as local forces attempted to challenge national authority over airspace.

In the 1920s the extension of such vertical transport routes into the horizontally-imagined domestic and public spaces of the state capitals also posed the question of whether, conversely, ‘living space’ extended vertically into the ‘air’. In an article, ‘Who owns the air?’, re-published in Sydney in August 1920, Henry Woodhouse, American author of the *Textbook of Aerial Laws and Regulations for Aerial Navigation*, described the challenges that private and public aerial activities made to the ‘law of the land’, such as the problem of aircraft noise disturbing church services. To introduce the article, the Australian editor of the magazine, *Sea, Land and Air*, reminded readers of the recent visit of “Sir Arthur Whitten Brown, KBE, hero of the Transatlantic Flight -- and his remarks concerning aviation conditions as he found them in America”. Because of Brown’s comments on the spectre looming as obstacles to “progress... by the lack of some definite form of control” demonstrated by the “horrible example” of America, the Australian editor urged his readers to “serious consideration” of Woodhouse’s views, as he believed they would concern “all who would see aviation made safe, not only for the man in the air, but also for the man in the street”.41 As airspace now extended above and across the modern city, the public space of the ‘man in the street’ was affected by aerial activities, and the regulation of aviation sought to ensure safety and order there as well as at the aerodrome.

The title of the American article, ‘Who owns the air?’, underlined the radical reconfiguration of urban space and notions of property that a territorialising of

---

41 Editor’s introduction to ‘Who owns the air?’ by Henry Woodhouse, in *Sea, Land and Air*, August 1920, p. 312.
airspace in the 1920s had put in train. Commonsense understandings of the dimensions of the natural home of humanity were transformed by aviation technologies: “Twenty years ago... the air was only something we breathed. It was free to everybody. Almost nobody went up into it. And practically nothing came down out of it, except rain, snow and a very rare meteorite.” This new experience of technological space challenged the location of the pedestrian and resident of the city, but, as is apparent well after the 1920s, and as the following sections of this thesis argue, even into the 1960s, any shocks or ill effects of aviation technology caused at the aerodrome are rarely mentioned in the machine-governed discourse of the urban engineer. Instead, the urban planner totalises an urban disposition to aeriality as the positive, steady operation of spatial progress.

Despite the dreamlike, utopian qualities of the spectacle of flight, for the terrestrially bound person there now existed the disturbing possibilities of the aeroplane dropping heavy objects such as spanners and bits of aircraft from the sky, or even falling out of the air itself. Woodhouse pointed out that despite the introduction of the Air Navigation Act, “there are no specific laws to govern aviation, the airman is liable to arrest if he breaks the laws of the land; literally ‘of the land’ because he is arrested only for damage caused to people on the ground”\textsuperscript{43}. He advised annoyed ground dwellers and urban property owners that:

\begin{quote}
You have no right to the air, except to the tops of the trees or buildings on your property... If you object to an aeroplane passing overhead don’t go and get your shotgun and try and pepper it -- as some annoyed individuals have done! It has a perfect right to be there!\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

Despite the indication of such writers that these questions would be resolved by the institution of new laws for legal control and regulation of flights, both nationally and internationally, these problems of the interface between airspace and ground space first debated in the 1920s continue today. The air was marked out as military-industrial national and international space, only to be navigated according to rules made by the nations who won the first world war. The actual discipline and surveillance of this space was a serious problem and Woodhouse worried away at the possibility of anti-social criminal elements using the new technology for ‘illegal importation’, ‘aerial crimes and escapes from justice’:

\begin{quote}
Imagine the possibilities of bringing liquor into the United States from Cuba, Canada or Mexico! You may send Revenue officers up to patrol the air, but what can they do? They can’t stop a machine at some convenient cloud and get out to search it. They can’t sit on a rainbow and examine a suspect...
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{42} Henry Woodhouse, ‘Who owns the air’, p. 313.
\textsuperscript{43} Henry Woodhouse, ‘Who owns the air’, p. 313.
\textsuperscript{44} Henry Woodhouse, ‘Who owns the air’, p. 316.
How are we to guard against these possibilities? What regulations have been made to prevent such offenses? Aviators do not have to follow roads which you can watch and guard. They can go so high that you can neither see nor hear them... The real safeguard is in the fact that a machine must leave the ground and return to it... The country constable, the bicycle policeman patrolling the highway to catch the speeding motorist, any officer of the law, can, and will demand from the persons on a 'plane that comes down in his neighbourhood that they show their licences, certificates, permits and so forth. He will require them to state where they have come from and where they are going.\textsuperscript{45}

The aerodrome was crucial then, as now, to applying the juridical powers of national economic and moral sovereignty by policing national borders. Only at the stable terrestrial site of the aerodrome could the new and difficult to control airspace be translated and mediated into the urban metropolitan network, making it a means of access and exit to the new international world of aviation politics. These new international rules of aviation would be contractually self-managed routes, much like the laws of the sea, and policed by "air cops" or "sky policemen". I wish to suggest in the next section, however, that the contradictions between air-space and ground-space could entirely not be resolved by such regulation at the site of the aerodrome.

\textbf{displacing place}

Johnston's argument for choosing Mascot as Sydney's 'natural' location for an aerodrome contains a crucial contradiction of modernity that emerges from a tension within the idea of the 'city of circulation'. The modern city was a fluid mental, cultural and physical space mediating the social needs of the individual, but after the 1910s it also had to mediate world-scale space through aviation. This conception of the city as a place of connection to world and nation produced and motivated planning schemes such as Johnson. The principle of urban circulation that sealed his decision to locate the aerodrome at Mascot was stated thus: "the whole object of rapid aerial transport is defeated if the terminal aerodrome is any considerable distance from the centre of population".\textsuperscript{46}

This positing of purpose of transport in the city as an absolute exposes the fault line at which this urban imagination of engineering principles has fractured. This development of spatial technologies for managing the integration of aviation with other forms of transport in the city did not take into account that conflicts over uses

\textsuperscript{45} Henry Woodhouse, 'Who owns the air' pp. 314-316. My emphasis.
\textsuperscript{46} Johnston, Mascot Aerodrome: Notes on early History, p. 2.
of space are actually part of the structure of the urban, as a zone where many groups and individuals intersect and co-exist, although in fundamentally unequal ways. To paraphrase Raymond Williams, urban space is the place in which we, as urban actors and modern people, are ‘separated in a common mode’. The ‘whole object’ of urban transport planning upon which Johnston’s statement is founded is an attempt to unify urban discourse in the image of one group. This ‘object’ denies that cities are always fragmented, somewhat transitory, and historically contingent entities, and that there might be other ‘objects’ to urban living. The stating of the ‘object’ of rapid air transport was, and still remains, a discourse resting on privileging of national and commercial interests over and above a local urban situation. This privileging of the national as space ‘above’ the local is not easily unseated. Despite a conjuncture of international, national and local interests at Mascot in its urban location in southern Sydney, the multiple users and claimants to the site were not of any concern to Johnson in his paramount principle of ‘rapid aerial transport’. The formation of airspace as extension of national territory discussed above is one instance of this, as it places national circulation above local uses of space. Access to airspace, needed for the flows of goods and information that characterise economic internationalisation and globalisation, is persistently imagined as an homogenous, ‘monologic’ space.

Against such claims to universality, by a simple reversal of this order of cause and effect, another kind of statement of need could be made: for some local residents the proposition could be transposed to say that ‘the whole object of a centre of population is defeated if a terminal aerodrome is close to that centre...’ That is, when reversed, the elevation of national planning above local and multiple uses of the site, places the ‘Fourth Function’ of the Athens Charter -- circulation -- above the first three, potentially superceding and excluding the functions living, work and leisure. The perception of the need for an air transport hub close to the city is a result of a particular discourse about the modern urban network that sees access to air travel as necessary for building a ‘proper’ urban centre.

This univocality and monologism of the official discourses on the urban have been continued throughout the twentieth century. This effacing of local space has intensified with an attenuation of boundaries between the parallel technospaces of aeriality and the urban after the 1920s. Each year since, the aerodrome expanded to grow closer to the suburbs, and the suburbs themselves have grown towards the aerodrome. Making these boundaries even more intensely felt, the acoustic field of aircraft has increased as planes have grown bigger and louder (see Appendix 2).

This very minor bureaucratic gesture of the state taking over the aerodrome was a solution to a gap in the administration of the ‘city of circulation’. The metropolis
could no longer be thought of as a modern city unless it participated in the production of a vertical, modernised time/space. The nexus between habitation and circulation that had been established in the age of sea and train travel, had now to be continued in administrative discourses about the articulation of the capital with the Australian nation and the British Empire. In pursuing this articulation, the problem that decided the direction of the new administration was defined and operated through the need control and mediate borders. I now outline some of the external and internal roles of the new technician of space, as his tasks say much about the negotiations between the global, the national and the local that took place in this period.

the bodily boundaries of the nation

Boundaries and junction points (which are also in the nature of things, points of friction) will naturally have different aspects according to the type of society, according to whether we are considering relatively settled peasants, plundering warriors, or true nomads or herders given to seasonal migrations.47

Le Corbusier’s ‘Radiant City’ was, as Harris Breslow has described it, a ‘spatial narrative’ of movement above habitation. Breslow portrays the ‘Radiant City’ as “the moving city, where social harmony and communal space are invested with -- and subservient to -- the principles of traffic and transit as paradigmatic of and synonymous with urban space.”48 This tension between subservience to traffic and transit and maintaining the city’s order was played out through techniques that controlled and channeled urban traffic into useful spatial arrangements. By a development of key administrative techniques at the aerodrome, the city of Sydney was not given over completely to uncontrolled movements of traffic. The already existing gateways at land and sea borders were now extended upwards into the airspace of Australia. Far from de-materialising these boundaries, however, by making them more open to global exchange, the modernisation process instituted a series of re-territorialisations and further techniques of control. The introduction of the Air Navigation Act of 1920 that constituted national powers of aerodrome administration was a discursive construction of the aerial boundary as space of interchange with a simultaneously productive and threatening ‘foreign’ world.

Victor Turner has observed, anthropologically, that when a social group or individual passes from one status or category to another, rituals or rites of passage are enacted at the moment of liminality, or ‘betweenness’, when one state or identity is completed and a new state is about to be taken up.\textsuperscript{49} Liminal states take place in and are constitutive of liminal spaces, the space of an intermixed threshold between one clearly defined area and another. In these states, the homogeneity of each space is threatened and rituals must be enacted to ensure the maintenance of centres and their boundaries. These rituals either incorporate the foreign body into the domestic or vice versa. In the case of the aerodrome, the aerial state of liminality between home territory and foreignness necessitated a series of rituals to be enacted. The first step was to declare an ‘airspace’ over the capital as a way of grounding the new geography and to shape it usefully for the population of Sydney and Australia. The existing bureaucratic discourses of quarantine and customs also had to be brought into play here, as the disease risks associated with foreign travel were magnified by faster travel and a perceived ‘shrinking’ of the liminal space between the pure, healthy national home and potentially polluting foreign space.

In the 1920s, the incubation periods for most diseases fell within the travel times by sea from potentially infectious ports. The shortened time of air travel posed a logistical problem for detecting outbreaks of infectious diseases. Historical fears of other, impure spaces infecting the nation were recalled in context of the new technology:

Over 100 years ago, Sydney found that the arrivals of transports and migrant ships brought disease into the healthy settlement. In 1866 the spread of typhoid in Queensland was attributed by a Select committee to importation of infection ‘by the large number of immigrants of the poorer class, who have lately arrived in crowded and ill-managed vessels’. Australian sanitarians noted the risk of diseases being introduced when in 1869 the new route through the Suez Canal shortened the voyage between the Old World and Australia... Thanks to quarantine measures, reinforced by splendid sanitary achievements in the infected areas, the earlier fears have not been realised.\textsuperscript{50}

The discourse of sanitation was not the most glamorous and spectacular in the many new organisations of ‘foreign’ space that the aerodrome performed, but it says much about the kind of society for which this aerial border was the liminal margin. The notion of Australia as a blank, uninhabited space is located within a particular historically established discourse of the Australian continent as unknown to civilisation, ‘terra incognita’, and therefore as uninhabited, ‘terra nullius’. The lack of


exclusively western knowledge of the ‘empty’ interior allowed the projection of colonial fantasies of an isolated continent, a pure and uninhabited land. Founded on this conceptual knowledge-picture, the bodily purity of the colonial outpost and the upper classes had to be defended. The nation, defined as such a pure land, still had to be kept free of disease and biologically unadulterated in the face of the increasing threat of accelerated circulation that was to come with frequent air travel.

The almost catastrophic introduction of European diseases such as smallpox, influenza, leprosy and syphilis to the indigenous population after the arrival of Europeans was not included in this ‘sanitary’ history. Instead, the abjected ‘immigrants of the poorer classes’ were the primary source of pollution to the purity of the national body. Australian national space, founded on colonial exploration and imperial conquest, is still imagined as a naturally pure entity threatened by the shortened travel times of air journeys. In this context, the application of quarantine inspections and medical surveillance to the new kinds of ‘vessel’ were rituals of boundary maintenance and national cohesion:

As long ago as 1920, Australia was the first country in the world to apply the quarantine code to aircraft by extending the definition of a ‘vessel’ subject to quarantine procedure, to ‘any ship, boat, or other description of vessel or vehicle used in navigation by sea or air’. The Primary Health Report, completed and signed by the late Sir Ross Smith on his historic arrival at Darwin on 10th December, 1920, now hangs in the office of the Director-General of Health at Canberra. Since that time each arrival by air has been subjected to the usual quarantine examination and surveillance.\(^{51}\)

Although Australia was a settler society, taking possession of land without ‘sanitarians’ aboard the First Fleet, the new figure of the Aerodrome Super-intendent was charged with the scientific surveillance of disease as he had been given the power to ‘make modern’ and proper the bodily exchanges that were to come through the international and national flights.\(^{52}\) His powers expressed the new sense of connection that air travel could bring to the Empire and its far-flung outposts, even as the Empire as a political structure was disintegrating from within and without. The Super-intendent was charged with policing and moderating the spaces between Imperial exchange, and held at bay cultural anxieties of the maintenance of national bodies and territorial boundaries.

The fluidity of the new technological ensemble of city-airspace further forced a sense of disintegration, as geographical boundaries were redrawn according to the new

---


\(^{52}\) Passengers on ‘potentially infectious’ international flights to Australia are still sprayed with disinfectant on arrival.
maps formed by air routes. The speed and immateriality of the new medium of transport emphasised the permeability of boundaries for the state and nation. The only place to conduct such activities was the aerodrome, a place in which concerns about uncontrolled exchanges between the nation and outside, and the authority of the nation and the lived spaces of the city were played out. As the aerodrome imposed its blanket of homogenous control and discipline over the already existing uses of the land, the powers of the engineer/architect had to be brought to bear on the other spatial actors, as will be discussed in the next section. In trying to establish this homogenous space of the aerodrome, the tactics employed by the Department in order to dominate space by technology were often contested.

the aeroplane ‘stunt’

As discussed throughout this chapter, the modern metropolis required a clearly specified territory for the conduct of takeoffs and landings, and this was partly achieved in the 1920s. The question of how to control unruly pilots who transgressed public spaces was another problem altogether. Such public disturbances had already been dealt with in the courts in America:

The pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Cranbury, New Jersey, caused the arrest of an aviator on the charge of flying near the church on Sundays, disturbing the services and keeping people away. It seems that many persons stayed outside to watch the aeroplane, instead of joining the congregation inside, as was their usual custom.\(^{53}\)

In Sydney, one of the earliest ‘disturbing’ flights took place at suburban beaches on a summer Sunday in 1923 (see Fig 3.5). Bathers at Bondi, Coogee and Manly beaches were at first excited to see a bi-plane approach the beach, but were terrified when the pilot swooped down “from a high altitude” and flew “very low over the bathers -- seemingly only about twenty feet above their heads.”\(^{54}\) At Bondi, the pilot was “even more daring than at the other two beaches. Several times he swooped from a great altitude.”\(^{55}\)

According to one of the surfers who was swimming at Bondi that day, after flying just above the breakers the plane appeared to be leaving the beach when the pilot suddenly turned around and returned for another run.

When the huge bird flew away, the crowd breathed a sigh of relief. But to our horror, away up over Ben Buckler, at about 2000ft, tearing along at

\(^{53}\) Henry Woodhouse, ‘Who owns the air’ in Sea, Land and Air, p. 313.
\(^{54}\) ‘Bathers Alarmed -- Aeroplane at Manly’, Sydney Morning Herald, 3 December 1923.
\(^{55}\) ‘Bathers Alarmed -- Aeroplane at Manly’.

117
a terrific rate, the machine was observed making for the beach. With the engine shut off, the pilot swooped down at an angle of 45 degrees. When about 15ft to 20ft off the water, the ‘plane, with a graceful glide, ascended again, but not before hundreds of men and women were rushing away for safety. If the daring occupants had heard the abuse that was hurled at them, to note the fright they had caused...\textsuperscript{56}

Even “at a late hour” the day after “many had not got over the shock” of being ‘swooped’.\textsuperscript{57} Women and children were reported to have had a particularly “rough time during the exhibition” and according to the Herald “[t]here were screams from many of the women bathers as the aeroplane passed above them.”\textsuperscript{58}

The beach has functioned in Australian society as a liminal space of display, pleasure and spectacle, needing regulation and surveillance to permit ‘safe’ swimming. Particularly in the 1920s, as mixed bathing during daylight hours had only recently been permitted and sanctioned interchange between the sexes in their states of undress allowed, it represented the threshold between nature and culture in an urban setting. On a hot summer day, it would have been a perfect place for a keen aviator to show off to the crowd, but the need for ‘controlled’ flying, as well as controlled bathing was expressed by those who saw the plane and experienced it as a machine ‘out of control’.

\textsuperscript{57} ‘Aeroplane Stunting on Crowded Beach -- Yesterday’s Thrill’, \textit{Evening News}, 3 December 1923.
\textsuperscript{58} ‘Bathers Alarmed -- Aeroplane at Manly’, \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 3 December 1923.
Fig 3.5 Photograph of 'The aeroplane stunt on Manly Beach', *Evening News*, 3 December 1923.
Many witnesses expressed a sense of violation from the plane passing overhead, and thought they were going to be injured or killed by the plane ‘out of place’ at the beach. Written to the editor of the *Evening News*, a letter signed ‘First Breaker’ described the flight from a terrestrial perspective:

Sir — The aviator who visited Manly yesterday gave the many hundreds of surfers a series of thrills that must have almost ended in heart failure for not a few. To swoop down on a helpless throng might produce pleasurable sensations in the swooper, but the “swoopees”, all potential victims, have a right to protest against such a recurrence.59

The ‘stunt’ pilot was eventually found out to be Captain Holden, the owner of the car manufacturing company, Holden’s Motor Bodies. Holden admitted guilt to police, and said that “he was out for a bit of a thrill like a speed boat owner would be were he putting up some fast runs on the harbour”. 60 The speed-seeker’s buzzing of the crowded beach can be seen as a rupture between the two now crucially separated spaces of leisure and circulation. This goes some way to explain the experience of technological shock that the bathers felt.

Further depicting an experience of technological shock, a cartoon in the *Evening News* on the Tuesday after the incident shows a man cowering and peering behind as a plane piloted by a lion bears directly down on him (see Fig 3.6). The man’s hair is blown off his balding head and his tie is lifted up into the air as the wind from the plane’s propellor moves past him. On the man’s tie is written ‘Percy Public’ and the flying lion is saying ‘Mind my dust’ as he ‘swoops’ down on the frightened man. The cartoon’s caption reads ‘IN THE AIR, TOO’, presumably meaning that just as pedestrians were threatened by Holden cars on the street, all public space in Sydney was now invaded by machines driven too fast by thrill-seeking speedsters.

The fear of the plane falling from the sky onto the bathers seemed to be the main reason that the ‘women and children’ displayed such alarm. The sky, like the sea, being an open space of movement rather than habitation, was a venue for a thrill for the pilot, and the screams of the ladies must have been an added bonus. To the swimmers, the display of potential disaster meant a sense of helplessness, of danger not from the threats of wild Australian nature by drowning or shark attack, but from machine attack.

---
Fig 3.6

‘In the air, too’, Evening News, 4 December 1923.
Captain Holden held no regrets: "In my opinion, the public are not educated to viewing machine [sic] close to them in the air and the surprise which would be occasioned perhaps accounted for the feeling of danger, which myself see no reason for." Holden wished to educate the public in the practice of sublime contemplation, rather than abject terror. In his modernist imaginary, the swimmers were profoundly mistaken in their feeling of being at war, terrified as though something was going to drop from the sky. Instead of experiencing terror and fright, they should have been enjoying the spectacle of flight. This enthusiasm for flight was not denied by the authorities, and was actually invited by the emerging governmental discourse on 'airminedness'. But the development of techniques for the separation of traffic and leisure and relegated to circulation to its proper place in the city.

the contradictions of everyday life and the machine

In this symbolic ordering and management of a world of machine dynamism and increasingly fluid urban and national boundaries in the 1920s, the aerodrome was drastically limited by its anti-spectacular nature. Instead of a sleek, streamlined machine-ensemble, as envisaged by the new kinaesthetic architecture, Mascot aerodrome remained closer to a farm in appearance than a super-modern 'landing ground of the future'.

A 'Magnetic Landing and Starting Platform for Aeroplanes' demonstrated in Sydney in 1921 had never been heard of again, although early descriptions were tantalizing:

The landing platform would consist of a framework of specially composed laminated iron bars, magnetically energised, and placed on a floor of wood or other non-magnetic substance... Between the wheels and the skid of the aeroplane, an attraction plate would be fixed, and it is claimed that the effect of these attractive metals would be to slow down the aeroplane to such a rate as will ensure a safe and satisfactory landing. It is further claimed that the magnetism will be sufficient to hold the machine stationary whilst the requisite revolutions are being attained to ensure a prompt take-off from the raised platform.62

The magnetic platform would only need to be 200 feet long and 60 feet wide to land

---
61 Letter from Captain Holden to Controller of Civil Aviation, 4 December 1923, AA (Melb) A705 181/3/46.
62 'Magnetic Landing and Starting Platform for Aeroplanes', in Sea, Land and Air, 1 February 1921, p. 705.
“an ordinary three-seater aeroplane”. Such applications of modern science to the problem of the aerial-terrestrial interface were also depicted in advertising for a more mundane product, ‘Malthoid’ roofing materials (see Fig 3.7). An advertisement that appeared in *Sea, Land and Air* first in 1919 and was carried by the magazine throughout the early 1920s showed two planes flying over the city of Sydney and the roof of each building covered by the roofing tar and bearing its name and slogan: “Malthoid -- Not the same as others” and “Malthoid -- Water Proof, Weather Proof”. “Builders of Aerodromes are advised to communicate with The Parrafine Companies, Inc.” for information about the substance and its application for “creating most suitable and economic landing stages”.63

The Superintendent of Aerodromes himself suggested that in future cities would have “landing grounds on top of buildings in the city itself”, yet at Mascot the planes were in fact often bogged in huge puddles of mud which formed on the surface of the landing strip, in what was really a marshy patch of low-lying sand-dunes.64 This groundedness was at odds with the new modern aesthetics, in which the engineer-architect had the desire, but not the means, to obliterate obstacles to the smooth functioning of technology. The most commonly offered solutions were based on the application of yet more technology to the environment with plans for new graveled and tarred runway surfaces and increased drainage, but the struggle for redefining modern space was most importantly carried on through an exclusion all other uses of space from the aerodrome.

At this stage of the development, the general public saw the aerodrome as vacant land, with potential to be used for sporting events and grazing. This is evident in a request from the Mascot council to use part of the grounds for cricket matches. The Mascot Town Clerk requested of the local Federal member:

as a special favour [to the Mayor] that you would kindly use your influence with the Defence Department to allow portion of the Aerodrome land at Mascot to be used for cricket. It is stated that there is a large area of the land not actually used for Aerodrome purposes which is very suitable for cricket pitches and if so used would not in any way interfere with the operations of the Defence Department.65

'MALTHOID: A Forecast of the Future', *Sea, Land and Air*, June 1919, p. 175.
The reply was an affirmation of the aerodrome as definitely a ‘one-use-only’ space, subordinating the terrestrial to the aerial. A ‘Defence Department Minute Paper -- Subject: Mascot Aerodrome, use of portion for Cricket’ refused the request on the grounds of safety, but also as an instruction to locals on how to behave at the aerodrome:

Within the next few weeks flying training will commence on the aerodrome, and it cannot then be said that any part of the aerodrome will be out of use. Young pilots under instruction do not always land their machines exactly where they hoped so to do, and it is submitted that, in these circumstances, concurrence with the request of the Mayor of Mascot would be conducive neither to safe flying nor to safe cricket.

Grazing rights over the aerodrome area have been let to S. Whitehurst for £160 per annum. The lessee must remove all stock, if so required, when flying is in progress, and he would inevitably raise further objection in the event of interference by sporting bodies.66

Further disseminating instructions on correct procedure when encountering a plane, *Sea, Land and Air* reprinted warnings from the British Air Ministry to the public in the interests of their safety. The advice included some invaluable tips for surviving such an encounter:

WHEN AN AEROPLANE IS LANDING OR RISING -- Don’t run to where you think it will land. Keep out of the way, near a hedge or other obstacle, and wait until it stops. Don’t stand in the direct run of an aeroplane which is about to rise. Don’t let children or animals stray in the route of a landing or rising aeroplane.67

The evacuation of such unruly stray humans and animals from the aerodrome was one of the primary concerns of the new administrators, and one that was to involve them for some time.

Despite the refusal of official permission to play cricket on the grounds, the disputes over multiple uses of the space continued. By September 1927, a temporary Control Officer was appointed and his duties were to police the enclosed space of the aerodrome while flying was taking place. This was a considerable task as he lamented in his first report to the Controller of Civil Aviation based in Melbourne, where the Department of Defence was housed:

Cattle are a source of danger to machines, and the practice of certain owners in the vicinity, opening up the fences and driving their stock on to the aerodrome will have to be dealt with. I believe the pound-keeper objected to taking stock from the aerodrome. I will try to ascertain the names of the

---

67 'Aircraft Warnings' in *Sea, Land and Air*, April 1920, p. 11.
dairy-men and warn them that if the practice continues they will be prosecuted. 68

Even after this threat by the Department in 1927, the farmers were still using the aerodrome for grazing in April 1928. A. Bostock, Groundsman, expressed his exasperation to the Superintendent of Aerodromes over his inability to enforce of the punitive powers of the Controller and control the cows:

Sir... with regards to the fence between Lauriston Park and the aerodrome paddock... this fence is always getting broken down by footballers and cricketers [sic] and I have complained to the Mascot council and the caretaker of the ground and I still have to repair the ground myself. People graze cattle in this part for 1/- a week, these cattle get through the broken fence and on the aerodrome... Would you advice [sic] the Mascot council of this matter as they take no notice of me. 69

The problems of the aerodrome’s interaction with local practices continued throughout the 1920s. In 1930 Australian National Airways complained about games of golf played next to the aerodrome as their planes were “only a comparatively few feet up when passing over players... a golf ball... might easily cause damage to the aircraft and/or to passengers”. 70 The officials of the aerodrome, despite the assertion of their ‘rights to the air’ were experiencing the impracticality of enforcing their powers at a local level. The Controller was instituted as an antidote to a multiple, contradictory use of space (hence the plain impossibility of a runway that was also a cricket pitch or golf course to him, but not to the Council), but the pursuit of people’s habitual activities on the grounds were not easily discouraged and excluded.

A federal ‘Committee of Public Works’ inquiry in 1929 heard evidence for and against the location of the aerodrome at Mascot. Evidence to the inquiry reported increasing criticism in the press of the management of the aerodrome and persistent questions surrounding the suitability of Mascot as a site for aviation purposes. The inquiry published its Report relating to the proposed development of the Civil Aerodrome at Mascot, NSW in May 1930. Thomas Hill, Chief Engineer of the Commonwealth Department of Works was one of the first called to present evidence and he was positive about the Mascot site:

I am aware that some time ago there was a keen controversy in the Sydney press concerning the suitability of the Mascot aerodrome. My belief is that the criticism is unjustifiable, because sufficient work has not been done

68 Letter from Clive M. Chateau to Controller of Civil Aviation, 19 September, 1927, AA (Melbourne) A705 7/13/1530.
69 Letter to Supt. of Aerodromes, 28 April, 1928, AA (Melbourne) A705 7/13/1056.
on the ground to test it.\textsuperscript{71}

Johnston argued for further study of Mascot and justified his decision to the Committee in the face of persistent criticism: in "June of last year [1928] there was considerable criticism as to the condition of the Mascot Aerodrome, and it was decided to prepare a scheme for the proper development of the landing ground."\textsuperscript{72} The evidence gathered during 1929 and collated in the report anticipated the expansion of the aerodrome at Mascot in the 1930s and beyond. The Superintendent of Aerodromes was enthusiastic for the future of aviation in Australia in general and at Sydney and Mascot in particular:

As regards Mascot, in December 1924 there were four machines more or less regularly operating from this aerodrome, whereas at present date there are approximately 33... Mascot aerodrome itself is rapidly becoming a popular rendezvous. Large numbers of the public, probably several thousands, visit the aerodrome during the weekends to watch the flying, and quite a number partake in short flights. On the arrival of some overseas fliers, very large crowds assemble at the aerodrome. It is estimated that over 100,000 people attended the aerial pageant which coincided with the arrival of Captain Lancaster and Mrs Miller.\textsuperscript{73}

Johnston repeated his perception of Mascot as the 'natural home' of aviation in Sydney:

I know of no other suitable areas nearer than Camden, which is about 25 miles out of the city. The practice in all countries is to have commercial aerodromes as near as possible to the capital cities and large centres of population...\textsuperscript{74}

Not only was it the most obvious site for the aerodrome, but without it, as noted above, Sydney could not 'become modern', and the aerodrome would attract the use of other modern technologies:

I am convinced that, as a means of transport, aviation has come to stay, and that therefore it is essential that a first-class airport should be established in the environs of Sydney. Enormous sums of money are being spent in other countries in establishing aerodromes and airports... We are making provision for the erection of a wireless station at the aerodrome.\textsuperscript{75}

Decidedly critical of this enthusiasm for development at Mascot, however, Michael L'Estrange, Mayor of Mascot -- perhaps still dreaming of a new cricket pitch for his constituents -- stated his position boldly and presciently to the committee: "I do not

\textsuperscript{71} Thomas Hill, \textit{Minutes of evidence to Committee on Public Works}, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{72} Captain Johnston, \textit{Minutes of evidence to Committee on Public Works}, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{73} Captain Johnston, \textit{Minutes of evidence to Committee on Public Works}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{74} Captain Johnston, \textit{Minutes of evidence to Committee on Public Works}, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{75} Captain Johnston, \textit{Minutes of evidence to Committee on Public Works}, p. 10.
think that the area at Mascot is big enough for future development."  

Not to be put off by any local opposition, especially by those who did not stand to benefit economically from expansion at Mascot, Norman Brearley, Managing Director of West Australian Airways believed that future aviation would require less room, rather than more:

I do not think we are ever likely to require more room for taking off or landing than we now use, because the new machines that are now being developed will have a very much better performance in regard to getaway, owing to more powerful engines and aerodynamic developments such as slotted wings.  

Unfortunately the grand vision of the ‘city of circulation’ did not develop as hoped, instead becoming a series of minor plans and strategies with no overarching vision to fit them together. The grand narratives of the city of circulation disrupted and were in turn disrupted by local pragmatic uses of space. The ideals of Le Corbusier’s mechanically governed, mobile city had troubles before it even started, and not all men had ‘grown wings to themselves’: “The man who is intelligent, cold and calm has grown wings to himself. Men -- intelligent, cold and calm -- are needed to build the house and to lay out the town.”  

Such a monologic plan was and is, by definition, always already future: it functions as a utopic, fantasy space, in which golfers and crickets are not allowed to breakdown the fences that surround the monumental spaces dominated by machines.

* * *

This chapter has shown how a narrative of progress and spatial conquest, in which travel occurred at the intersection of economic and military interests, produced the modernist city of circulation within a frame of nation and Empire. The city of Sydney sought a closer connection to the resources of the nation and the benefits of international air travel. At the same time, through discursive techniques of administration and government control of air space, the nation ‘domesticated’ the aerial at the site of the aerodrome. On the one hand, airspace was seen as an intrusion of machine spaces into the everyday, public space of the city and international space understood as a threat to national boundaries because the new problems that increased travel speeds and decreased travel times posed to public

26 Michael L’Estrange, Minutes of evidence to Committee on Public Works, p. 20.
27 Norman Brearley, Minutes of evidence to Committee on Public Works, p. 20.
28 Le Corbusier, Towards a new architecture, p. 179.
health, quarantine, and customs. On the other hand, the new links that interurban and international flights performed produced a new space for the operation of the mobile and modern individual. The modernist spatial strategies of the ‘city of circulation’ advocated by Le Corbusier offer both kinds of space: the space of the urban nomad and wanderer, and an injunction to mobility as he sought to privilege the principle of traffic in the urban plan. In trying to establish this homogenous space of the aerodrome, domination of local space by technology was contested at its moment of institution.

The question faced by city planners in the age of flight was exactly how to introduce and manage such a new kind of space in the city, the space of technological flows. The nineteenth century city, although monumental and too stable to survive traffic, offered something that the ‘city of circulation’ could not: multiplicity and heterogeneity. In the next chapter I examine the site of aerodrome as offering a space for discourses on Imperial conquest and speculate on the gendered nature of this modernist space. It is crucial as a challenge to such spatial ordering to examine the ‘turbulence’ that sexual difference introduces to modernist spaces of pure mobility.
chapter four:

The impossible aviatrix

Who was she? Shopgirl, typist, mechanic, lone flier, Wonderful Amy, the Aeroplane Girl, never much good at landing.
May 1930. Millions thrilled at her heroic... She’s crashed... No, she’s safe!
Are you ready? One! Two! Three!!!

Amy, Wonderful Amy

Released in 1930, the popular song ‘Amy, Wonderful Amy’ by Jack Hylton and his orchestra celebrated the flight of Amy Johnson, the ‘aviatrix’, from England to Australia. The song’s lyrics, set to a kind of jazzy foxtrot, recounted the thrilling narrative of her flight. This narrative was based on British press reports of the time, and follows Johnson’s departure from England: the song ends with her arrival in Australia. The lyrics constructed Amy Johnson as an object of love and respect:
“Since you’ve won the praise of every nation/You have filled my heart with admiration/Amy, Wonderful Amy/I’m proud of the way you flew/Believe me, Amy/You cannot blame me, Amy, for falling in love with you.”

Johnson’s destination was Sydney and Mascot aerodrome, and her attempt to link England and Australia by air travel reflected the new position of Sydney as the ‘terminal’ city of the British Empire. The trip, sponsored by the London Daily Mail and British transport industries, suited the daily rhythms of press publication as Johnson stopped each day in a different exotic Imperial outpost. Adding additional excitement to the narrative development of her flight in daily publication, from England to Calcutta the flight was made under ideal conditions, but her journey from Rangoon to Australia -- demonstrating a willful ignorance of local climatic conditions -- was made during the ‘monsoonal season’, and so “was a series of nerve-wracking experiences and marvellous escapes”.

While singing the praises of Johnson’s flight in ‘Amy, Wonderful Amy’ Jack Hylton’s song breaks into speech as she approaches Australia, as if commenting on the ‘live

---

1 Opening intertitle in Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen’s short film, Amy!, BFI, 1980.
2 Mulvey and Wollen, Amy!, p. 41.
3 Flypast, p. 94.
action’ of Amy’s landing in Darwin: “She’s crashed… No, she’s safe! Are you ready? One! Two! Three!” The song’s lyrics and structure invited listeners to ‘visualise’ Amy Johnson’s ‘daring’ solo journey, from the British Empire’s centre to its furthest reaches. The narrative development of Johnson’s flight in the mass media of the English-speaking world told the story in a similar way, keeping the audience guessing about her success or failure as she encountered obstacles on her journey to Australia. Daily headlines from The Times in May 1930 organised these new time/space relations through an episodic narrative of the aviatrix’s journey with “Miss Johnson’s flight: adventures in the Desert”, “Miss Johnson’s flight: India in six days”, the tantalising suspension of “Miss Johnson: No news of landing”, and final resolution “Australian flight: Miss Johnson’s success”.

The breaks in the song’s description -- represented above as ellipses in the text -- draw us into a momentary suspension of the aviatrix’s journey and, in that moment, keep us guessing at the outcome of her flight: will she make it? Or is she going ‘crash’ spectacularly? Or as Amy herself did, is she going to do both: come down to earth with a bumpy landing that damaged her plane but from which she emerged more or less alright. As Laura Mulvey notes in her film Amy!, which I discuss in this chapter, Johnson was a brilliant pilot, navigator and mechanic, but she was never much good at making it back smoothly to the ground.

This chapter examines Amy Johnson’s flight in detail for the ways in which it transformed modernist urban space by a gendering of the new kinaesthetic. Called the ‘flapper ace’ in popular songs and articles celebrating her flight, Johnson, influenced by her newspaper sponsors and a promise of Fox Movietone ‘talking newsreels’ and live radio broadcasts, chose Sydney for the final stop on her England to Australia solo flight. Johnson’s journey followed closely in the tracks of the flight of other aviators such as Bert Hinkler. Hinkler’s solo flight in February 1929 had linked the image of the heroic flyer to the coming adventure of mass air travel in the Australian imagination. In addition to Hinkler, whose speed record Johnson surpassed for most of her journey, the masculine persona of the hearty air hero had been consolidated by the flight of the Southern Cross from California to Sydney by Charles Kingsford-Smith in 1929.

Descriptions of Amy Johnson’s flight, when contrasted with those of male aviators, indicate a constitutive tension for women in the relationship between modern subjectivity and modern spatiality. The troubled identity of the aviatrix exposes a

---

4 Mulvey and Wollen, Amy!, p. 41.
marked dissonance between new freedoms for women in urban space and their location as objects rather than subjects of the new technologies that produced these very spaces. Discourses of women’s lack of technical competence and knowledge have operated to exclude women, both as individuals and as a category of person, from such modernist spaces. In this chapter I trace a line of thinking about gender that draws a connection between attitudes to women moving in the new public spaces of the nineteenth century city and the construction of a modern ‘sublime’. Following the exposition of Kracauer’s distracted mode of travel as a ‘popularised’ sublime in the preceding chapter, this chapter examines the sublime as a category of experience increasingly associated with technology, speed, and travel in the twentieth century. My analysis of Johnson’s arrival in Sydney seeks to understand why and how this sublime was appropriated for feminism through the figure of the gendered aviator, or aviatrix. Against what can be seen as a particularly male anxiety about women and modernity, the visibility of women such as Johnson in the domain of the new transport technologies linked gender and technological space as a new formation of women’s agency.

Mass consumption of these new technologised mobilities through aviation offered new possibilities of freedom, and expanded the limited public spaces available to women. Many descriptions of women pilots, however, placed the woman in the machine as a cause of transgression and error. One does not have to look far to find instances of women such as Johnson, who, in their demonstration of technical skill, were constructed as risky, dysfunctional bodies and subjects (“She’s crashed...”). At the same time the acts of travel that these women undertook offered to modernity’s ‘others’ an alternative to the dominant discourse of modernist heroics that strived for ‘mastery’ of the machine (“She’s safe...”).

Despite the predominant association of women with the failure of technology, their obvious survival of such crash landings challenges the modernist sublime as a masculine category. The euphoric and lofty passions of the sublime, namely a terror tinged with excitement and wonder at the expansion of human powers, were forced to fall back to earth by the ‘ordinary’ disposition of female travellers such as Amy Johnson. Yet the figure of the aviatrix decentred notions of gender at the same time as she integrated post-Federation white Australia within a historical discourse of Britishness and Imperial space. This chapter seeks to understand her flight -- and the new space of aviation in the city -- as multiply marked by unevenly spatialised performances of the politics of race, age, class, as well as gender. My analysis of the representation of her flight in these terms seeks to map the kinds of symbolic and material exchanges that the aviatrix performed in Sydney in 1930. The focus on
gendered space here allows me to trace the possibility -- as well as impossibility -- of her flight within a modernist aesthetics of mobility.

are you ready? one! two!! three!!!

The sudden appearance and disappearance of this curious figure -- the aviatrix -- within a few decades in the twentieth century, and across the long lineage of female adventurers and explorers, marks a significant transformation in popular understanding of the relationships between space, time and gender. Created at the intersection of subjectivity and technology, the emergence of the aviatrix, or female aviator, marked an important new stage in the development of a culture of mobility and speed in the West in the 1920s and 30s. The adoption of many new technologies, such as the telephone and radio, in the immediate post-First World War period was associated with the activities of women as office and domestic workers, but despite women’s enthusiasm for and presence in the popularisation of air travel, their involvement before the 1930s with such ‘public’ technologies was conspicuous by its absence.  

These new communication and transport technologies emerged from the social and political context of war, but they also established new time/space relationships in everyday life. The combination of transport and communication technologies in the interface of powered flight with radio as a navigation tool, constituted new, different subjects, or human agents, who could now be in more places than ever before. These technologies also symbolised the changing relationships to proximity and distance that were becoming present for many people in the presence of media technologies in the home and workplace.

The new political and social arrangements after the war opened up the possibility of global travel for ordinary people, rather than exploration, as travel was no longer arduous labour to be performed only in the service of Empire, but involved pleasure and adventure, and, increasingly, glamour. For women in the 1920s, the figure of the ‘flapper’, a thoroughly modern woman, literally fashioned the new public spheres available to women. The flapper as a gendered modern subject visibly displayed

7 Amelia Earhart, despite holding a licence and demonstrating her competency as a long distance pilot, was invited to be an unpaid passenger on the Friendship flight across the Atlantic on 18 June 1928. She did not make the same flight as pilot until 20 May 1932. Amelia Earhart, The Fun of It, Academy Chicago Publishers, Chicago, 1992 [1932], pp. 60-61 and p. 209.
women's new economic and consumer power, as well as articulating women's technologised mobility as form of social equality with men. In article published in the New York Times in July 1922, an 'ex-flapper' declared 'Flapping not repented of', and proceeded to outline the attractions for the Times' male readers of the new "feminine type":

Of course a flapper is proud of her nerve -- she is not even afraid of calling it by its right name. She is shameless, selfish and honest, but at the same time she considers these three attributes virtues. Why not? She takes a man's point of view as her mother could, and when she loses she is not afraid to admit defeat...

She will tell you where you stand in her catalogue, and if she wants you badly enough she will come out in the open and work for you with the same fresh and vigorous air that you would work to win her. She will never make you a hatband or knit you a necktie, but she'll drive you from the station hot Summer nights in her own little sports car.9

The independence of the flapper was reflected in her enthusiasm for travel and economic power, as well as her ease within the new modern spatio-temporality: she danced, drove fast in her own car and, could even perhaps fly a plane. The flapper's "death sentence", however, began at the end of the 1920s in a period of declining affluence and the onset of economic 'depression'. The next feminine fashion was figured at the end of the 1920s in the appearance of an older and 'wiser' feminine subject who performed a more 'mature', mysterious and sober femininity: the 'siren'.9 The New York Times' Paris correspondent wrote in 1929 that even the flappers themselves perceived their own obsolescence at the sight of the new feminine composure of the 'siren': their "voices falter in their stridentities and reach for lower notes", they "clutch at brief skirts in a sudden agony of doubt as to the chic of bumpy knees", and in order to up-date themselves as soon as possible were forced to "register a mental note that smartness has now clothed itself in garments of a fascinating complexity, and that sophistication no longer relies in revealing too much".10

Another stage in the relentless 'modernisation' of gendered subjectivity, the 'siren' herself was definitely not a traditional woman but "as modern as the airplane and the backless bathing suit".11 To the New York Times' correspondent, the siren, emerging in Paris rather than New York "symbolised the end of the post-war jazz age and the recrudescence of values that for years were crowded out by the nervous

10 'The end of the flapper'.
11 'The end of the flapper'.
intensity of speed and the jeering laughter of saxophones". The specularity of women’s bodies and their participation in modern life as ‘flappers’ in decline is here described in terms of a grotesque, excessive embodiment of ‘strident’ vocal tones, a pathology of ‘nervousness’, ‘revealing too much’, and, perhaps worst of all, the very un-streamlined physique of ‘bumpy knees’. The narrative of women’s modernity has been figured thus as a steady progress and expansion of the gendered spheres of consumption and travel, economic power and bodily movement, but in need of containment and discipline, so that their new visibility was not ‘overdone’ or ‘out of place’.

Alongside the ‘feminine’ typologies of flapper and siren, the aviatrix as possible formation of a womanly identity appeared some time in the 1910s, and Amelia Earhart, in her autobiography describes herself, although tentatively, as an aviatrix in 1920. As she walked several miles to the aerodrome in Los Angeles where she took flying lessons — Earhart had already tried out careers in nursing and medicine and classes in automobile repair — she was finally offered a lift. In the car, a young female passenger became “exceedingly excited when she found out for a certainty I flew”:

“But you don’t look like an aviatrix. You have long hair.”
Up to that time I had been snipping inches off my hair secretly, but I had not bobbed it lest people think me eccentric. For in 1920 it was very odd indeed for a woman to fly, and I had tried to remain as normal as possible in looks, in order to offset the usual criticism of my behavior.

The aviatrix, placed along a line of progress from tradition to modernity, included women in the modernist project as they now too ‘occupied’ the pre-eminent modernist space, that of ‘aerial’ modernity. Yet Earhart’s efforts to maintain an appearance of ‘normality’ while learning to fly points to the social transgressions of her involvement with flying. As she says of her efforts to reshape the ways in which women’s bodies produced space: “Tradition hampers just as much as clothing”. The figure of the aviator, gendered as a heroically male, military subject during the war period and immediately after, was now transformed and doubled by the ‘civilian’ figure of the aviatrix (see Fig. 4.1 on following page). This is not to say that women did not fly before the 1920s; journalist Harriet Quimby, killed in an air race in 1921, had been the first woman to gain a pilot’s licence in 1911. Women pilots visited Australia throughout the 1920s, as reported in Australian newspapers in April 1921: “Miss Laura Guerite, a revue artist... piloted an aeroplane over

---
12 ‘The end of the flapper’.
14 Earhart, The Fun of It, pp. 10.
[Melbourne in March 1921] and therefore gained the distinction of being the first lady to pilot an aeroplane in Australia”.¹⁶ Miss Guerite had held a pilot’s licence since 1917, as well as a Royal Aero Club certificate and had instructed pilots in the U.S Army. But despite this apparent fascination with women’s aeronautical activities, what I wish to suggest in what follows is that before the 1930s the act of flying for women had not cohered into a practice which mediated and embodied discourses on gender, technology, and spatiality.

These discourses converged within the figure of the ‘aviatrix’. Although her outlines shift in stories told about her at the time and since, the aviatrix symbolised the new popular enthusiasm for air travel in the late twenties and early thirties. Widely represented in 1930s popular culture, the figure of the aviatrix offered a role for women as participants in an urban and international modernity.

Flights by women such as Johnson and Earhardt seemed to usher in a set of possibilities of freedom for women as a group. These freedoms included opportunities to travel independently and partake of the new spaces of modern life on an equal footing with men. The public attention that these flights attracted in the new media forms of radio, popular music and magazines also meant that women visibly acquired and demonstrated their competency as pilots and navigators. The flights of female pilots such as Amelia Earhart had been widely publicised as newsworthy and unusual events, and aircraft manufacturers used public fascination with women flyers to promote the safety of their latest models. In a chapter called ‘Women Pilots and the Selling of Aviation’, American cultural historian Joseph Corn describes this ‘domestication of the sky’ that women such as Earhardt performed as crucial to making “flying thinkable to so many people”.¹⁷

Women aviators were central to the understandings of flying as a mode of transport available to everyone, but they were also marginal to the institutions that controlled and regulated flying: commercial airlines, aviation manufacturers, and civil and

¹⁶ ‘Lady Pilot’, *Sea, Land and Air*, April 1, 1921, p. 56.
Fig 4.1  Ad for ‘Going up’ play at Criterion Theatre, ‘Sea, Land and Air’, September 1919, p. 404.
military aviation authorities. As Earhart notes in a section of her autobiography on ‘Twentieth Century Pioneers’:

Although she never flew herself, I doubt if any American woman had a larger hand in making flying a fact than Katherine Wright, the sister of Orville and Wilbur Wright... The money she earned [teaching Latin and Greek] she turned over to her brothers so they might continue their aeronautical experiments which by this time occupied them to the exclusion of bread-and-butter business. So Katharine Wright helped pay for and actually helped build the first heavier than air plane ever flown.\(^{18}\)

Long after Johnson and Earhart’s flights the aviatrix remained a border creature, extremely visible and celebrated in popular culture, yet the particularities of her *gendered* labour elided within a structure of public and private women. Women as technological players were thus positioned in a key contest zone of modernity. The aviatrix occupied an ambivalent and ambiguous existence on the border between women’s possible participation in technologised public sphere of work and leisure and their private consumption of new technologies. The aviatrix was positioned in this zone through what Andreas Huyssen has called the “deeply problematic homology between women and technology”, in which both woman and technology are ‘other’, requiring a relationship of mastery and domination.\(^{19}\) Her flight transgressed the first relationship of women’s ‘otherness’ implicated in travel narratives, that is, women have traditionally been the ground, or matter forming space, not agents producing or traversing the space of the travel story. She also transgressed a second important construction of women’s otherness in modernity, in her assertion of women’s agency in technological space, rather than as a machine in female form, lacking her own rationality.

Women’s adoption and construction of new technologies and their role in their popularisation has always been -- and continues to be -- contested and highly charged. As the figure of the aviatrix demonstrates, deep contradictions existed between these extraordinary, spectacular performances of sublime feats of travel and the social context of femininity that women had to negotiate and participate in everyday life. My reading of the construction of the subjectivity of the aviatrix here operates through Peter Stallybrass and Allon White’s thesis of ‘constitutive ambivalence’. Stallybrass and White, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin, assert that a “mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear and desire” operates in the construction of


modern subjectivity, resulting in “a psychological dependence upon precisely those Others which are being rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level”.20

The discursive constructions of the relationship between women and technology implicated in the fantastic embodiment of the aviatix were not ‘untrue’ or ‘false’, but processes of power. These work through a highly visible representation of women as ‘modern’ at the very same time that they were most excluded from the power relations embedded in the socio-technical complex of aviation. For the aviatix, participation in an international modernity, signified by her act of travelling as a single woman, was shot through with contradictions, as Stallybrass and White suggest further, in that “what is socially peripheral is so frequently symbolically central”. Stallybrass and White analyse such a politics of representation in the peculiarly Victorian urge to classify and order marginal working class and colonial subjects, specifically at the key sites of the slum and fair. The gendered subjects of these spaces, the domestic servant, the prostitute and the hysterical woman, show how women in the twentieth century have been “denied at the level of political organization and social being” while being “instrumentally constitutive of the shared imaginary repertoires of the dominant culture”.21 Here, I focus on the function of gender in the modern spatial imaginary, although the discursive denial and construction of class, age and race are also obviously operating here as well as the constitution of a gendered subject. The focus on the gendering of technology as an extension of the sphere of mainly white and middle-class women is drawn out within and across these multiple affects of modernity in order to demonstrate feminism’s participation in, as well as possible reshaping of, this imaginary.

visible and invisible travellings

As Amy Johnson was to find, female travel in the early twentieth century was thus performed as a spectacle outside of everyday life far more easily than as a spatial practice within it. Representations of her flight implicated Amy Johnson in modernist myths of travel as personal freedom at the same time as they attempted to produce a new, more democratic kind of space for women. In this desire to expand the public spaces available to women, the history of the space/times generated by a modern subjectivity has been shot through with risks and dangers, as well as great potential,

21 Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, p. 5.
for women as modernity’s ‘others’. Here, the feminist construction of the aviatrix should be investigated, like the flapper and the siren, in the context of recent feminist debates surrounding the (non)existence of the figure of the flâneuse, the female version of the urban dandy depicted in Baudelaire’s writing on his experience of nineteenth century Paris, and Walter Benjamin’s analysis of this figure. Because Benjamin posed the flâneur as a key figure of modernity as an exclusively masculine spatial practice and subject, feminist inquiry into women’s involvement in public space has had to grapple with the question of whether such a figure entails the exclusion of gender from urban space. The constitutive activities and pleasures of the flâneur, namely wandering in public space, mingling with the crowd and gazing at urban spectacles did not end cleanly at the close of the nineteenth century. Flânerie in the twentieth century has been argued to be practiced not just in on the streets and boulevards of Imperial cities, but to continue within the diasporic urban spaces of post-colonial cities, and also to be reflected in the discontinuous spatial practices invited by suburban shopping malls and television. The questions of whether the flâneuse has ever been a possible subject position for women, and if flânerie was spatial practice gendered as male, whether women ever could practise it, have been widely analysed and discussed in feminist critiques of the gendered nature of urban space. I will briefly outline those debates here, as I would like to position feminist theorisations and concerns over the underexposure of the flâneuse as importantly related to the overexposure of the aviatrix.

The flâneur, a practitioner of ‘aimless’ urban wandering and speculating, was understood by Walter Benjamin to emerge when the ‘man of the crowd’ who wandered the Parisian streets in the 1800s was forced off the ‘outdoor’ pavement by the increasing speed of traffic on the boulevards into the ‘indoor’ streets of the arcades. In the arcades -- the labyrinthine shopping malls of the nineteenth century that fascinated the surrealists in the twentieth century -- his slow, ‘prowling’ pace inverted the dominant imaginary of modernity as a highly mobile, technologised dynamism. In a feminist critique of the flânerie of modernist critical theory, Janet Wolff has commented on the irreducibly gendered nature of this persona and his milieu:

---

The experience of anonymity in the city, the fleeting impersonal contacts described by social commentators like Georg Simmel, the possibility of unmolested strolling and observation first seen by Baudelaire, and then analysed by Walter Benjamin were entirely the experiences of men.25

In the same period, the flâneuse as public woman was visible only as either prostitute (one translation of flâneuse means literally ‘streetwalker’) or as the female shopper.26 These associations of female bodies and public space as incompatible within modernist categories of spatial order, of femininity in moral danger in metropolitan space, as Elizabeth Wilson has argued, posed disciplinary difficulties for urban planners and social reformers: “the problem of nineteenth-century urban life was whether every woman in the new, disordered world of the city... was not a public woman and therefore a prostitute”.27 Wilson concludes her discussion of the contradictory nature of the regulation of women in nineteenth century public space by arguing that the flâneur himself never really existed, on final analysis a phantasmic construction. And further, argues Wilson, the flâneuse can be seen not to be a failed subject, but an impossible one, mythical like the flâneur himself. Wilson shuts out the possibility of the flâneur existing both historically and imaginarily, as a subject formed spatially, by totalising flânerie as a purely psychoanalytic construct: “a shifting projection of angst rather than a solid embodiment of male bourgeois power”.28

It is exactly the gendered embodiment of power, however, that interests me in the development of a travelling subject: how was the male flâneur so easily identified, described, represented, figured and taken up as a subject-position in the early metropolitan era and the female not? How does the flâneur function as a ‘mobilising figure’ (or ‘mobile’ in Bruno Latour’s terms)29 to negotiate and generate the space-time of the metropolis, when, again, the flâneuse cannot? And following from this crucial relationship between materiality, visibility and subjectivity, what

26 This understanding of women in public space must be referenced to the ways in which public visibility was also constructed through economic class. The accounts of Hannah Culwick’s pleasureable and almost entirely unremarkable mobility in the public spaces of Victorian London stands as an important historical account of working-class women’s indifference in public space and to flânerie: “…all the years I’ve walked about London nobody has ever spoke to me wrongly, & I don’t think they will you’re drest plain & walk on about your own business.” Diaries of Hannah Culwick, quoted in McClintock, Imperial Leather, p. 180.
preconditions are necessary to produce the aviatrix as a mobilising figure and what spaces and times does she generate?

Tracing the genealogy of a travelling female subject from her invisibility in the nineteenth century Imperial city to her intense and highly mediated association with the twentieth century ‘world’ city, I am interested in the flâneur very much as the embodied figure whose existence Wilson seeks to disprove. The flâneur negotiated, by inverting its times and spaces, a new kind of metropolitan space that was characterised by mobility of people, commodities, and information, and this mobility depended on the new transport and communications technologies. The figure of the flâneur emerged as a possible body formed by urban space, especially after railway transportation brought large numbers of people to travel to the city for work and consumer pleasures. Appearing near these transportation hubs, the flâneur’s favoured haunts of the boulevards and arcades themselves constituted as a new urban form in which the urban crowd was described and understood as “a field of forces in motion”.

The subject of this kind of urban space is spatially and temporally signified as the flâneur; as much as he is a literary and imaginary construct. Rob Shields has noted that the flâneur “is a hero who excels under the stress of coming to terms with a changing ‘social spatialisation’”, although Shields concludes he was also an “embodiment of space–time psychosis” for the ways in which he demonstrated the urban excess and phantasmagoria of the modern city of circulation. As a geographically and historically specific practice flânerie offered a subjective response to the shifts in space/time relations of modernist urban worlds. Flânerie is thus way of appropriating the givens of modern space and time for one’s own pleasure and labour, an exercise not that far from the ways in which early women pilots described their adventures in aviation.

The continuities between the urban and the aerial practices of flânerie develop through a ‘fascination with the new’ and an obsessive desire for freedom from temporal and spatial constraints, although the aerial flâneuse was definitely not a woman of the crowd. Amelia Earhardt writing on her life and attitudes that “certain threads... that were fully as important in leading me to aviation as being mechanical perhaps was”. These threads comprised of ‘liking to experiment’ and of her father “being a railroad man... by which I discovered the fascination of new people and

---

33 Earhart, *The Fun of It*, p. 3.
places”. Occurring at a crucial moment of the increasing visibility of women in public space in the 1920s and 1930s, as international air travel developed as a new spatio-temporal practice, the ‘invisibility’ of the flâneuse was transformed into the spectacularised, internationally mobile gendered subject, the aviatrix.

Readings of Johnson’s flight, both contemporary and historical, raise questions about the conceptualisation of such technologised travel as freedom that I wish to explore with reference to the gendering of flying in the 1930s. The aviatrix was produced in and through this configuration of dreams and technologies, grounded bodies and desires for the aerial.

When the aviatrix made her journey, she crossed some of the existing boundaries drawn for women, such as those between home and travel, private and public, body and mind. Instead of erasing boundaries between all people, however, her story was recruited to perform again and again more stable geopolitical divisions for Britain and its Orient. Through representations of Johnson’s flight in 1930 the British Empire, under internal and external pressures from nationalism, as well as decolonization and left-wing political movements, was as geopolitical network reworked and given shape in the mediascape of the early twentieth century. As Mary Louise Pratt has appreciated in her study of the ‘transcultural’ contest zones of Imperial travel, stories of such travel consumed and read back ‘home’ in popular forms were (and still are) “a powerful ideational and ideological apparatus through which European citizenries related themselves to other parts of the world”. In an important interplay between gender and technology, Imperial centres and national space, Amy Johnson’s journey propelled her towards Sydney as the “beginning and end of the great Imperial air route”.

a mobile feminism

As a crucial point in this history of feminism and travelogue, Laura Mulvey interpolates into her work on the gendered spectator and object of the gaze the story

34 Earhart, The Fun of It, p. 3.
of Amy Johnson as female adventurer. Mulvey's film on Johnson forms an important moment in feminist critique of representations of women as, and in, cinematic space. Not accidentally, given Johnson's symbolic status in Britain for a modernist feminism based on woman as narrative agent, in 1980 Mulvey made AMY! with Peter Wollen. Mulvey and Wollen comment on Amy Johnson's construction within popular culture as a spectacular body, as well as the more general question of women's doubled position as both female spectator and object of the gaze. In the film, emerging from 1970s feminist debates about representation, and just as she did in 1930, Amy Johnson as public woman embodies certain hopes and anxieties about women, travel and narrative space.

In more recent essay in the collection Sexuality and Space, Mulvey reiterates her concern with gender and space in the western and the melodrama, as genres that construct a particularly gendered spatial imaginary through "[their] narrative structures... and [their] narrative landscape[s]". She refers to a familiar structural analysis of the narration of the folktale, which can be seen to intersect with stories told about female travel:

...a minimal story must follow an established pattern. It begins with a point of stasis. A home characteristically marks the formal space of departure for the narrative, the stasis which must be broken or disrupted for the story to acquire momentum and which also marks the sexual identity of the hero, both male and Oedipal, as he leaves the confines of the domestic, settled sphere of his childhood for the space of adventure and self-discovery as an adult male. The horizontal, linear development of the story events echo the linear of narrative structure. The two reach a satisfying point of formal unity in the literal linearity of the pattern drawn by the hero's journey, as he follows a road or path of adventure, until he comes to root in a new home, a closing point of the narrative, a new point of stasis, marked by the return of the feminine and domestic space through (as Propp has demonstrated) the function marriage.  

In the introduction to Visual and other pleasures, published in 1989, Mulvey says that in making the film AMY! she was "dealing specifically with the narrative spheres allotted to female protagonists, and the fate of a heroine who adopts an active relation to narrative space and resists the intimidating look of the camera in its role as a sculptor of passive femininity".

The need for a heroic feminine remains an originary moment in feminist historicising (in many texts that begin with 'the first woman to...'). On a narrative level, this

strategy challenges representations of women as domesticated subjects, and posits them as agents of domestication, rather than mere markers of the distance travelled by the male hero. This narrative structure actualises the spaces available to women, whether in the spaces of the city, globe, or stratosphere, as well as in the spaces of the text. As Teresa de Lauretis has indicated in her histories of the ‘technologisation of gender’, gender is always already signified and produced, not an essence of being: “The construction of gender is the product and the process of both representation and self-representation”39. Thus representations of a gendered mobility have real implications for the differential access to, and limitations of, mobility for women as a group and as individuals. An example here would be the link drawn in studies such as Laurie Pickup’s, in the collection Women in cities, of women’s choice of low-paid jobs close to home because of gender constraints on women’s access to modes of transport.40 Judy Wajcman observes in a chapter on the built environment in her important analysis of the mutual constitution and social shaping of technology and gender, Feminism confronts technology, that gender has been implicated in the popular combination of imagery of travel, specifically car travel, with discourses of liberation. She says that “For men, cars afford a means of escape from domestic responsibilities, from family commitment, into a realm of private fantasy, autonomy and control.”41 Feminism has also constituted women’s mobility as an escape from domesticity, something that within the fantasy described by Wajcman, reads travel as freedom rather than labour, allowing that “While the car constitutes a major environmental hazard, for women, at least in the short term, demanding ‘equal access’ to the car is an important assertion of their right to independence, mobility and physical safety”42.

Jennifer Laurence, in a fascinating article on the construction of the flight of the female cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova as an instance of feminine abjection in outer-spatiality has made a sustained critique of the appropriation of such travel narratives in and for feminism. Laurence finds the “shared understandings of the Women’s movement” generically bound up with narratives of travel. Progressive social movements have broadly drawn on these conventions, and their feminist expression Laurence describes the movement from home to freedom through travel a “coalescence of the identity of the feminist around the idea of the occupation of

42 Wajcman, Feminism confronts technology, p. 135.
hitherto prohibitive and prohibited spaces". The readings of Amy Johnson’s flight in Laura Mulvey’s film, and other feminist projects that investigate the gendering of social space, run the risk of continuing this trajectory: narrating a linear progression of a woman from the home to the public world as a positive, desirable move into freedom.

In her aims to move beyond a feminist appropriation or rejection of travel narratives, Mary Russo’s work on the ‘female grotesque’ as transforming such fixed notions of gender and space would be, together with Laurence, notable exceptions to such feminist discourse that perpetuates narratives of modernity within feminism. Russo’s work instead teases out the transformative powers embedded within representations of public women such as Earhart in excessive, carnivalesque, unruly situations, and opposes such practices to any (self) policing of the normative, unitary, and correct contexts of the ‘good’ feminist. Russo provides a methodology and discussion of the sublime that proves extremely useful for moving beyond modernism because she avoids a simple appropriation of a travelling subjectivity for feminism. By embracing both the categories of the sublime and the possibilities of the grotesque body for feminist cultural analysis, she offers a way to negotiate the ground between liberation and responsibility. She argues in The female grotesque that “women’s liberation... [imaged as boundless flight] is imbricated with... bourgeois exceptionalism which marks off categories of irregular bodies to leave behind”.

Russo, via Bakhtin, analyses the discursive formation of the ‘aerial’ as relying on crucial modernist separation between above and below. The off-stage of such an ‘aerial’ modernity is thus the lowly zone of abjection, filled by the contents of modernity’s others: embodied subjects marked by class, age, physical ability and gender, especially signified by older women who might display the signs of ageing or manual work, as well as race signified by the ‘savage’, ‘primitive’ and ‘native’. Whether in the form of ‘low’ carnivalesque displays or the return of the uncanny, modernist space negates these non-modern bodies and produces its own clean and proper space of altitude and ‘upward mobility’.

Russo identifies the female aviator as positioned within and across these tensions of the modernist ideal of upwards flight. The aviatrix as a figure of modern femininity has to negotiate the sublime in aerial embodiments -- “sleek, transcendent, spectacularised bodies that modelled the ideas of progress and liberation” -- and the

---

grotesque, as such women were portrayed as ‘excessive’ and out of place.45 The aviatrix, like the flapper, performed a modernised female body, emphasising the new streamlined forms of everyday technologies in the nineteen thirties. The aviatrix, as a modern woman, had to be continually reinterpreted as both inside and outside established gender norms (as ‘not woman’ yet always feminine, as fundamentally altered, yet never grotesque), revealing much about the context in which she emerged as a possible body.

My argument wages that representations of Amy Johnson, as a figure formed by historical and imaginary geographies which saw feminism and modernity in these terms, engaged directly with these ambiguities. Indeed, representations of the aviatrix constituted her within and without traditional symbolic domains of gender and human identity. I will now turn to how Amy’s journey was represented in Australia through a discourse on the female sublime, both to herself, and in some of the texts that gave meaning to the new experience of a woman flying.

sports sills and flapper aces:
how not to be a woman

Before Amy’s flight to Australia she had been longing for the kind of liberation from the claustrophobic city that flying could provide. She wrote to her lover in 1927 (the year that Lindberg crossed the Atlantic), “I just hate streets and houses and tubes and buses and stuffy rooms and typewriters. I wish I could climb up a mountain and be high above all these things... where there’s light and air and sunshine”. Thomas Elsaesser, in an essay on the construction of gendered social spaces in Hollywood melodrama has described the function of such a spatial separation of the sublime and the domestic, as both extraordinary and ordinary in its performance of gender in space. Elsaesser notes that this separation relies on generic and gendered conventions, and formed through “a concept of masculine space: an outside sphere of adventure, movement and cathartic action in opposition to emotion, immobility, enclosed space, and confinement”.46

45 Russo, The female grotesque, p. 15.
Johnson's description -- and Elseasser's analysis -- both resonate with the sense of a contrived precariousness and orchestrated vertigo that appealed to and constructed the Romantic sublime within the age of Enlightenment as discussed in previous chapters. Quite understandably, this modern sublime has appealed to feminist narratives of the social and the spatial, as Patricia Yeager has enquired, in seeking to provide a new 'architectonics of empowerment' for women's writing and self-expression.\textsuperscript{47} In this feminist translation of the concept, access to 'the sublime' is seen to operate as a metonym for what has been at stake in women's participation in the modernist project. Yeager demands equal access for women to the sublime as a structure that comes pre-fitted with a sense of power -- of "transport and the self's strong sense of authority".\textsuperscript{48} Through access to the subjective and rhetorical powers of sublimity, Yeager argues, women can also claim their place in the modern world, a world which has transcended the human. Yeager contends that rather than a 'vertical', masculine sublime, the female sublime operates along a 'horizontal' plane of intersubjectivity. The possibility of such a sublime for feminism sounds terribly appealing as a rejection of fixed notions of gender and established lines of movement. However, the spaces of and for feminism within the sublime that Yeager and others (such as Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray) have tried to claim seems to be fundamentally at odds with the 'sublime' itself, and begs the question of why such a strong sense of 'self' might be needed here.\textsuperscript{49}

Such a structuring of the self, however, no matter what vector it might follow, emerges from a pre-eminently modern spatial imaginary (namely Enlightenment humanism) and organizes social space by placing 'otherness' at its disposal. Even a feminist inflection of the sublime is implicated in a power relationship which rests on recognizing the potential for, and then making use of, nature, bodies and space as a resource for production. Feminist critiques of this relationship should be heeded as an explanation of the limits of the sublime in gendered terms, rather than as claims to transcend its politics. Any move from a masculine aesthetics to a feminist ethics of the sublime, has to move through this phenomenology of domination.\textsuperscript{50} This tension between power over others and emancipation of the self appears in many texts which figure a gendered subjectivity in relation to the sublime, and Yeager is most

\textsuperscript{48} Yeager, 'Toward a Female Sublime', p. 212.  
aware of this. Because ‘woman’ as a category of person has occupied the space between subject and object, an ‘other’ against which a fully modern subject has been defined and organised in Western culture, feminist narratives of self and their relations to modernity that operate through a rhetoric of the sublime have had to maintain a tricky ambivalence in their acceptance of the power relations that it necessarily structures.

These contradictions and tensions are played out in what I believe is a shift in deployments of sublimity which correlate roughly with two ontological shifts which have been influenced by feminist and deconstructive theorisations of the subject: firstly, from the subject as unified and rational, to a conceptualisation of the subject as shifting and multiply organised and constructed through difference and alterity; and secondly, from the body as ‘being’, to a notion of the body as culturally constructed surface.\textsuperscript{51} After these shifts in ontology, the pursuit of “the infinitude of the private self”\textsuperscript{52} becomes an impossible and grotesque gesture. The horizontal axis of such a subject redraws the relationship between the lofty sublime into its low ‘other’, the defilement and impurity of the abject. The purity of this relationship is already figured as contested in the category of the grotesque. Feminist attempts to recoup the powers of the sublime ignore its history as a cultural form embedded within the modernist canon. The history of the grotesque as an alternative to the sublime offers a cultural politics that questions modernist upward mobility and transforms given understandings of the bourgeois ego-bound individual: “In Freud, the more of the other, the less of the self; in Bakhtin, the more of the other, the more of the self.”\textsuperscript{53} Feminist critiques of the individual subject have exploited this tension between self and other. Such critiques have characterised the self as inter-subjective and ultimately eccentric. Feminist theories of subjectivity that understand identity as process rather than essence begin and end at a stand on the social context of subjectivity that is better served by the grotesque than the sublime. What is developed in stories of women, like Johnson, who moved beyond traditional roles and spatial practices should, for these reasons, not be understood as a progression to a utopian beyond through the sublime.

The case of Amy Johnson demonstrates how aviation as a practice did offer women a ‘beyond’ to the stuffy interiors of ‘typewriters, tubes and houses’. As a way of mediating her own experience of living in the city, this privileged space of aerial

\textsuperscript{52} Yeager, ‘Toward a Female Sublime’, p. 192.
navigation enabled her to break free of the metropolis while being within it at the same time. In the spring of 1928, Johnson’s desire for some alternative to her sense of urban claustrophobia was joined to practical means of achieving an escape from it when she joined the Aero Club at Hendon in London and started to earn her flying licence. According to her biographer, it was directly as a way of ‘winning a place for women’ in aviation that Amy decided to fly to Australia:

One day in the club hangar, when the trio [of Johnson and two men] were chatting and chaffing in their usual bantering manner, the talk turned towards the subject of aviation, and Amy lamented... that anti-feminist prejudice seemed an almost insuperable obstacle for a woman who wanted to become a professional flyer. Baker said that to be accepted a woman would have to find some way of ‘winning her spurs’. ‘How?’ asked Amy. With a laugh Baker replied ‘Oh, by flying to Australia for instance’.54

In 1930 she wrote a newspaper article extolling the 'Joys of the Air for a Woman':

You who fly -- Do you tell your friends of the joys you experience in the air, of the exhilaration of knowing yourself free and alone in the glorious freedom of the skies, of the wonders to be seen... Do you show them by your example as a fine, careful pilot, how safe it is to fly a machine so shining, clean and well-cared for as your own? I hope you do -- you will be helping to make Aviation History.55

She urged women to save money out of their salaries, as she had done from her job as a typist, in order to “help bring flying within the means of us all”.56 The desires that she expressed, to democratise flying and give it a particularly feminine character, were consistent with those of other women flyers, including Amelia Earhart and Louise Thaden in the USA. Louise Thaden expressed this aerial utopianism when she wrote that “flying is the only real freedom we are privileged to possess”.57 In 1930, American journalist and amateur pilot Margery Brown pictured women’s liberation as an aerial adventure in a continuum with other labour-saving technologies when she declared:

Women are seeking freedom. Freedom in the skies!... The woman at the wash-tub, the sewing machine, the office-desk, and the typewriter can glance up from the window when she hears the rhythmic hum of a motor overhead, and say, ‘If it’s a woman she is helping free me, too!’58

55 Smith, Amy Johnson, p. 159.
56 Smith, Amy Johnson, p. 159.
These perceptions of a new public sphere for women linked them to a modernist trajectory of technological progress and spatial conquest through aerial feats. Many women (and men) read Johnson’s flight in political terms as the expression of women’s liberation through technology -- although these readings did not elaborate an effective politics by which they might re-organise their own lives outside of a technological sphere produced within patriarchy and capitalism.

Amy’s sublime and transformative identity was realised in local readings of the event that articulated her flight with a construction of a healthy modern femininity based on women’s physical exertions. In Sydney, the newly formed ‘Sports Girls’ Association’ issued a souvenir publication titled *Johnnie, you’re a bird*, with proceeds going to the ‘Crippled Children and Amy Fund’.59 The magazine contained drawings and testimonials to Miss Johnson’s achievement and drew her flight into a wider discourse on sexual difference within commodity culture. The practicalities of the expense of her flight demanded that she used sponsor’s money to finance the purchase of the plane, and her funds came from Lord Wakefield, the manufacturer of Castrol Oils who had also funded Hinkler’s flight. Wakefield was described advertorially as “a philanthropic oil magnate”, a “true Briton” who placed “the British Empire and its progress before wealth and self”, and above all the “Patron Saint of Aviation”.60 Advertisements for Castrol Motor Oil, KLG Spark Plugs, Shell Oil and Dunlop Tyres (all good British companies) created an analogy between the maintenance of her flying machine, a Gypsy Moth, and the fashioning of a feminine ‘girlish’ body, in which her girlish figure was used to promote the consumer accessories of modern travel, Mercolised Wax Complexion Cream, Borrowman Permanent Wave Treatments and Berlei Bras (see Fig 4.2).

---


Fig 4.2

Fig 4.3 Various illustrators, "These Wimmin... Some reasons why sportsgirls...", Johnnie, You're a bird, Sydney Sport's Girl's Association, Sydney, 1930, p. 12.
The sports girl was sexually ambivalent, neither man nor woman. Across the pages of the magazine itself representations of modern femininity clash and contradict each other. Representations of Johnson oscillate between sublimity and banality: she is both extraordinary ("a goddess of flight", "the new air Queen", "the Dancer of the air", "the Flapper who made the world gasp", "the lone flier cleaving the winds, through the vasty space" and "the most conspicuous woman in history") and ordinary ("still just a girl", "somebody's typiste", "how simple must ordinary flying be if a girl with... a little experience [and] much commonsense can fly as Miss Johnson has flown in the past few weeks!"). The transformation of gender from a nineteenth century womanhood that constrained women through clothing and confinement to the domestic sphere to a new, indefinite gender, was depicted by the new 'outdoor girl' who showed 'contemptuous independence'. Several cartoons celebrated the youthfulness and healthiness of the outdoor girl and the articles that were interposed with the illustrations parodied men's discomfort with the example set for Sydney women by Amy Johnson (see Fig 4.3). Her appearance and activities were contrasted with the seeming 'elegant insignificance' of men. The men were variously pictured as miniaturised, emasculated, effeminate and decidedly non-sporty. The style-conscious and leisureed Sydney 'sheiks' drank and smoked while the gigantic and heroic sports girl canoed and flew around the world. Although the Sport's Girl's Association itself was decidedly positive about the arrival of new sphere of action for modern women, even within the pages of the booklet male aviators described her as not "normal". An advertisement for Castrol Oils under the heading 'Advice to Sports Girls' constructed the car driver as exclusively male and women as passengers. The advertisement reminded 'Sports Girls' that Lord Wakefield had financed Johnson's flight and asked that modern women "be practical": "Next time dad or brother or the boyfriend drives the car to the garage for oil, see that he stipulates 'Castrol'. Made in all grades by the English firm of Wakefield's".

Anxieties surrounding the possibility that women might be driving cars or flying planes rather than being driven in them were also expressed in an editorial in the Adelaide Advertiser which cautioned that:

61 Johnnie, you're a bird, passim.
62 Charles Ulm, 'Ulm's Praise of Girl Ace', Johnnie, you're a bird, p. 25.
63 'Advice to Sports Girls', Johnnie, you're a bird, p. 27.
when the whole world is acclaiming Miss Amy Johnson’s great performance, which few men would even attempt, the voice of those who cry out against athletic feats by women is apt to be lost. Yet certainly there is an uneasy feeling that they are overdoing things... it is quite possible that women may push to excess the liberty given them now for the first time since the days of the Amazons -- who after all may have existed mainly in fable.64

Julian Thomas has pointed out in his essay on the transformative cultural politics of Johnson’s flight that the author of this article was obviously not concerned about women endangering their health by excessive domestic labour, and one could add here that other activities in which women were ‘overdoing things’, such as factory work, which were not mentioned in the editorial.65

The press coverage of Johnson’s flight further linked youth and modernity through girlhood. Like the flapper, the aviatrix was decidedly contemporary, having no past, and was positioned as falling short of a stable gender identity. In an interesting and telling factual error, started in England and continued by newspapers in Australia, Johnson’s age was misreported. Johnson’s age was noted in Johnnie, you’re a bird as twenty-two, but she was in fact twenty-seven.66 The need for an image of a girlish achievement, rather than a grotesque physical act that did not befit a mature woman who should instead be domestically occupied, was underlined by the streamlined lightness and youthfulness of the representations of the aviatrix. Amelia Earhart, thirty years old in 1928, was called the ‘girl Lindbergh’ after her flight across the Atlantic in the same year, and promoted the new aerial style in ‘sports’ clothing that she designed in the early nineteen-thirties, saying “This is an era of feminine activity. The stay-at-home and the hammock girl are gone... I tried to put the freedom that is in flying into the clothes. And the efficiency too”.67 The notion that ‘Woman too could fly’ symbolised the safety and comfort of flying by air: the air was both democratised and domesticated, although these two processes were in conflict with each other. The un-homely space of sublime aerality was domesticated and feminised by Johnson’s flight, but equally the feminine was also being freed from a definition as purely domestic. The ‘flapper ace’ was a powerful figure: the ace was a militarist fusion of man and war machine popularised during and after the First World War, while the flapper was a new figure of femininity, embodying sexual freedom, bodily mobility and fashion. To put these two together is to acknowledge what Mary Russo calls woman’s “burdensome duty to forever represent the new”.68

67 Ware, Still Missing, p. 101.
In Australia, these historical shifts in the representation of gender were employed to reinforce the bonds of Empire. Although Amy Johnson's flight was seen to create a new relation of time and space between Australia and the world, representations of the journey emphasised the terminal points of her journey, the centre of the Empire and its margin, erasing the spaces in between. Amy Johnson is pictured as gigantic in many drawings and advertisements, appearing out of the clouds, literally from 'nowhere'. Conversely, planet earth becomes a tiny ball upon which she stands, with the continent of Australia positioned under her boots. In one cartoon, the 'little ole world' wishes her luck and thanks her for landing "much more gently than those male fliers" (see Fig 4.4).  

In a drawing that expresses the changed relationship between center and periphery, man and woman, youth and age through a fantastical aerial embodiment, Johnson's body becomes a bridge between England and Australia (see Fig 4.5). Hal Quinlan, a cartoonist for The Sun, draws Johnson as a giantess standing across a sea of pure distance with no land in between the two islands, both are redrawn as similar in size. The entire geography of her journey through Europe, the Middle East and Asia is now an empty space marked only by lines of latitude and longitude.

Susan Stewart's useful analysis of the symbolism of giants seeks to understand such exaggeration of bodily size as an 'interface' between the natural and the human. Stewart suggests that "the gigantic represents, infinity, exteriority, the public, and the overly natural". The gigantism of the aviatrix further underlines her position as a 'public woman', a link between distant nations and a mediator of the territorial displacements of colonialism (see Fig 4.6). Such an exteriorised longing for connection to an Imperial centre is expressed in many drawings which show her leaving one home to come to a safe landing in another. Amy proclaimed on her arrival in Brisbane (on Empire Day 1930) "I stand for Empire... and Aviation and Empire stand together", and although accounts of her flight in newspapers and her biographies focus on her dealing with exotic and dangerous places during her stopovers, she relied on outstations of Empire in almost every place that she visited: either Royal Airforce fields or colonial administrations in the various points she stopped to refuel and repair her plane (see Fig 4.7).

---

71w Advertiser, 3 June 1930, p. 15.
Fig 4.4  
Fig 4.5  Hal Quinlan, 'We Dips our Lid – Young Australia is at your feet' from
“Travelling Light”

The use of radio for a live moving broadcast from a Fox-Movietone plane, the first of its kind, allied the new broadcasting technology to aviation and Imperial conquest. Radio was used to “stimulate patriotism” in the early 1930s, most explicitly in events such as the Royal Empire Society dinners, which were broadcast from Sydney’s Wentworth Hotel to all “Empire countries and homes across Australia.”\(^{72}\) Her arrival was also broadcast live on 2GB in Sydney, 2HD in Newcastle and 3DB in Melbourne, creating a metropolitan network of broadcast audiences, who were invited to join the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Radio-Movie-Club’s Aviation Section. At the aerodrome, ‘Big Bill’, the “500-watt Philips’ Mobile Public Address Amplifier... truthfully referred to as the ‘Big Noise of Sydney’ will be installed on the field... in order that the crowd shall be kept fully conversant with all that is going on.”\(^{73}\)

Sir Samuel Hoare, British Secretary of State for Air, had during the 1920s consistently advocated the use of aviation in conjunction with new media technologies to strengthen a sense of British Imperial unity and keep its subjects in close communication.

Let me now say something of its uses in destroying the great enemy of Imperial solidarity, distance. Is not distance the only real obstacle to Imperial unity? Is it not distance that creates the main difficulties in Imperial organisation? Was it not distance and the impossibility of consultation between British statesmen and American colonists that lost our American Empire in the 18th century? Is it not distance to-day that complicates Imperial machinery and deters men and women from migrating freely within the Empire’s boundaries? The aeroplane and the airship, entering into an alliance with the cable, the telephone, and wireless, can almost eliminate distance from the forces that now impede the course of Imperial unity.

Little more than a hundred years ago it took four or five days to make the journey between Edinburgh and London. There is no reason to-day why the aeroplane could not bring Bombay as near in time to London as Edinburgh was at the beginning of the 19th century.\(^{74}\)

Johnson expressed a similar desire to eliminate the in-between of the Empire and construct an Imperial connection for Australians in a speech that she gave on her arrival in Sydney. Fox Movietone recorded the event in a newsreel, that -- by courtesy of the Daily Mail, London -- promised to “bring ‘Jonnie’ [sic] to you, in the first and only genuine ‘personality’ sound picture of this great little lady”:

---

\(^{72}\) Cinesound Movietone, ‘Royal Empire Society Dinner’, A Year To Remember -- 1933, Newsreel Compilation, 16mm, B&W, NFSA Acc. No. 7612.

\(^{73}\) ‘Mascot Arrangements’, Johnnie, you’re a bird, p. 27.

I shall be very happy if this flight of mine can bring together people so far apart but so near together in fellowship and friendship, and everything except mileage. If you could get aeroplanes to bring you together that would be so much better, if you could get people coming out every week or so as I have done.75

Thus Johnson’s flight was also implicated in discourses of British dominion over its empire, and created a complex articulation of Amy Johnson’s flight within an imaginary of modernised, yet more closely allied British Empire, a desire that Amy herself often expressed. The aviatrix represented a break with women’s domestic roles in the nineteenth century, but she also represented the sublime dimensions of the grand and gigantic British Empire. Amy’s ‘strangeness’ had to be explained to herself and to other women and men in familiar terms; she had to perform an identity that was young, happy, adventurous, feminine and, above all, patriotically British.

a sublime (in)difference

Within these descriptions of flying women (and men) can be discerned a characterisation of the modern sublime, a way of narrating technological change which was contingent on a particular aesthetic relationship to technology. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries an earlier Romantic aesthetics of ‘Nature’ fused with a Modernist enthusiasm for the technology. These traces of the Romantic sublime have exerted a powerful influence on the forms of technology that have been considered feasible and worthwhile and have shaped the kind of technosphere that has developed since. The planners, writers, politicians and urbanists who have been admiring of the technological sublime were not just the contemporaries of Kingsford-Smith and Johnson, but have lingered on into an age which does not accord modernisation such a positive character.

To acknowledge that the sublime has a history offers one approach to explaining its hold on the modernist imaginary. A feminist critique of its deployment within modernism also offers a way of detaching it from a structure of domination. In order to dislodge the technological sublime such a structure it is necessary to ‘bring it down to earth’ to allow it to be examined as a fiction that has contradictory effects when deployed to narrate the modern. The sublime rests on a logic of rational discipline, in which the human subject recognises that which is beyond human

control, yet tamed and distant from any real bodily threat. Occurring at the threshold of terror and pleasure, the sublime represents the point at which humanity’s other (nature, technology) is really no longer life-threatening, but still contains that element of risk that made it attractively threatening in the first place. This structure of feeling is repeated throughout descriptions of flying as a technological engagement with limits, especially in its earliest manifestations, as journalists, writers and the aviators themselves sought to shape the understandings they had of exactly what it was they were doing in the sky. For the aviator and the public to make sense of this experience, the anxieties of associated with the new form of travel were ‘sublimated’, that is, displaced and elevated above pure abject terror to the register of the sublime by a concentrated effort of reason. This rationality ‘manages’ the modern will to fragmentation, dislocation and displacement by simultaneously holding in tension the extreme sense of freedom that flying engendered with the vulnerability of hugely increased speed, which all along relied on a flimsy machine that could be displaced from the sky at any moment. The sublime’s persistence in modernity marks foundational need for a reaching towards limits of understanding in order to move forward, and thus deeply implicates the sublime in modernist narratives of progress. Such a structuring of the self in terms of the sublime, whether it goes up and down or across and between, if it takes place in terms of domination, through absolute otherness, rather than through feminism’s anticipated realisation of a negotiated and simultaneous space of alterity, continues the conservative politics of the sublime.

In a widely reported ‘scene’ from Amy Johnson’s trip, on one of her stops during bad weather en route to Australia, she mistakenly landed in a ‘field of anthills’ at Atamboea in East Timor rather than an airfield. Johnson’s description of her relationship to her plane, nick-named ‘Jason’ offers a such a moment of horizontal ‘otherness’, but reveals also the frame of difference within the gendered sublime emerges:

I was delighted to see Jason again, surrounded by this ring of grinning savages... On this frail machine rested my one hope of getting away from this place, and it was here far more than when I reached Australia that I had the impulse to throw my arms round him as being the most faithful friend I had.⁷⁶

In her expression of friendship and kinship to the machine, Johnson constructs a counter-image to the master/slave relationship of man and machine. The presence of a ‘ring of grinning savages’ provides the background for the techno-corporeal

complex of the aviatrix as a merging of woman and machine. The existence of another inassimilable ‘otherness’ emphasises the preconditions of estrangement that enables this connection to take place. When Johnson found herself in the strange interspace of Imperial travel, she was so alienated from other humans to be moved towards a ‘sublime of nearness’ to her ‘frail machine’.

Kingsford-Smith’s biography, in contrast, ends with a very different kind of conversation between human and machine. Describing his final flight from Mascot in the ‘Southern Cross’ on 18 July 18 1935, Kingsford-Smith wrote:

It was an emotional moment for me personally. That was my last flight in the “Old Bus” which had meant so much in my flying life. She had been a living thing to me. In her, I had spent about one hundred and fifty flying days and twenty whole nights. During all her long flights she had never let me down. Even on that last flight across the Tasman, it was not the “Southern Cross” that failed me.

When the propeller was smashed, I seemed to hear her call out: “It isn’t me, boss! It’s that new bit of cowling.”

The “Southern Cross” was “the father of the Fokkers.” The Dutch, who always refer to an aeroplane as masculine, call her that, for she was the first big-wing three-engined Fokker ever built. One day, I want to put a brass plate on the old plane. It will bear and inscription something like this: “To my faithful old bus, in grateful memory and regard, from her boss.”

Kingsford-Smith’s account does not admit his proximity to the machine, but emphasises the distance between them. He insists on the position of the machine as subservient rather than equal, by calling himself her ‘boss’ addressing ‘her’ as a faithful servant. Even the part that breaks, the propeller is excluded from the machine-being of the aeroplane.

It is only through acknowledgment of the proximity of the technological to the organic that the feminist notion of ‘empowerment’ through technology can be reconfigured, as Donna Haraway has indicated in her essay on cyborg feminism, to become an architectonics of possibility: a freakish but more realistic idea of embodiment in a post-human world. Perhaps then the longing for ‘something more’ that has been under investigation throughout this chapter can be seen to be produced by and constitutive of the tension between subjectivity and spatiality that the aviatrix represents. The continued appeal for feminism of the notion of a ‘female sublime’ is also imbued with this longing. Rather than offering women like Johnson

---

77 Charles Kingsford-Smith, My flying life: an authentic biography prepared under the personal supervision of and from the diaries and papers of the late Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith with a preface by Geoffrey Rowson, Andrew Melrose, London, 1937, p. 280, emphasis mine.

as a real instance of a global flâneuse, instead I would like to suggest that she is an embodiment of the incompleteness of this project, a necessary impossibility, rather than a final solution. What she does offer, retrospectively, is a moment at which travel for women was a practice involving a break with home, ontological risks and openness to possibilities of change. Her identity as a modern woman had always to be elaborated within a structure that tried to displace her from it: while she performed women’s modernity she had to make sure that she was not ‘out of order’, ‘abnormal’, in ‘error’. The intense commodification of her identity revealed the avatrix as a technology of gender, a subjectification within a structure of the essential feminine, rather than a political challenge to the ‘gender’ of technology. As Klaus Theweleit has theorised the relationship between the authoritarian male subject and the female object of the gaze, sorted into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ women:

If yet more images, terminal stops, solid territories, are created to permit easy identification before the dissolving of boundaries (deterritorialisation of desire, the partialisation of the body) has even begun, then there is a danger that images will be replaced by other images (male by female images), instead of being erased by experiences.79

It was precisely through the avatrix’s overrepresentation that the possibility of women’s participation in the kinaesthetics of modern space was compromised and limited. Women’s ability to be technological agents had to be negotiated by staying in their ‘proper’, gendered place. The modern woman ultimately had to maintain her femininity at the same time as she anticipated its dissolution.

defending the hero

From these fragmentary glimpses of a woman, helmeted, standing by her plane made from wood and fabric, a kind feminist heroics was constructed and also denied: despite a call by Australian feminist movements for her arrival to inspire girls to fly – ‘for women too to hold the heights’ – Johnson was later portrayed by Australian (male) aviation journalists as ‘nervous’, ‘febrile’, and ‘excessively secretive’.80 Instead of a utopian figure celebrating women’s entrance into modernity, the predominant readings of Johnson (and other women fliers) were of her as a subject lacking the required mastery over the machine to be a successful pilot.

80 Norman Ellison, pencilled note attached to typescript on ‘Great Moments in Australian Aviation’, “Destination Australia — Record Miscellany... Most charming — Ely Beinhorn, self-
Johnson's own descriptions of the multiple reasons for her 'nervousness', however, challenge this understanding. Her diaries and letters describe several occasions on which she 'broke down' emotionally rather than mechanically. These 'breakdowns' seem to be precipitated by the stresses of the massive public relations industry that was necessary to fund her flying endeavours rather than the demands of air travel itself. At the time of her flight, she was not able to publicly criticise her managers. After her death in 1940, the publication of her letters and diaries reveal her sense of self-alienation during and after the commercialisation and intense publicisation of her flights.

She was unable to complete her intended itinerary to Mascot after she crashed her plane in Brisbane and instead she was flown to Sydney by an Australian pilot. This prompted Norman Ellison, an Australian aviation journalist and future biographer of Kingsford-Smith to comment on her noticeable difference in deportment from the male aviators: "The women record breakers were a marked contrast; that is in journey's end condition. Amy Johnson was a jittery nervous wreck when she reached Darwin. She was still over-taut, nerve-crackly, after weeks on Australian soil."

This 'nervousness', despite Ellison's attempt to dismiss her flying ability, seemed not to be brought about by the stresses of the flight but the overwhelming attention from crowds that she underwent during her reception. Constance Smith in her biography of Johnson notes that on her arrival in Charleville in Queensland she was rushed by the local population:

Amid frantic cheering and pushing Amy was trapped until rescuers fought their way to her. By the time she had been bundled into a car and driven to the hotel where she was to stay she was weeping hysterically. It is hardly surprising that during the next few weeks an irrational horror of crowds and strangers beset her.

That the aviatrix, travelling subject extraordinaire, suffered agoraphobia is a paradox that cannot be explained except by reference to the fact that although Amy flew, she had to come back to earth some time. Her freedom was not guaranteed by emulating the hero, whose freedom depended on others being left behind, but had to be

assured -- Jean Batten, most febrile -- Amy Johnson, ratbag -- Lady Chater, Most eyebrow raising -- Mrs Miller, most domineering -- Jacqueline Cochran", np., Australian National Library, Canberra, Ellison Collection MS 1882/1/13; 'Miss Johnson - Flight causing comment -- 'Mysterious and Disturbing', Sydney Morning Herald, 3 January 1931.

81 Norman Ellison, early draft of Flying Matilda book, typescript and pencil changes, p. 10.
Australian National Library, Canberra, Ellison Collection MS 1882/1/1.

82 Smith, Amy Johnson, p. 264.
practiced in relation to institutions and discourses which were especially constraining to women.

While representations of Johnson’s flight from England to Australia included women in modernist myths of travel as personal freedom, her reception in Sydney attests to a popular enthusiasm for such public spectacles of technology at a time of economic hardship. Over fifty thousand people attended Mascot aerodrome to meet her in Sydney on 4 June 1930 and more than fifty six thousand paid sixpence to see her plane at David Jones department store in the city centre.\textsuperscript{83} This increasing commodification of the aviatrix and her public appearances was criticised by the Sydney press. Johnson as a spectacular embodiment of collective desires for technology and the growing popular enthusiasm for aviation demonstrated the duality of women’s inclusion in public space. She was increasingly both subject and object of commodification and display. She had only been able to get to Australia by private sponsorship. Aviation was consumed and celebrated in popular culture in collective expression of utopian desires for technological progress, but aviation as was underwritten and dominated by commercial interests. Johnson’s manager, in what Constance Smith describes as “an unfortunate decision”, charged £100 for her public appearances in Sydney. This was reported by papers such as Smith’s Weekly and the Labor Daily as a indicative of Johnson’s personal greed, rather than her management’s. Smith’s Weekly published an article on 14 June calling her ‘The Air Digger of the Skyway’ and ‘The Gimme Girl’. It included a satirical letter from Johnson to her family that established her public persona as pathologically avaricious and depicted her as exploiting her popularity for economic benefit:

\begin{quote}
I do loathe the crowds staring at me for nothing. I don’t mind them when they have been counted at the box office... My right palm is all itching. I must rub it on wood so that it’s sure to come good, and then on brick, so it’s sure to come quick... I’m sorry there’s no Fishmonger’s Guild out here, other wise I’d have been on another £100 as their guest through Dad’s association with that ancient trade...

Your Johnnie, The Cash and Carry girl.\textsuperscript{84}
\end{quote}

Despite the effort of her managers to censor such criticism, Johnson read this article during an interview by Truth, Smith’s Weekly rival publication. The next issue of Truth carried the headlines “TEARS DISSOLVE AMY’S SMILE... RESENTS THE GIBE THAT SHE IS A GOLD DIGGER... IN GRIEF AND ANGER SHE THREW OFFENDING PAPER BEHIND THE PIANO”.\textsuperscript{85} To explain the stresses on Johnson during her trip to Australia, Smith also records a story told by Ian Grabowsky, a pilot

\textsuperscript{83} Flypast, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{84} Smith, Amy Johnson, p. 250.
\textsuperscript{85} Smith, Amy Johnson, p. 251.
who flew her around Australia after her plane was damaged. Grabowsky describes a melodramatic scene in Perth, after Johnson refused to fly a German plane to promote Wakefield Oils:

I was walking to my room at the hotel... and as I approached Amy’s I heard a man’s voice raised in anger and swearing. Without knocking I opened the door and then I saw Amy lying on the bed crying and sobbing and saying ‘I won’t, I won’t.’ Standing over her was Bill Brash [a Wakefield’s employee] who was loudly and angrily saying somewhat as follows: ‘You’re our servant -- we bought you body and soul and you’ll bloody well do what you’re told and what we arrange’.

Johnson eventually rejected her own name as a commodity in itself and was even more overwhelmed by the pressures of media attention after her return to England. By October 1930 she distanced herself from her public image as aviatrix and wrote to her family to tell them that she had assumed the alias of ‘Miss Audrey James’:

I detest the publicity and public life that have been forced upon me... I have therefore been driven to tell you... that I am seeking hard to lose my identity of ‘Amy Johnson’ because that personage has become a nightmare and abomination to me. My great ideas for a career in aviation have been annulled, for a long time to come, by the wrong kind of publicity and exploitation which followed my return to England. I’ve had a complete breakdown since the Engineer’s dinner and I’m not normal at present. I strongly resent interference and efforts to rule my life or control my actions... I’ve lived my own life for the last seven years and intend to continue doing so.

Johnson’s refusal of a heroic narrative of sublime travel in the name of feminism offered a crucial twist on modernist space, through which collective desires for social transformation through technology could be expressed. Women like Johnson and Earhart demonstrated that feminism’s advantages of an antipathy and indifference to the sublime do not have to be given up in order to claim modernist space for women. Insisting on her own ‘ordinariness’, Johnson said in a ‘broadcast talk’ in back in England “I admit I that I am a woman, and the first one to do it... but in the future I do not want it to be unusual that women should do such things; I want it to be recognised that women can do them.” Her own self-positioning as a modern woman was thus negotiated in opposition to an individualist, masculine sublime heroics of speed and transcendence.

Such a sublime was embraced by aviation journalists, especially in their descriptions of Kingsford-Smith, actively constructing him as hero to exclude all other heroes.

86 Smith, Amy Johnson, p. 252-253.
87 Quoted in Mulvey and Wollen, AMY!; Scene 11. ‘Amy through the mirror’, p. 40.
When Kingsford-Smith disappeared flying to Australia in November 1935, *Smith’s Weekly* published Ellison’s “intimate study” of “Kingsford-Smith at the controls” on its front page, and credited the author with the title of “the Pressman who knows him best of all” (see Fig 4.8). Ellison a few years later wrote in an early introduction to his biography of Kingsford-Smith:

In this book, there is a lot of switching from the main subject. This is not because Smithy is not big enough for a book completely on his own; it is hoped that this book proves it. But in these days, when commerce, [an armaments race], international [bitterness] unrest and big business have eroded so much of the romance, and the individuality of aviation, many of the old hands and the work they have done are forgotten, and are likely to remain so. None more than Smithy loved his fellow-fliers. He would not begrudge their sharing in a minor way, his book. So whenever another air trail crosses that of Smithy’s, and the other fellow deserves it, he flies into this book.

In 1931 Kingsford-Smith had constructed aviation as an ordinary activity, but noticeably gendered as masculine and spatialised as public and officially sanctioned. Kingsford-Smith showed only the benefits of aviation for ‘Mr. Suburbanite’ “who merely sets his watch and thanks his gods that the letters he posted last night will be in Queensland at lunchtime” and “John Citizen [who by flying] could get where he wants to go at the moment he wants to go... and to do these things with greater speed than has ever been known before”.

Nowhere in any of his writing on Kingsford-Smith from the 1920s to the 1970s did Ellison mention Kingsford-Smith’s profoundly anti-democratic politics. Despite Kingsford-Smith’s rhetoric of a democratic ‘Everyday Aviation’ if Australians became more ‘airminded’, his widely reported membership of the counter-revolutionary, quasi-fascist organisation ‘The New Guard’ during the 1920s and 1930s under the leadership of Eric Campbell indicates what kind of democracy

---

89 Norman Ellison, ‘Smithy -- Where are you?’, *Smith’s Weekly*, 16 November 1931, p. 1.
90 Norman Ellison, early draft of *Flying Matilda* book, typescript and pencil changes, p. 1, Australian National Library, Ellison Collection MS 1882/1/1. Text in square brackets was omitted from the final printed version.
Son Of “Smithy”—Our Greatest Son

NATIONAL TRIBUTE SHOULD MAKE THIS HEIR TO FAME WARD OF THE NATION
Spontaneous Homage to Heroic Blood

CRAVEN'A

Fig 4.8 Front cover of Smith's Weekly, 22 November 1935.
Kingsford-Smith anticipated. Kingsford-Smith was reported to be the squadron leader of the New Guard’s air wing, complementing fleets of ‘armoured cars’ and a naval squadron. At the peak of the depression in Sydney, Kingsford-Smith was heard at a dinner party to suggest as a way of dealing with strikers “if the Labor crowd do not come to their senses a bit of bombing might persuade them”. The enthusiasm for military uses of the aeroplane that conservative forces like the New Guard were able to muster underlines the social context of aviation in the 1920s and 1930s. The sense of exclusion from the modernist city being planned and built at Mascot that women and working class people expressed illustrates that modernity for the citizens of Sydney was always a fragmented and contested process.

In a sentence omitted from the final manuscript Ellison confesses his absolute and total admiration for Kingsford-Smith: “Frankly, I admit, what is a defect in a biographer striving to be factual, is a grave defect [sic]. I believe that Smithy was the Daddy of them all.” This masculinist vision of the perfect hero strove to represent Kingsford-Smith after his disappearance and presumed death as a sublime, perfect body. As Bakhtin wrote in the 1920s, the story of the hero offers readers a ‘completed’ life that is always unavailable to the self as individual:

Artistic vision presents us with the whole hero, measured in full and added up in every detail; there must be no secrets for us in the hero in respect to meaning... From the very outset, we must experience all of him, deal with the whole of him: in respect to meaning, he must be dead for us, formally dead.

In this sense, we could say that death is the form of aesthetic consummation of an individual... The deeper and more perfect the embodiment, the more distinctively do we hear in it the definitive completion of death and at the same time the aesthetic victory over death.

Johnson, who never quite reached ‘home’ in her own identity, and held out for the promise of women’s self-determination rather than their domination of others, is remembered for a series of misadventures and crashes, rather than an heroic and sublime death. Her story illustrates the riskiness of endings that intertwine the final completion of spatial and personal progress. In her complex participation in Imperialist and feminist discourses at the same time, the aviatrix demonstrates the problematic nature of political strategies of liberation that engage the sublime. As a

---

solution to oppression, the liberation through technology promised women in the 1930s (and beyond) remains caught in modernist ideals of progress and order. The figure of the aviatrix was deeply implicated in a Western modernism that drew on these ideals.

* * *

Despite her ‘triumph’ by arriving in Australia, the meanings surrounding Amy Johnson’s flight were never completely unified and remain multiple and ambivalent. By the late 1930s, when aviation was re-militarised, the utopian image of the ‘lone girl flyer’ was undercut by a re-gendering of air travel as a male activity. Women’s inherent mental instabilities were a barrier to the demands of aviation, and these were posited as a natural condition of femininity, rather than a socio-psychic reaction to any individual stresses, especially to women’s overexposure through the commodification of their identities. Women’s operation of planes was seen to introduce an ‘irrationality’ to modern space, and their presence as pilots was constructed within a circuit from machine to woman as an embodiment of technology out-of-control. Readings of Johnson’s mental state as such a ‘problem’, was extrapolated to all women -- their mentality seen to be insufficiently defended against the shocks and stresses of flying.

The aviatrix as a problematic body was produced historically and institutionally by these tensions in discourses on women’s mobility. These conceptions of mobility have operated metonymically for what has been at stake in women’s participation and access to technology, and even more broadly their role in modernity. The tensions established in these discourses between on the one hand, a feminism imagined as a spatial practice of liberation of selves and others, and on the other, a pre-eminent Western geographic imagination that is based on a domination of territory, make the aviatrix an inherently unstable persona.

In this chapter I have interrogated this imbrication of the spatial and the social in the subjectivity of the aviatrix through close examination of a ‘female’ technological sublime. As a critique of the modern drive to mastery, liberation, and spatial conquest, such a ‘female sublime’ attempts to rework the terms of sublimity and re-conceptualise the problem of relations between self and other within a sublime staging of difference. Because the sublime has been a foundational category through which relations between spaces, selves and technologies have been organised in Western culture, it offers a unique moment at which to get a ‘fix’ on the problems and possibilities of feminist engagements with technology. It is also through an
investigation of socio-cultural aesthetic states that oppose and underpin the sublime, namely the grotesque and the abject, as they relate to a feminist cultural studies of technology, that we might understand the journey of the aviatrix as a transgressive practice.

The long-lasting achievement of Amy Johnson’s flight was her popularisation and participation in the pleasures of long-distance air travel. At the same time her flight consolidated exclusionary claims to international airspace in the name of Empire. So despite her struggles to ‘prove’ feminist success in the realm of technology, such a contradictory position for the aviatrix illustrates that in 1930 women were not yet fully citizens of the city of (international) circulation.
part two:

On the very threshold of space
chapter five:

War, everyday

The everyday is covered by a surface: that of modernity. News stories and the turbulent affectations of art, fashion and event veil without eradicating the everyday blahs. Images, the cinema and television divert the everyday by at times offering up to it its own spectacle, or sometimes the spectacle of the distinctly noneveryday: violence, death, catastrophe, the lives of kings and stars -- those who we believe defy everydayness. Modernity and everydayness constitute a deep structure that a critical analysis can work to uncover.1

In 1943, the Director-General of Civil Aviation, A.B. Corbett expressed his hope that the Australian traveller could be as easily habituated to air travel as he was to walking. In a truly technocratic vision, the Director-General made a case for the seamless dispersal of aviation technology throughout the everyday life of ordinary Australians. His evidence to the ‘Interdepartmental Committee on Civil Aviation Policy and Organisation during the war and post-war period’ -- a submission that later became known as the ‘Corbett plan’ -- set out a plan to train Australians for war through a popular involvement in civil aviation. This proposal drew on the technological imperative of the 1930s call to the nation to think ‘airmindedly’, but here Corbett went further by urging a total re-organisation of the citizen’s everyday world. Corbett’s plan represents an attempt to dramatically shift the horizons of mobility in Australian everyday life by forging citizen’s readiness for war through their everyday movements:

I shall no more than outline the propositions that a nation desiring to raise a mechanised division would be involved in great difficulty if its citizens never used mechanical transport in any form. It might have similar difficulties in raising infantry brigades wearing boots, if its national [sic] habitually went barefoot.

A nation which refuses to use flying in its national life must necessarily today be a backward and defenceless nation.2

In this plan Corbett expressed his strategies for making aviation a ‘backgrounded’ technology: invisible, unremarkable and pedestrian. Aviation, an activity that had

2 ‘Civil Aviation Policy and Organisation during the war and post-war period’, Report of Interdepartmental Committee, War Cabinet Minute no. 3097, Melbourne, December 1943, p. 3. AÂ MP 288-17/2/16.
been spectacular, extraordinary and heroic in the period between the wars had always been undergoing a simultaneous ‘domestication’ through popular culture in the 1920s and 30s as I have shown in the previous section, ‘Engineering the future’.

In the war period the mediascape was especially important as advertising actually worked to mediate and replace consumerism during the war, by providing a terrain of pure signification. Through a picturing of glamour and fashion consumers maintained contact with the latest modern styles while labour and resources were diverted to the national effort. As familiar items disappeared from the shops, manufacturers explained their absence in advertising by representing them without actually offering them for sale, as in a 1942 advertisement for Dunlop Rubber (see Fig 5.1). By showing what the factories were making instead of the familiar consumable, everyday items, the companies which had previously been familiar as consumer brand names gained a market position as contractors for the military. Again, high and low, here and there were related through a figuring of two materially different, but symbolically continuous transport technologies: the shoe and the aeroplane. In advertising such as a representation of the manufacture of shoes into tyres, terrestrial and aerial transportation were related, demonstrating a magical transformation of shoes to planes through a kind of sublimation of the everyday. This placing of the shoe and aeroplane on a continuum of mobility produces an historical narrative of ‘natural’ progress from one form of transport to the next.

This chapter argues that such a profound re-organisation of everyday life was precipitated during the war period. Through the militarisation of everyday life before and during the war period aeriality was reconstituted, not so much as a utopia of ‘peace, height and freedom’, than as a space of fear and invasion. This chapter examines how representations of the technosphere of aviation sought to construct the domestic as a military zone for the Australian population in and through an urban frame. Both political rhetoric and advertising during the war both constructed the home as site of narratives of national values, as well as essentially ‘British’ practices. At the same time the borders of the nation were re-territorialised in aeriality. This ‘domestication’ of the sky operated through a national imaginary of strengthened national boundaries in everyday life. The need for these hardened boundaries was contracted within perceptions of Australia’s geographical proximity to hostile and highly technologised nations such as Japan. In this imaginary both the home and the sky were constructed as threshold spaces needing continual surveillance and reinscription as defensible space.
Fig 5.1  ‘We made this instead...’, Brian McKinley, *Australia 1942: The end of innocence*, Collins, Sydney, 1985, p. 171.
The 'everyday' in this discussion is understood as a terrain of contesting and competing practices that are familiarised through repetition and ritual. A key site of these rituals, and their logical object, is the home as a space of familiarisation. Rituals of home-making are also political rituals of cultural exclusion and identity construction. Etymologically, the verb to domesticate is closely related to dominate, as both derive from dominus, the lord of the domum, the home. As Ann McClintock's work on colonial exploration and Imperial commerce richly demonstrates, the British project of imperial conquest operated through 'threshold institutions' that spatialised and ritualised the civilisation process and, so doing, fetishised the space of the home and the feminine through a re-deployment of signs of the domestic in 'foreign' space: "Domesticity denotes both a space (a geographic and architectural alignment) and a social relation to power". This chapter examines the aerial militarisation of everyday life as a parallel process to the domestication of the aerial discussed in the previous chapters. I suggest in this chapter that the discourse of air power and militarisation of the home were equally contested and multiple in their effects and reception.

wartimes and spaces

Although there were inter-party disputes on how aviation should be managed and by whom in the 1930s, the overall enthusiasm for aviation crossed party, regional and class lines in Australian politics. This passion for aviation was demonstrated by parliamentary discussions that asserted a unified support for aviation policy. Queensland Labor senator, Senator Collings, expressed his party's total support for the Empire Air Services Act No. 13 in 1938 that gave Qantas Empire Airways rights over the Singapore to Sydney route and the Australian federal government increased administrative control over the privately owned airline:

The Opposition will not oppose this bill which it believes to be long overdue. So far as this legislation will keep the Commonwealth abreast of modern inventions for the practical annihilation of time and space, it has the support of the Opposition. Desirable legislation is better late than never.¹

The act guaranteed that all new aircraft to be bought by Qantas and used on the route would be at least partly built in Australia, and most importantly, that the Australian government would be able to use for military purposes any commercial

¹ McClintock, Imperial Leather, pp. 34-36.
² Commonwealth of Australia, Parliamentary Debates, 1938, p. 2940.

178
planes on the route.\textsuperscript{5} Such debates were topical in the late 1930s, when the possibility of a world-scale war seemed to hover over the day-to-day. Journalists speculated on the possibility of either a negotiation of a last-minute peace or the escalation of hostilities into war, followed by unimaginable disaster. In the meantime, the question of whether the then Liberal government was making sufficient and well-organised preparation for war was a constant topic in the papers, and one that, like the Corbett plan, revolved around the ‘outfitting’ of the ordinary soldier for war, with his style of dress, his equipage and uniform metonymic for the ‘outfitting’ of the nation for war.

In April 1939, a short item in \textit{The Bulletin} under the heading ‘Ready, Aye, Ready?’ reported that although “Town after town filled its recruiting quota towards the end of January... recruits are now wondering whether their country really needs them, or whether Messrs. Hughes [then Minister for External affairs and in charge of militia recruiting] and co. were herding them to recruiting stations purely for fun.”\textsuperscript{6} The problem of dressing the men in military gear almost seemed almost more important than equipping them to fight: “A daily paper correspondent says... ‘It is very difficult to maintain interest among men whose uniforms range from navy blue suits and patent leather shoes to shorts and sandshoes’.”\textsuperscript{7} Through a crucial interrelation of the technological and geographical, the low with the high, the availability of the humble army boot became an index of the readiness for war of the soldier-citizen, just as it had been for the French army in 1792. As an accessory for the military man, the placement of the aeroplane in a contiguous arrangement of fashion, technology and war here points to some of the ‘deep’ relationships between the everyday and modernity.

As Lefebvre has suggested, narratives of modernity oppose the everyday to violence and terror, marking out the quotidian as a space of private, predictable, benign, microscopic, familiar and tightly bounded practices, and everything else -- irrationality and fantasy, as well as politics and war -- as outside the temporality of the everyday. But the increasing ‘everydayness’ of war technology in the 1930s, starkly depicted in the aims of Corbett and others who sought to ‘plan’ out everyday life, demonstrates the complexity of this relationship. Rather than a simple partition between the everyday and the extra-everyday, these boundaries are mutually constitutive in modernity. Large scale shifts in the organisation of everyday life, such as the declaration of war, further question these boundaries, and makes their interplay visible and strange, rather than part of the background. Further, recent

\begin{footnotes}
\item[5] Haddon and Cave, \textit{Air Transport in Australia}, p. 89.
\end{footnotes}
critical attention to the organisation of everyday life has allowed exposition of radical contingency of everyday practices and how the notion everyday itself 'others' spaces and times.

The forces that organise everyday life are multiple and many layered, and to trace such forces elucidates the relations between the sublime and the banal, between everyday distractions and their place in modern quotidian rhythms. During the war period, rapid change to the very material of the city and suburbs took place, as well as changes to understandings of what the city and the nation meant. Such changes not only made -- and continue to make -- that which was most extra-ordinary (the military-industrial complex) become familiar, but the technologies themselves became indispensable; like the mass-produced boot that fits and is moulded by the individual foot: part of the architecture of the body.

Of course, everyday time and space have never been empty, constant, to be filled with that which is simply 'ordinary'. As Michel Maffesoli suggests in his essay 'Of Proxemics' the everyday is the 'glue' of communal identities through "tactile, emotional and affectual experience" and as such it forms a network of relations which are only "evoked by area, the miniscule and the everyday". Maurice Blanchot similarly argued that the everyday should be 'opened' onto history, to demonstrate "existence as public through and through", although the everyday itself, by its obliqueness, ubiquity, massification, its 'any and anyone'-ness, "escapes the clear decision of the law". Although during the war period aviation as a technology of mobility sought to incorporate the space produced by the individual body into the military *dispositif*, to organise men into a machine corpus, who could range over and defend territory against "expansionist" powers, the everyday (still) evaded regularisation, more diffuse than the forces that sought to make use of it.

An imaginary of ordinary disaster was increasingly narrated by radio, newspapers and magazines in the moment of impending war and after the declaration of hostilities against Germany in 1939. Not only was the spectacularly aerial made ordinary, but the violent, foreign and horrific abstractions of war were brought 'home' in this period. In this militarisation process, the most minute and familiar practices such as getting dressed and going to work, what Benjamin has called 'the extreme concrete', took on a logic of battle and become a site from which to launch a defense of the nation against threatening external forces. The city also became place

---

to organise and mobilise resources for the defence of the lofty ideals of freedom, and these ideals were grounded in the homelessness of the free world: ‘a way of life’.

As in times of such cultural shifts, these mobilisations worked both centrifugally and centripetally. For example, the narrative of war sought to homogenise the domestic and national space around racial identity (the mass internment of Germans, Italians, and Japanese in Australia for example) but also allowed many Aboriginal people to become involved in the world of salaried work for the first time, and consequently argue for citizenship rights. For the purposes of this discussion, the focus on the representation of aviation will illustrate some of the effects of the war which lasted much longer than the duration of the war, neatly marked by dates in the period 1939-45.

The military mobilisation of the everyday begins when the sphere of personal relations, love, marriage, work becomes implied in the ‘war effort’. Feminist historians of the war period have sought to question the masculinist histories of grand men and grand deeds of wartime, as they ignore the impact that the war had on gender relations, but this is only one aspect of the militarisation of everyday life. The structure of modernity seeks to organise affectivity, to make decisions and wage war at a distance from the populace, to rationalise war, risk and death. Lefebvre observes that this passivity “weighs more heavily on women, who are sentenced to everyday life, on the working class, on employees who are not technocrats, on youth – in short on the majority of people – yet never in the same way, at the same time, never all at once”. The construction of the technocrat as the expert who understands technical problems that are too complex for ‘the ordinary person’ and makes technological decisions so that others can be left passive, places decisions about technology as too complex for everyday life. This division of labour separates everyday decisions about space from grand narratives of ‘planning’. This separation also divorces agency from the social relations that construct technology. The structure that makes the everyday ‘passive’ is complex and enmeshed with the state’s monopoly on violence. The militarisation of everyday life, that is the extension of war into the texture of daily practices that must continue even during times of war, and are even necessary to militarisation, was dissected by Walter

---

10 In 1949 Labor Prime-Minister John Curtin extended the right to vote in Federal elections to Aboriginal ex-servicemen and those considered to have “sufficiently developed the attributes of civilisation as to be deemed capable of exercising the right to vote.” David Day, Claiming a continent A new history of Australia, Angus & Robertson, 1997, p. 365.


Benjamin in 1920 in his essay ‘Critique of Violence’. Benjamin anatomises the state’s monopoly on violence as operating through two functions: violence as both law-preserving, that is the right of the state to make laws that are not apparently violent in themselves (such as general conscription) and as law-making, that is the right of the state to ‘simply apply’ violence to its citizens and declared enemies. Throughout the 1920s and 30s Benjamin criticised both left- and right-wing movements in both France and Germany for their participation in nationalist politics, and their confusion between the two kinds of violence. He wrote of the Socialist Popular Front’s rise to power in the French elections of 1936: “They all cling solely to the fetish of the ‘left’ majority, and they are not concerned that this majority executes a kind of politics which, if it was being done by the Right, would lead to insurrection.”

In this chapter, I examine the former rather than the latter, that is, not the grand battles and exercise of technological supremacy over the enemies of Australia during the second world war, but rather how militarism was made possible and effected through changes to the structure of everyday life in the 1940s. This is a far less documented and glorious enterprise, but one that remains important to studies of technological change. Although civilians had little or no say in the conduct of the war, especially war fought in the arena of air power, they were implicated as targets and workers.

The founding principle of air power became manifest during the war, in its capacity for distributing violence more quickly and across a greater area than any other military technology. Through the nation’s seizure of aeriality -- as with the national appropriation of the other new technologies of time-space mediation such as radio and car travel -- it became apparent that, politics was now conducted as air politics. In Lefebvre’s description of the legitimacy of the space of capitalist accumulation: “Violence [wa]s in fact the life blood of this space, of this strange body.”

The objective of the militarisation of everyday life was a total unification and order towards the goal of national defense. This was based on the understanding that the nation held its powers to organise everyday life as sovereign over the minute and

---

15 Kenneth Hewitt, “‘When the great planes came and made ashes of our city...’: Towards an oral geography of the disasters of war”, Antipode, 26, 1, 1994, p. 3.
16 Lefebvre, The Production of Space, p. 277. “[The violence of the state] cannot be separated either from the accumulation of capital or from the rational and political principle of unification, which subordinates and totalizes the various aspects of social practice... within a determinate space.” pp. 280-281.
everyday practices of the home and workplace. The airport soon became inscribed as a monument to this unity, and the new order of air power was a glorification and realisation of this special brand of violence.

As the unprecedented scale of the war became ‘ordinary’ and its costs subsumed into modernist myths of progress, as everyday life was increasingly militarised and heroised, however, the familiar myths of state and national power could not hold domestic fears at bay. As a consequence of the everyday militarisation of the aerial in discourses on air politics such as the ‘Corbett plan’, aviation as monumental, sublime, extraordinary space collapsed into the domestic. The upwards affectivity of the sublime is eventually levelled off if it repeats and is performed everyday. In wartime, the violent operations of air politics pressed in upon the everyday, eradicating the boundaries between the ‘everyday’ and the ‘noneveryday’; “violence, death, catastrophe” were routinised and de-sublimated, but not eliminated.

Air power was a new total scale of violent action. Aviation’s political use now negated the benign structure of ‘airmindedness’ as an instantaneous space of connection. The everydayness of aeriality during the war period circumscribed earlier structures of the sublime that had been mobilised to explain modernist narratives of progress. The totalisation of this narrative within the site of the airport as a military installation meant that aeriality could no longer hold the only promise of a better future. Instead, new narratives of the home, the urban and technology would emerge to contain the meanings that the new methods of war had brought ‘home’.

the dromological domestic

As Paul Virilio suggests in *Speed and Politics* -- subtitled an ‘Essay on Dromology’ -- the democratic era has been distinguished by the disposition to movement of national and urban populations. He describes the distinctly modern politics of movement that is manifest in public spaces of modern cities as an “obligation to mobility”. In his convincing analysis of this modern politicisation and organisation of movement in the French Revolution, Virilio -- after Foucault -- emphasises that:

the events of 1789 claimed to be a revolt against *subjection*, that is, against the *constraint to immobility* symbolised by the ancient feudal serfdom... a revolt against arbitrary confinement and the obligation to reside in one place... the ‘mass uprising’ of 1793 was the institution of the
Virilio’s argument is that dromology is not only a pure science or systematics of speed, it is the political strategy of dromocracy, the rule of and by speed. Virilio’s essay presents many moments in a long history of what he calls the “permanent exploitation of the ignorant masses’ aptitude for movement as a social solution”, and cites the vexing of this solution in a case in France in 1792: “the Supply Corps are able to furnish the barefoot troops with 200 pairs of shoes, when they would need 80,000.” This problem of the organisation of the population for mobility is the same problem that the Australian Director-General of Civil Aviation in 1943 sought to solve with his plan for distributing the habit of aviation throughout the Australian population. The primary question in both cases is the logistics of mass movements. Both instances of this everyday militarisation solves this logistical question through the most familiar, benign and intimate object, a shoe, in order to place everyday mobilities within a configuration of defense and domination. So dromology begins with pedestrian movements and expands on a vertical scale of speed to territorialise the air.

Here Michel Foucault’s influential analyses of the institutional architectures of the mental hospital, the military camp, the clinic, and prisons provide a way of seeing spatial structures as architectures of dromology as they allow a “certain allocation of people in space, a canalization of their circulation”. Such sites aim to distribute the flows and possible trajectories of bodies through spatial arrangements of social relations, just as much as they produce ‘docile bodies’ by ‘fixing’ them to a particular spot, and thus achieving containment of social norms and political problems in space through disciplinary technologies. In their perceptive studies of space, movement and power in modernity both Virilio and Foucault invert the modernist understanding of spatial movement as freedom — as an escape by the individual from a containment and objectification of political power through movement. They both maintain that modernity politicises movement, and dictates travel, rather than understanding movement as inherently liberating. Because of their attention to processes of modern subjectifying practices and governmentality

---

18 Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, p. 46. Greek *dromos* race + logos speech or reasoning.
19 Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, p. 28.
20 "Logistics" is defined as the art "of moving and quartering troops", from the French *loger*, to quarter or lodge, *Oxford English Dictionary*, "P", p. 403.
both Virilio and Foucault offer a more nuanced approach to discussions of the articulation of movement to the conduct of politics.

In an interview on the topic of ‘Space, Knowledge and Power’ Foucault discusses the challenge to ‘everyday’ meanings of home and national space that railroads posed to European culture in the nineteenth century:

What was going to happen when people in Germany and France might get to know one another? Would war still be possible once there were railroads? In France a theory developed that the railroads would increase familiarity among people and that the new forms of human universality made possible would render war impossible. But what the people did not foresee — although the German military command was fully aware of it... was that, on the contrary, the railroads rendered war far easier to wage.\(^22\)

The interpenetration of previously distinct nations and classes through transport technologies is seen by both Foucault and Virilio as an important development of the modern period. Foucault argues that this mobility has profoundly changed the relationship between domestic and public architecture. Following the changes to the urban network after railway travel, Foucault asserts that the three “great variables” of modern politics, “territory, communication and speed”, escape the domain of architects and city planners if they perceive their role as “masters of space.”\(^23\) In the early modern period, architects were not, as they themselves believed, the “people who thought out [modern] space” but Foucault identifies instead a series of technocratic figures who managed modern circulation and thus were truly the producers of modernity -- the “engineers and builders of bridges, roads, viaducts, railways.”\(^24\)

At the crux of Virilio’s argument in Speed and Politics, written in 1977, is his assertion that, as a consequence of the modern state’s appropriation of and fascination with speed, a ‘vehicular extermination' (the elimination of space by time) takes place: “the loss of material space leads to the government of nothing but time... the violence of speed has become both the location and the law, the world’s destiny and its destination”.\(^25\) Although material space is under erasure by dromocracy, paradoxically, it remains necessary as the ground for the production of speed. The political organisation of movement take place both through the built environment and representation: through materialisations and mediations of space and time. For Virilio, the interface between technologies of transport and technologies of representation for military purposes marks a turning point in the military control of

\(^{22}\) Foucault ‘Space, Knowledge, and Power (Interview with Paul Rabinow)', p. 243.
\(^{23}\) Foucault ‘Space, Knowledge, and Power (Interview with Paul Rabinow)', p. 244.
\(^{24}\) Foucault ‘Space, Knowledge, and Power (Interview with Paul Rabinow)', p. 244.
\(^{25}\) Virilio, Speed and Politics, p. 141.
movement. His book War and Cinema Virilio considers the new role of photography and film in warfare. His study follows the parallel emergence of high-speed and long-distance military technologies and the tools of high-speed perception: photography and film.

If the First World War can be seen as the first mediated conflict in history, it is because rapid-firing guns largely replaced the plethora of individual weapons. Hand-to-hand fighting and physical confrontation were superseded by long-range butchery, in which the enemy was more or less invisible save for the flash and glow of his guns. This explains the urgent need that developed for ever more accurate sighting, ever greater magnification, for filming the war and photographically reconstructing the battlefield; above all it explains the dominant role of aerial observation in operational planning.26

Virilio, trained as an architect, wrote in 1966 that this interplay between space and time, movement and perception in post-war urban forms means that there is only ‘habitable circulation’.27 By 1984 Virilio had modified the ‘dromological’ telos of his arguments in Speed and Politics to argue in his essay ‘The Overexposed City’ that urban space survived dromology, but it had been forever altered by it: “If the metropolis is still a place, a geographical site, it no longer has anything to do with the classical oppositions of city/country nor centre/periphery.” Virilio’s focus in the essays in the collection written in the early 1980s and published in English as The Lost Dimension shifted from his earlier concern with the spectacular and non-everyday instances of dromological powers. Instead he develops an account of suburbanisation of dromology and the collapse of the urban/rural binary through “the transport revolutions and the development of communication and telecommunications technologies”.28

This interplay of space and time emerges in Virilio’s analysis, via Walter Benjamin, of the domestic of speed in the morphology of the modern house. He sees the adaptation of new technologies to the form of the modern house as illustrating the impact and incorporation of mobility into new and profuse forms of architecture that must engage with technology, such as the displacement of the front door of the house onto the garage and then the actual door of the car (“a detachable part of the floor plan”), and the transformation of the form of the window looking onto the street outside into the virtual window of the television screen.29 For Virilio, these ‘autonomous’ windows and doors signify an ex-tension of the thresholds of the

27 Virilio, Speed and Politics, p. 6.
house into time, and in-tension of national borders as technology extends the
domestic across space and through time.

By extending the defensible border of the nation across space and through time, the
advent of the ‘air’ war posed such a similar ‘detachment’ of the nation’s territory
onto the figure of the aeroplane and the airport. The title of an Australian airman’s
auto-biography Trenches in the Sky reveals the perceptible detachment and
displacement of national borders and of military fronts into the militarised zone of
aeriality.30 As has been demonstrated in the previous chapters, the extension of
national borders into previously inaccessible territory of air, also entailed an in-
tension or collapsing of the national with the domestic and pedestrian spaces of the
city.

the home front

In January 1939, a genre-crossing comic science-fiction short story appeared in The
Bulletin -- a magazine that still carried the subtitle ‘Australia for the white man’. The
story appeared alongside news stories that pitted Allied democracy against Axis
autocracy, and it made light of some serious questions about the increasing
domestication of technology and technological knowledge that had been engendered
during the preparation for war in the 1930s. ‘Space and Smith’, a short story by H.C.
McKay, told the tale of P.X. Smith, a disgruntled tenant of the ‘Daydream Flats’,
Kings Cross. After discovering the secret of ‘negative gravitation’ through
experiments with “chemical currents sent along a wire”, Smith sets up an invisible
barrier around his front door, creating a ‘citadel’, from which to launch his
‘dictatorship of the world’.31

The image of a solitary figure retreating from public life into a sealed and easily
defensible space echoed news items that had appeared in Australia in January 1939.
Reports of Adolf Hitler’s construction of an expensive hideout and command centre
on top of Kehlstein Peak at an altitude of 6,050 feet were carried in the Sydney
Morning Herald. ‘Herr Hitler’s eyrie’ was depicted as the site from which the dictator
could launch a conquest of the globe. The installation was reported to be ‘a fortified
penthouse’ accessed only by:

30 Dan Conway, The trenches in the sky: what it was like flying in RAF Bomber and Transport
A huge iron door... [that] permits penetration into a wall of rock which apparently blocks the spiral motor road... a lift ascends 1,800 feet to the summit, where a pavilion, constructed of steel and glass with enormous windows, affords beautiful mountain views.  

The imagery of a leader in solitude controlling his state at a distance, aided by superior technological means and enjoying ‘beautiful mountain views’ is a vision of militarised sublimity. It also literalises paranoia in a site. Paranoia as a political affect has as its end point the wish to be “the only one” as Elias Canetti has described “the final and most extreme phase of power.”  

This moment of individual triumph over space and time, however, is parodied and complicated in the *Bulletin’s* short story, especially as it denies ‘oneness’ through a localised narrative of the collective experience of unemployment in the 1930s.

A successful radio trader until the horizontal integration of ‘chain stores’ took over his markets, the protagonist of ‘Space and Smith’ had been an ‘ordinary’ man. He had ‘normal’ and happy childhood, quietly enjoying his hobby of “electrical and wireless experiments”. Despite financial misfortune, he had maintained respectability until a guard at a country railway station had mistakenly reported him to police as a ‘hobo’, when he had been pursuing his other ordinary “hobby of hiking in old clothes through country districts at weekends”. After spending a night in jail, Smith, “unbalanced by his money troubles”, developed an ambition to become dictator of the world and seek revenge on the country town. While Smith repels all attacks on his flat by the police and army through “negative gravitation wires”, he extends the ‘kingdom’ protected by his homely science experiment to the rest of Kings Cross, Sydney’s centre of urban itinerants, the unemployed and bohemian social movements in the 1920s and 30s. The social hierarchy of dominant and marginalised subjects is then inverted as the new dictator invites “Tramps, Hoboes and the Unemployed... Underdogs!... [To] Seize the Chance of a Lifetime” and join him against the police in return for free meals, board and luxury. A “mad carnival” of the homeless then erupts. The new recruits take over the shops, hotels and restaurants of the rich, and live in luxury and drunkenness with the aid of Smith’s invention. However, the kingdom of hoboes comes to an end quickly when Smith falls onto his own ‘negative gravity wire’ and rebounds into space.

The domestication of radio and electricity operate in the story as the basis for the amateur scientist to launch a campaign for world domination. The story brings a set

---

34 McKay, ‘Space and Smith’, p. 5.
35 McKay, ‘Space and Smith’, p. 7.
of fears and problems surrounding the technologisation of the home into the same narrative space as world politics with references to Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. The slippage from one to the other in the narrative points to a collapse of the representational distances between the ‘mere weekly tenant’ and the totalitarian leader. The transport and communication technologies -- in their “practical annihilation of space and time” -- had developed a single space that brought everyday activities into proximity with the spaces of fear and terror in Europe. The condensation of these fears into the comical persona of Smith and the decidedly tidy closure of the narrative with his ejection into space seems to operate both to enclose the terror into a narratively manageable body (the mad scientist) and diffuse it throughout the urban fabric (he could be living next door).

The political and ideological nature of aspirations to ‘world dictatorship’ also evaporate into the form of modern technology in the story, as they seemed to do in news stories reporting evidence of German technological advancements. Two German Flight-Lieutenants who arrived in a German Air Force plane in Sydney in January 1939 were welcomed and considered ‘visitors’. The vocabulary of modern fashion is evoked in the Sydney Morning Herald’s description of the light plane: “The silver and blue machine, with a large swastika on the tail unit, is one of the shapeliest light aeroplanes that have ever visited Sydney”. The homology between modern machine and modern body resonates throughout the twentieth century as a sign of a recurring fascination with technology as ‘second’ nature, nature’s doubling in the world of man-made objects. The military body is materially constituted by its prostheses: weapons, vehicles, media as enhancement of the soldier’s senses of vision, hearing, and movements. The fascist plane is thus represented as a fascinating example of the ‘latest’ design. It displays the modernist concern with the form of what Bakhtin called the classical body, “an entirely finished, completed, strictly limited body, which is shown from the outside as something individual”.

And further, because the classical body that is promoted in advertising is such an individualised body -- closed, clean and with its boundaries in their proper places -- this symbolic transference between the military body as designed for the fastest possible travel and the fantastic body of advertising imagery is easily achieved.

The housewife, as mediating figure between the public and the private was a key conduit of this transformation, especially as women also had started to work in factories producing armaments and machines needed for the war. ‘No Medals for

Mother', a poem re-printed in Australia from *The Times*, underlines the military significance of the housewife's new domestic tasks.

Her cares are many, her tasks beyond number. Every hour, every minute she is on duty... She makes the meals, she makes the beds -- *and the planes!* Sees to the laundry *and the lathe.* Fills the shell *-- and the shopping basket...* She holds the fort of the family; the citadel of the hearth. She has no medals, only the pride of working and striving beside her menfolk in a great enterprise -- to save the homes and the children of all the world.38

The ease with which the metaphor of the home as citadel is mobilised in these narratives seamlessly incorporates the home in the home-land, the mother in the mother country. The figure of the housewife-worker, making beds as easily as she makes planes sutures the home into a contiguous scene of nation-ness, denying any disjunctures between her two roles in public and private spaces. Indeed, it is her heroic but ‘medal-less’ task as the ‘saviour’ and carer for children and the home to manufacture the planes and shells that will bring the war to a faster end.

---

Re-organising the suburb

Demonstrations of the power of aerial bombardment by both the Axis powers and the Allies, meant that the structure of the house and suburb had to be reconfigured in order to contain the threat of invasion by air. After the bombing of Pearl Harbour, on 16 December 1941, Curtin made a special radio broadcast to the nation in anticipation of the new threat that air power posed to the sovereignty of the British Empire in Australia. Curtin called the bombing “the gravest hour of our history” and promised Australians (in a patriotic confusion between Anglophony, Anglo-Saxon-ness and allegiance to the King of England) that the ‘whole of the manhood of this nation’ would “hold this country, and keep it as a citadel for the British-speaking race, and as a place where civilisation will persist”. Curtin’s speech to parliament on the same day represented the threat as a invasion of the purity of the nation as much as territory:

In more than 150 years no enemy has set foot in this country. In the months ahead that tradition will remain with us. Never shall an enemy set foot upon the soil of this country without having at once arrayed against it the whole of the manhood of this nation in such strength and quality as to show our determination that this country shall remain for ever the home of the descendants of those people who came here in peace in order to establish in the South Seas an outpost of the British race.

On 8 February 1942, Japanese troops landed in the British colony of Singapore, and on 15 February 1942, the Japanese attack forced the British commander to capitulate, beginning the ‘inevitable’ reach of “the spearhead of the Japanese hordes” towards the south, and eventually Australia. On 16 February Curtin declared that the “fall of Singapore opens the Battle of Australia”. In order to defend the cities and towns, workers were organised into ‘Volunteer Air Observer’ units, and neighbourhoods formed ‘Trench Shelter Committees’ and ‘Air Raid Precaution’ groups.

During the war conservative politicians also advocated everyday sacrifices for the collective war effort in the name of Australianness. In a speech that critically reconstituted the central site for the organisation of the everyday life of Australian society as not the squatter’s farm but the suburban home, Robert Menzies, then opposition leader, broadcast a talk on the ABC in 1942 entitled ‘The Forgotten People’. In his speech, Menzies argued that the Curtin Labor government in their

39 Day, Claiming a continent, p. 312.
40 Commonwealth of Australia, Parliamentary Debates, 16 December 1941.
41 ‘The Spearhead reaches SOUTH -- ALWAYS SOUTH!’, McKinley, Australia 1942: end of innocence, p. 102.
dangerously ‘internationalist’ and working-class outlook had forgotten “the middle class -- those people who are constantly in danger of being ground between the upper and the nether millstones of the false war; the middle class who, properly regarded represent the backbone of this country”. Menzies instead sought to define and speak for the silent masses who ‘lacked’ class consciousness, but were the most ‘ordinary’ people in the nation. Their unassailable rights to citizenship were constituted in their economic contribution to the nation and their wholesome domestic outlook. In contrast to those who were state-dependent, the middle class exhibited the essence of Australian morality because they had an economic “stake in the country”. The middle class, Menzies’ powerful speech asserted, were the unacknowledged heroes of national modernisation. He categorised this urge to domestication as an essentially civilising force, and the Australian home -- either “home material, home human, and home spiritual” -- as embodying the patriotic spirit. The main point of the speech was a homily: “If you consider it, you will see that if, as in the old saying, ‘the Englishman's home is his castle’, it is this very fact that leads on to the conclusion that he who seeks to violate that law by violating the soil of England must be repelled and defeated.”

National patriotism for Menzies sprang from the instinct to defend and preserve the continent of Australia as the home of civilisation, and equated the urge to domesticate with the urge to civilise. In contrast with private desires for home, the urge to collectivise demonstrated moral lassitude:

The material home represents the concrete expression of the habits of frugality and saving “for a home of your own”. Your advanced socialist may rage against private property even whilst he acquires it; but one of the best instincts in us is that which induces us to have one little piece of earth with a house and garden which is ours... My home is where my wife and children are; the instinct to be with them is the instinct of civilised man.43

Menzies was looking forward to Australia’s re-building during peacetime. However, his construction of the home as bastion of the bourgeois family was a cure for the potential dissolution of the individual in collective ownership and the dissolution of world borders:

The moment a man seeks moral and intellectual refuge in the emotions of a crowd, he ceases to be a human being and becomes a cipher. The home spiritual so understood is not produced by lassitude or by dependence; it is produced by self-sacrifice, by frugality and saving.44

---

42 Robert Menzies, The forgotten people, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1943.
43 Menzies, The forgotten people.
44 Menzies, The forgotten people.
This national spiritual home was above all organised for defence — “If you consider it... a man’s home is his castle”. The domestic was the place that the male citizen’s hard work and individual identity could be displayed to his family and his neighbours. The home that Menzies imagined as the cradle of post-war Australian civilisation looked back to Scottish and British essential qualities of ‘thriftiness’, frugality and education, rather than forward to internationalism. His stories of frugal rural Scots saving to sending their children to University and thus into modernity were designed to remind Australians of their British heritage, as well as to appeal to middle-class values of property rights and the need to plan for a future. His talk sought to remind Australians of their Imperial heritage that, in his political view, believed should not be forgotten in a national rush to embrace an international consumerist modernity. The political philosophies developed in this speech would propel the Menzies government to re-election in 1949 and keep his party in power until the 1970s. In the 1950s and 1960s the home would remain as a site of national values and development, but it was imagined in this increasingly universalising discourse to be a dominion of masculine and capitalist power.

the desecrated sky

Despite these efforts to construct Australia as potentially the citadel ‘of the British-speaking race’, the efforts of the ‘whole manhood’ of Australia were not as totally organised towards their goal as the authorities might have hoped. A survey conducted in Sydney in mid-January 1942 by the Australian Women’s Weekly undertook to monitor the state of preparation that householders had made for ‘civil defence’. Their concerned correspondent found that only half of those surveyed were prepared to ‘bomb-proof’ and defend their homes as recommended by authorities:

I visited sixty houses in metropolitan suburbs and found that:
30 were prepared for permanent blackout;
20 householders had bought the paper, but had not fitted it;
4 had treated the windows with paper or material to prevent casualties from flying glass;
6 were prepared to evacuate and had therefore done nothing;
33 had sand and shovels in the house;
25 had sand, but no shovels;
14 had made no preparation at all.45

To make windows splinterproof residents were instructed to stick cloth and paper to windows with a mixture of flour, water and treacle, to cover windows to prevent lights being visible during a raid and surround the house with sandbags. They were also advised to build an air-raid shelter, or if they could not afford or find bricks and cement to build one, to cut a slit trench in their yard and cover it with roofing iron or planks. In winter rains these trenches filled with water and became, in the words of a poem in the Argus, ‘a pond for waterlilies’. The kind of protection these trenches would offer in an air attack was severely compromised by their potential to drown their occupants as the poem observed: “There’s a trench in our backyard. If you own a cow or lamb and seek somewhere to water stock, we’ll gladly GIVE A DAM!”

Only home owners in affluent suburbs such as Mosman could afford to build proper shelters. Rather than the communal shelters that were used in large European cities, the Australian shelters were for the nuclear family, mum, dad and kids, reflecting the suburban form of the detached family home.

Civil defence groups urged citizens to watch the sky for the presence of Japanese aircraft. Newspapers published daily listings of the types of Japanese aircraft likely to be seen although they also warned that during raids citizens should not be tempted to ‘have a look out their windows’. Campaigns to fund repairs to Australian planes called ‘Stamp out the Jap!’ asked for collectors to buy a penny stamp for each ‘Jap’ plane brought down. Government advertising equated the invasion of Australian skies with the invasion of national territory and asked for everyday pleasures to be given up for the war effort (see Fig 5.2):

What is your answer? Now death rains down from Australian skies: Japanese bombs blast destruction on Australian soil... Are you going to shake your fist at the desecrated sky and then drown your indignation at the nearest bar... Are you going to dope your senses with the drug supplied by Dr. Bookmaker? Don’t!

The airport at Mascot itself was considered a major target for attack and those who lived near the airport “went icy’ whenever the air raid siren sounded”. However,

---

46 ‘Poem’, Argus, 7 June 1942.
47 Joanna Penglase and David Horner, When the War Came to Australia, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992, p. 69.
48 ‘DARWIN, WYNDHAM, BROOME...’, McKinlay, Australia 1942: end of innocence , p. 90.
What is Your Answer?

Ninety deaths have been estimated since Japanese bombs fell on Australia, and into the ears of Australian women and children came the ghastly rattle of machine guns.

What is your answer? Are you going to huddle under metaphorical bed-cover and mutter prayers, or are you going to stand on your two feet and fight these little drunk invaders?

Are you going to shake your fist at the desolate sky and then drown your indignation in the nearest bar, or are you going to set your teeth and double your production?

Are you going to dope your senses with the drug supplied by the bookmaker? Don't! You must strike every nerve and sinew and dedicate every moment of your time to winning back the soul and pride of Australia.

Fig 5.2 'DARWIN, WYNDHAM, BROOME...', Brian McKinley, Australia 1942: The end of innocence, Collins, Sydney, 1985, p. 90.
the ‘desecrated sky’ was never a real space of invasion for Sydney, although as a space of terror and a zone of uncontrollable invasion it preoccupied the media and the government. When three Japanese submarines entered Sydney Harbour, on 13 May 1942, and fired at a navy target it became apparent that Sydney was far more under threat from naval invasion by sea than from the air.

air politics

‘Air power’ was, as the most modern territory of war, far more visible and discussed than naval power. Coalesced in the concept of air power was a set of assumptions about the technological supremacy of western democratic societies, and a discourse on strategic and cultural relationships between Imperial powers and their colonies. Fundamentally re-ordering the Australian geographical imaginary, boundaries between the British Empire and the rest of the world were becoming more indistinct as mass movements by air became available to the formerly colonised. As businessman W.S. Robinson advised Prime Minister Evatt in 1943, the ease of invasion of Australian territory would increase for the innumerable ‘coloured races’, now ‘only a few hours away’:

We must not forget that the East, with all its cruelties lies at our door... Australia and New Zealand have a total population of about 9,000 whites. Their neighbours are 1000,000,000 of the coloured races -- only a few hours away by air... Australia and New Zealand are in the uncomfortable position of having most to lose and the greatest chance of losing it.50

Politicians and military advisers scrutinised Australia’s vulnerability to air power, arguing that Australia’s security depended upon the nation’s control of a ‘natural’ border zone extending from northern Australia to encompass Singapore, Netherlands East Indies, New Guinea and the adjacent islands. This formed the basis for an argument by Robinson and others to claim Australian (and by extension British) dominion over the Pacific and South East Asia. “These are the areas in which we cannot afford to permit those opposed to our ideals of life and to our ways of living to establish himself in the air.”51

The war served to show Australians that their future also lay with American technological expertise and military power, and that the British Empire was unable to compete in this new aerial politics. In 1947, American lawyer John C. Cooper

50 David Day, Claiming a continent, p. 335.
51 David Day, Claiming a continent, p. 335.
analysed the impact of the new global political and social arrangements of air power in his world-wide study of *The Right to Fly*. Although Australia was still a dominion of the British Commonwealth, Cooper sought to understand the new geopolitics of the post-war period through the prism of air power. Cooper saw air power as a modern phenomenon intrinsically linked to youth. He believed that the relatively ‘aged’ population of the United Kingdom might be a possible barrier to its access to air power, equal to the problems posed by its dependence on its colonies for the raw materials to build and fuel its air force:

The total population of England, Scotland, Wales and northern Ireland is only about fifty million. In 1940 less than 22 per cent of the British people were under fifteen years of age, as against 36 per cent in the Soviet Union, about 28 per cent in Canada, about 25 per cent in the United States, and about 24 per cent in Australia. Both in case of an air power emergency – where sudden and rapid expansion may again be necessary and where thousands of young men and women must be quickly trained – and generally of ever a long period of years even without a new world crisis, the proportionate decrease in the youth of Britain may be a serious handicap.\(^5\)

The correspondence between a youthful population and aptitude for flying actualises the connections between the future and air power. It is an example of bio-power being harnessed to technological power as the raw material of youthful lives becomes a resource for the militarisation of everyday life. Additionally, the British investment in maritime technologies that had formed the British Empire through travel and economic exchange throughout its overseas colonies placed the Empire firmly in the past, not in the future of travel by air. The United States, in contrast, had explicitly territorialised its national image as holding the balance of ‘air power’. As Paul Virilio outlines in his discussion of ‘Space Rights to State Rights’, during the nineteenth century England and France had ‘parcelled out the universe’ rather than confronting each other on the same terrain: “the adversaries choose to create a fundamental physical struggle between two types of humanity, one populating the land, the other the oceans. They invent nations that are no longer terrestrial, homelands in which no-one could set foot”.\(^5\)

Britannia might rule the waves, but the rulers of the air, through their aircraft and space industries, post-1945 would be the Americans. Australia needed to better recognise geographic location in order to take advantage of this, Cooper argued. To demonstrate that Australia is a “Pacific and not Asiatic” power, Cooper pictures the new geography by illustration. He includes in his chapter on Australia’s rights to fly a map that puts Canberra at the centre of an oceanic territory.

By representing such a space graphically -- bringing together a simultaneously geographic and political imaginary -- Cooper's chart choreographs the abstractions of regional political power. It configures a series of continents, islands, cities and names as revolving around the Australian federal capital. This image of Canberra as the capital of the Pacific is underpinned by a set of concentric circles radiating from a ground zero at Canberra and appearing at 1000 mile intervals. The representational logic that placed Australia as such a firm centre of a field of influence, with the Pacific at its disposal, was formed by a new understanding of geostrategic space of air power. Based on the projection of the travel times by air to other capitals in the region, each circle on the map disseminates a coloniser's world view to the 'less mobile', in terms of access to air power.

The map also blurs the shapes of countries in its margins and provides only a partial view of Japan and China, as they are intersected by the 5000 mile limit of the map. The boundaries of this world view end at the 5000 mile limit, as though nothing exists further than five thousand miles away from Canberra, yet the United States is clearly marked on the map in the specks of the Hawaiian islands. Although they strictly fall outside the limit of the chart US controlled Hawaii, as a part of a mobile nation, is represented and named. Other 'less mobile' patches of land, New Caledonia and the New Hebrides, remain nameless smudges in the ocean, unlike the US territories of Truk, Guam and the Marshall Islands.

Through this picturing of the world known to aviation Cooper articulates his view that:

The future of Australia and New Zealand must lie in maintaining contact with the Indies and Asia to the northwest, the scattered islands of the Pacific to the north, with North America to the northeast, and with Britain and Europe either through Ceylon or India by one route through Hawaii, the United States, and Canada by another. To no part of the world is communication by air so important as it is to Australia and New Zealand.54

By posing this political view as a commonsense assumption about the ordering of the globe, further into Cooper's book he places the centre of the entire world, not in

---

Canberra, but somewhere in the Atlantic: "the most important trade route of all -- the British--American route."\footnote{Cooper, *The Right to Fly*, p. 243.}

**The Aerial Commonwealth**

Towards the end of the war, the peacetime operations of the air transport industry sought to end Australia's perceived spatial alienation from the centre of the world, to transcend its 'marginal' position in relation to the global. In 1943 a radical, even eccentric, proposal was formulated to 'internationalise' air transport. This concept implied that like the pre-war 'nationalisation' of industries, the operation of international air routes would be administered by a non-commercial international air transport authority. This authority would also own the aircraft and facilities. Australian politicians assumed throughout these discussions that the socialist principles of the Labor party, then in power, could be extended into the international sphere.

Plans to limit the control of nations over air transport had been outlined by the French delegates to the Disarmament Conference in 1932 but were not taken up seriously again until after the outbreak of war in 1939.\footnote{D.M. Hocking and C.P. Haddon-Cave, *Air Transport in Australia*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1951, pp. 96-97.} Internationalisation became an official national policy when Australia and New Zealand issued a joint declaration in January 1944, known as the 'Canberra Agreement'. This agreement proposed the creation of an international authority to own and operate international air services on behalf of the United Nations. There were reservations of national powers in the agreement, including the right to conduct 'short local services' between Australia and neighbouring countries (such as New Zealand, Noumea, New Guinea, and Java) and the specification that Australian personnel, agencies, and materials should be used by the authority in providing services leading to and from Australia. The idea that these were 'local' services demonstrates Australia's self-appointed national sovereignty over the air space of the south-west Pacific and south-east Asia, both targets of Australia's regional aspirations.

In September 1944 Mr Drakeford, Minister for Air and Minister for Civil Aviation, lamented the probable failure of the proposal at the United Nations Conference at the Chicago Conference in November. He argued for the proposal as he believed it would guarantee world security at the same time as bringing efficiency to business:
This is felt to be necessary, both in the interests of world security against the possible misuse of civil air fleets in the future, and also in order to obviate as far as may be possible the disastrous effects of unregulated competition in a race to become predominant in the air commerce of the world.\textsuperscript{57}

However, the fact that the Australian and New Zealand governments were the only nations supporting the plan (with only the French delegates at the UN conference even suggesting that it be taken seriously) distinguishes the peculiar desire -- based on both geography and ideology -- of the antipodean nations to secure the international military-industrial complex of aviation for a kind of utopian global federation of states. The management of international airspace as a kind of liminal zone to promote good-will and limit the military uses of aviation was an explicit strategy to overcome the problems posed to Australia by its isolation from the centres of the world system. When the war finished, however, the transport systems of the world would be de-ordered and re-organised around commercial interests rather than ‘common good’.

The proposal, despite the lack of international enthusiasm for it, did have some influence on the structure of aviation in post-war Australia. Drakeford had suggested in 1944 the possibility of joint ownership and operation by ‘British’ countries of services between the Commonwealth, using recently freed-up military aircraft and personnel. Drakeford pointed out that “such a service . . . would provide valuable experience in flying the Pacific Ocean on a regular service, and would pave the way for a commercial service at the appropriate time from Australia to New Zealand, the United States and Canada”.\textsuperscript{58} Out of this political confluence of interests emerged British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines Ltd. (BCPA), a company registered in Australia and owned by the Governments of Australia (50 per cent), New Zealand (30 per cent), and the United Kingdom (20 per cent).\textsuperscript{59}

Drakeford believed that the gravitational effect -- seemingly a force of nature rather than culture -- of the old Imperial system would structure the global air network. A British controlled network would create a sense of proximity among the separated parts of the empire:

intra-Commonwealth services, in addition to catering for the governmental, commercial, industrial and social needs of the British Commonwealth will do much towards vitiating the former feeling of distant isolation experienced by individual Commonwealth countries. Properly organised and conducted, intra-Commonwealth air-transport services will

\textsuperscript{57} Commonwealth of Australia, \textit{Parliamentary Debates}, 1944, p 1737.
\textsuperscript{58} Commonwealth of Australia, \textit{Parliamentary Debates}, October 1944, p.1738.
\textsuperscript{59} Hocking and Haddon-Cave, \textit{Air Transport in Australia}, p. 100.
in time engender among the constituent parts of the British Commonwealth the same feeling of contiguity as is now enjoyed by widely separated States in the United States of America.\textsuperscript{60}

To counter claims that such a network would comprise a British Commonwealth ‘bloc’ and thus form a barrier to other national interests, Drakeford made clear that they were to be regarded as a step in the direction of an eventual internationalised ownership, and that Australia would therefore welcome any other nations who wished to join in the scheme.

The formation of B.C.P.A. in June 1946 faced little political opposition. Nor was there much criticism of the purchase by the Government in 1946 of the 50 per cent share interest in Qantas Empire Airways held by B.O.A.C. Even the Liberal Party agreed: “The Opposition has no objection to this proposal. In fact it believes that the best results should be achieved by the co-operation of Government with private enterprises.”\textsuperscript{61} Since the BOAC had been already ‘nationalised’ the transaction simply involved a transfer of interest from the British Government to the Australian Government. The Australian government then proceeded to acquire the remaining half of the share capital in Q.E.A., by buying out Qantas Empire Airways Ltd.

These operations at a federal level secured air space as a national entity, to be managed in the interests of citizens but not to be controlled by any monopoly or oligopoly. The unprofitability of civil aviation was a major consideration in the nationalisation of the airlines, which were being heftily supported by air mail subsidies anyway, but the underlying rationale of these acquisitions was that air transport was a public utility like railways or roads.

\textbf{the global everyday}

\textsuperscript{a} In July 1945, just before the end of the exclusively military use of Australian airports, eleven air force men were killed when a British Pacific Fleet plane crashed on south side of airport, on ground that is now north of the Cooks River. (It was on the south side before the river was diverted in the late 1940s. The Kyeemagh polo ground, the site of the crash, now forms the south-eastern end of the east-west Runway.) Although minimal in comparison to the numbers of deaths caused by the ‘slum raid’ bombings of the densely populated central cities of Europe and Japan, the deaths,

\textsuperscript{60} Hocking and Haddon-Cave, \textit{Air Transport in Australia}, p. 101.
because of their proximity to the city, made overt the violence of air space as ever-present possibility in the everyday.\textsuperscript{62}

The new geopolitical space of air power had exploded the terrestrial plane of action in the 1940s. Although this new zone was frantically described, mapped and planned for, it had not quite been assimilated into the urban. The colonialist imaginary of a contiguous British (and white) commonwealth, made real by a rapid air network, would be far more internally contested than had ever been imagined during the war. The Second World War intensified the ways in which the spaces and times ‘other’ to the everyday were pictured and experienced in Australia. This intension of the everyday’s ‘others’ has a created complex and problematic process that questioned nationalism and its domestic aspirations. What Doreen Massey has articulated as a ‘progressive sense of place’, a locality that encompasses rather than imperialises other places and times, started to take shape under these conditions.\textsuperscript{63} Ross Gibson, in an important critique of the ‘paranoia’ of nostalgic and essentialist nationalist cultural politics in Australia, has argued for such a sense of locality that includes technology as forming a sense of place as much as geography:

\begin{quote}
You might start to understand how the definition of location in Australia must nowadays take heed of the effects of transnational media, shifting spheres of geopolitical influence, and the epistemological changes brought about in citizens as a result of their increased mobility within systems of communication and information. A notion of locality can entail all these things, without negating the continuing influence of more traditional criteria of place -- longitude, latitude, climate, and long-running legends, myths, histories, and economic dependencies.\textsuperscript{64}
\end{quote}

As this project is concerned to demonstrate, the kind of city that had to be configured to engage with the new extension of urban space into the air -- and air space into the urban -- encountered new and radical political articulations of mobilisation and population. The war period was characterised by three major shifts that can be discerned in the transformation of discourses about aviation. These reworkings operated through an imaginary of military and civil airspace as simultaneous in space and time: firstly, the shift from a British military alliance to an American alliance and a re-positioning of the Australian imaginary from the geography of British Imperial network to negotiate Australia’s regional location in the Pacific; secondly, the construction of the home as defensible space in a vertical dimension after the advent of mass aerial bombardment; and thirdly, sense of place

\textsuperscript{62} Hewitt, ""When the great planes came and made ashes of our city..."", p. 17.
\textsuperscript{64} Ross Gibson, 'Paranoid Critical Methods', Art & Text, 26, September-November 1987, pp. 58-66.
and locality itself were transformed by aerial interconnection. The house and suburb were imagined during the war as the field for the total organisation of everyday life. After the war, the domestic became both an agent and an object choreographing the increasing speeds of the affect of the everyday.

As Michel de Certeau has indicated, any supra-local notion of the urban constructs a rationality that privileges time over space, the total over the particular. In de Certeau’s essay on local spatial practices as an alternative to such rationality, this concept-city is “the machinery and the hero of modernity”.

In order to avoid collapsing local space into this concept-city, the alternative notions of locality described by both Gibson and Massey can be employed to examine changes in relations between home and world. The following chapters examine this process in detail.

The expansion and intertwining of these spaces -- through the domestic as a site of mediation and representation -- also creates a kind of dissonance in identity, a collapse between here and there, us and them. The world scale connections of mass mediated ‘senses of place’ construct an eccentric self in an elliptical moment. The global sense of place that constructs ‘home’ in modernity moves in an “ellipsis with foci that are [increasingly] far apart”.

This is a world in which reality cannot be taken for granted, but in which the everyday and the extraordinary, the domesticated and the apocalyptic might be intertwined, unstable and mutually dependent.

Precisely at the moment at which the notion of reality has been questioned and put under discussion in cultural studies, the everyday has also become a kind of sign of a stable and identifiable ‘real’. The textualisation and reading of the everyday’s significant insignificance in cultural studies produces a ‘reality effect’ that through a surplus of detail that indicates that ‘this really happened’. In order to avoid seeing life’s little details as purely ornamental, and thus leaving their production by culture as undisturbed development, analyses of everyday life must examine the fragments of the intimate within genres of the private and personal as indicative of larger developments, but never as denotation of a unified discourse equal to all parts of society. By pointing to unnarratable inconsistencies between media, geopolitics, and local epistemologies, these fragments can do their own work.

---

The refusal of nationalist pleasures in victory by some subjects was also a refusal to participate in the violence of total war. After the consummation of total war with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, many acknowledged that peace had only been acquired by the destruction of the other. This is a moment begotten by modernity itself. Such an imaginary appears in the observations on personal suffering and the suffering of unknown ‘others’ found in the diary of an English woman began in the 1940s, published in 1961 under the title War isn’t wonderful. Ursula Bloom -- suffering from incapacitating migraines, which were misdiagnosed until doctors returned from military service and were able to operate successfully after the war -- notes the events occurring around her in London in a modest and self-displacing voice. She prefaces her book by saying that it “claims to have no new aspect on war as a whole and is merely the everyday story of a woman’s life during the years of uncertainty.”

In her daily activities Bloom reflects on the violence of war through the prism of her own body, transforming the metaphor of home as nation to the metonym of country as body. On April 8, 1940 she wrote, “We have mined Norwegian waters, which I hope is a good idea & I only hope it gives Hitler the headache it gave me.” The next day’s entry records her personal involvement in the events of the war: “Something of a shock, after all my jubilations yesterday, for apparently Hitler hasn’t a headache after all. He has just taken Norway & Denmark, and I’m the one with the headache.” Throughout the diary entries, she narrates the pain and suffering of the victim’s bombings through her own pain and daily experience. In the last days of the war, after the bombs have been delivered to their targets in Japan, she refuses to be incorporated into the first person plural in the ‘we’ of ‘we won the war’, but includes herself on the ‘side’ that made and dropped the bomb:

We have a bomb that splits the atom & we have dropped it on Hiroshima in Japan. The news came through on the radio tonight & for a moment we were almost paralysed with sheer abhorrence.

We dropped it.

This is the end of the world as we have known it. It could be the end of ourselves.69

The everyday stories that Bloom interweaves with events of the total war illustrates the social operation of power that the quotidian performs. Far from a passive, inert and homogenous field, a sign of the ‘real’ the everyday functions as a ‘foundation’ for action and storytelling that exceeds the limits of the domestic.70 As the Second World War, and in particular the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki,

69 Bloom, War isn’t wonderful, p. 221.
demonstrated the scale of violence capable of being organised by the war machine was seemingly without limits and without reason.

As Rey Chow has formulated it, the new scale of disaster, the fatal combination of air power and nuclear weapons was greater than the sum of its parts: “one plane plus one bomb = minus one Japanese city”.71 (And as she notes further not only was total destruction of one major city by one bomb sufficient, but two bombs were dropped in order to test two different inventions). As Chow argues this change in the scale of violence continues to have political effects because it displaces violence from the everyday level of the concrete and tangible, and transposes it onto a new mass mediated and virtualised plane. But perhaps Ursula Bloom’s diary entry might offer one way to approach this privileged world represented without recourse to the sublime. Her direct speech to herself in the form of a diary shows just how closely the distant can be felt.

* * *

This chapter identifies the home as a site located between public and private discourses through which everyday life has been organised. The militarisation of the everyday narrated a unified public who were oriented, one and all, towards defence and attack if provoked by enemy claims on their territory. The work of Paul Virilio and Michel Foucault was argued to provide a useful means to analyse the everyday organisation of movement as a political strategy. I have identified a series of texts that interrelate and intermix these two spaces. The inclusion of the signifier of the ‘shoe’ as a form of everyday transport was shown to operate in military discourses that constructed a total disposition to aeriality. Through intimate symbols of everyday travel, the wartime mediascape familiarised the nation with the space of war.

Despite attempts to construct, as Menzies did, the home as ‘citadel’ against international space, to establish the home as a site of national unity, and the individual house as a reproduction of a uniform mass identity, the national home was already constituted through its others. This closed and defensible notion of the domestic was constructed by contrast to the unrepresentable mass of the hordes poised ready to invade, as well as the socialist will to collectivise and dissolve individual identity.

This chapter reveals some eccentricities that are constituted in the ‘diversion’ of the everyday by its othered spaces. This chapter argues that the shifts from the global space of war (above, outside and beyond) to the individual scale of the everyday (horizontal, proximate, and immediate) are not easily resolved and passively received. The next chapter extends this focus on the interplay between the domestic and the public to examine discourse of post-war reconstruction at the site of Sydney airport.
chapter six:

The man in the glass tower

We cannot change the history of the past, but it is within our grasp to change the history of the future.¹

Just as the period of preparation for the military conflict of the 1930s and 40s was characterised by a militarisation of civil life, in the immediate post-war period the weapons and practices of war were ‘civilised’. Continuing the previous chapter’s concern with the interplay of the military/national and the domestic, this chapter seeks to outline a certain play of priorities and objectives between the official and the familiar. This exchange was encapsulated in the call from politicians in the post-war period that urged the nation’s citizens to participate in ‘building the future’.

The post-war period was marked by a further intensification and internationalisation of the city of circulation. Air travel augmented even more frequent exchanges between Australia and other countries. Because of this increase in international travel, aviation was seen to play an important role in resolving the dislocations and displacements of war. An example of this was announced in a newsreel in 1946, when the first Australian-American service, the ‘Skymaster’, carried the Australian fiancées of US servicemen on a forty-two and a half hour flight from Sydney to Vancouver. The newsreel celebrated the Australian National Airlines flight as the first direct air link to the North American mainland. It also recorded it as an event that bridged past and future: because it linked Sydney to the continent of America the newsreel’s narration described the flight as “a monument to Smithy” that “set the post-war period off to a wonderful start”.²

This chapter seeks to understand the historical context in which this urge to build the future emerged. I also elaborate the ways in which the post-war planning project claimed the expansion of the airport at Mascot as a project of rational, orderly modernity. In continuity with the focus on the construction and embodiment figures of modernity discussed in the earlier section, I examine the tasks and capacities of the post-war planner and technocrat at the site of the airport. These figures were not

² ANA makes Pacific Airline History, 1946, NFSA, AVC 006912.
just heroes of rationality, but also agents in the ‘urbanisation’ of aviation. As Sydney expanded in the era of post-war reconstruction, such figures of the new urban world proliferated. As a parallel figure to the aircraft controller or ‘the man in the glass tower’, the planner also appeared at this time as a technocratic hero. Both operated in ‘spaces without places’ in order to manage the contradictory and fragmentary forces that had shaped a highly contingent and ‘accidental’ city. These figures emerged out of and negotiated the convergence of official and popular desires for a new kind of city after the war. Such a city could be simultaneously global and national, technological and natural, spectacular and everyday. This chapter finally proposes that rather than operating as a meta-discourse that transcended the contingent, this post-war urbanism has itself left traces on Sydney that can still be read today at the site of the airport.

This material commitment to rebuilding the nation must be understood as a process which sought to shape a particular future -- to implement an international vision of a modernity in which the nation was to direct and control technologies and resources for the benefit of the population -- as ‘the future’ of Australia. The massive urban rebuilding project of the early 1950s was both a sign and the content of the project of national post-war reconstruction. A similar rhetoric can be seen in other grand-scale publicly funded schemes that harnessed ‘nature’ for nation-building projects such as the building of the first (and only) Australian nuclear reactor, the coal-fired electrical scheme in the Victorian Latrobe valley and the damming of the Snowy River for hydroelectric power. These projects, their future-building aims, operated through a rhetoric of a technological sublime, but also needed speak to citizens about the benefits of this technological change and locate these benefits in as emerging through improvements to the urban environment of post-war cities.

As outlined in the previous chapter, ‘world’ war, because of its total scale and global aims, can be seen as an event during which the most ordinary spaces of the nation took on a logic of defence, and the suburban home became a frontline that defined national space and its citizens. As will be shown, aviation technology after the war was increasingly visible in domestic space, and came to be integrated far more closely into urban and suburban worlds. This reversed and paralleled the earlier phase of strengthened external boundaries of the nation practiced in wartime home-making. Broadly, the earlier extension of the home into the aerial space of a contested frontier was reversed by a new orientation, an intension, bringing the

---

aerial into the everyday domestic world. However, a fundamental asymmetry exists in this process, as the home was more easily ‘aerialised’ than the aerial was made homely. The increased air traffic over the inner city suburbs near the airport has produced problematic after-effects, as will be outlined in the later section of this chapter.

the aerial object of desire

Intersections between the city and modern technology were fundamentally new constructions of Australia’s relation to ‘modernised’ international space. After the end of open conflict between Australia and its enemies in 1945, these new relationships can be mapped through the re-materialisations of aeriality. Aeriality now moved from public, state controlled and security purposes to privatised, consumer uses. Appearing as a sign of the exchange between private and public technologies, the materialised aerial was at once a sign of connection and a measure of distance between the national self and its others. The domestication of the aerial operated on both a symbolic and a physical level through a series of re-organisations in the meanings; the aerial was no longer a militarised zone but now a civilian and public space. In this process, representations of aviation technology sought to re-materialise and displace the military itself in the objects of everyday life. Previously directed to ‘official’ purposes, to defend the nation and destroy its enemies, military technologies were now ubiquitous, almost unremarkable. The mechanics of war were now shown in a positive light. The intense investment that national economies had made to achieve a technological ‘edge’ during wartime had developed transport technologies such as the jet engine, and thus a corresponding need for subjects and objects that could survive and thrive in this world of speed. These technologies were now increasingly shown to bring greater efficiency and proficiency to the performance of household tasks and the urban everyday.

Reversing the centralising social processes of the war, in which the home had been turned into a national battlefield, and the suburban air-raid shelter portrayed as a new kind of home that would survive the war, during the transition to peace-time the abstract and unrepresentable ‘beyond’ of the war was dispersed, fragmented and parcelled up. The spatially and temporally distant technological complex of the Allies was brought ‘home’. The war effort was shown to be a process that would finally bring rewards, thanks to the great economic and bodily sacrifices, made by individuals and families throughout the 1930s and early 40s. As the military machine wound down, the fragmentary and heterotopic sites at which the most
familiar and intimate practices of living took place -- the suburban house, the individual body, the office, the factory, the urban transport network -- were updated, streamlined and re-categorised.

In Australia, national projects of post-war reconstruction were adopted to realise an imaginary of an inevitable future that would draw on the technological advances afforded by the intense economic investment in manufacturing and design during the war period. These projects were co-ordinated and organised through the Department of Post-War Reconstruction established in 1942 and, after the election of Labor in 1943, overseen by Labor visionaries H.C. Coombs and the Prime Minister Ben Chifley. The Department sought to re-order the everyday world of Australian citizens to realise a rational and planned future. This future was built on a massive expansion in population and urban settlement, but overseen by a cohesive national government that would plan ‘productive public works’ and control the nation’s resources.

The potential of this reconstructed world appeared in stories that told of the ‘novelty’ of the materials and designs emerging from war technologies. These stories sought to make citizen-consumers familiar with the advances in technology that had been at the core of new weapons and methods of arms delivery. These advances were now embodied in objects that bestowed the products of military science and technology on the Australian population. This domestication of military technologies was presented as desirable and inevitable.

As the previous broad social orientation and direction towards defence through public sacrifice was reorganised to a new private consumerism, these symbolic shifts in the character of the nation surfaced in the objects of everyday life. New materials developed in the war effort no longer needed to be kept secret and hoarded to maintain technological superiority over enemies. They could now be incorporated into uses in fashion, food preparation and transportation. The identity of the domestic both before and after the war remained (and, as this thesis argues, still remains) marked by its ability to function as a transcoding site, occupying a dual and unstable position as publicly privatised and privately publicised. This duality is reflected on many levels, from everyday and commonsense understandings about ownership that are determined by the very public juridical decisions such as zoning and lease-hold rights that paradoxically give private citizen-subjects rights to own and sell land, to contemporary debates about the home as simultaneously a place of surveillance and retreat, the domestic has always been transit point inside the private and the public. The spaces of the home and the landscape of suburbia, in this period most visibly performed through the figure of housewife as the modern
feminine, were the sites at which these technological transfers from weapons and transport to household and fashion products were articulated.

The ‘leftovers’ of the war were now transformed into new and useful tools for living as well as decorative and fashionable accessories. Appearing only days after the end of the war in the Pacific in August 1945, an article in the ‘Women’s Supplement’ of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, showed two black and white photographs of female models wearing jaunty hats (see Fig 6.1). Immaculately made-up, with poised yet casual expressions, the two models appeared under the headline, ‘Plastic Hats are Really Stuck Together’. The photographs were captioned “New translucent, rain-proof plastic materials can be draped or decorated with plastic flowers to make hats instead of aeroplanes. The original plastic hats were made in very bright colours.”

The article began with the announcement that “Plastic fabrics formerly used for aircraft are being twisted into hats that will take to the air any day now”. As Roland Barthes noted in post-war France, here too plastic was presented as a ‘miraculous substance’, in the sense that “a miracle is always a sudden transformation of nature”. Betty Wilson, the ‘Herald’s London fashion correspondent’, suggested that for hats the new material would be superior to fabric made from animal fibres. Plastic hats would be water-proof, heat-proof and less likely to fade, as well as more easy to work with for designers. The new materials were not just limited to hats: Wilson reported that a dress designer was already working on a dress that combined wool and plastic. Further, the very name of the new substance, *plastic*, an adjective before it became a noun, still held the meaning of a thing that once was something else, now moulded or extruded into a new form. Barthes identifies the essence of the material as its actual and symbolic volatility: “more than a substance, plastic is the very idea of its infinite transformation... Plastic remains impregnated throughout with this wonder: it is less a thing than the trace of movement”. A hat made from an aeroplane parallels and completes the substitution of the pedestrian by the aerial (making planes from shoes) discussed in

---

5 Wilson, ‘Plastic Hats are Really Stuck Together’, p.6.
PLASTIC HATS are Really STUCK TOGETHER

By BETTY WILSON

LONDON, July 1st—Plastic hats, formerly used for the air force, are being lodged here and will take the air over the town. One of Hugh Wander's 'clown' mixes into his new 'overhead' productions with a certain amount of novelty. Each hat is a plastic cylinder and is made to fit over the head in place of a snood. The plastic hats have been made to vary with the morning's fashion.
the previous chapter, with the excess of war now rematerialising in the fashion ornament. Here again, the speed of aviation technologies operates as the preeminent sign of modernity, ‘taking to the air’ and thus beyond the rhythms of the everyday, but constructed and interpreted through familiar objects and places.

Further, the metonymic substitution of objects in this sequence of transformations is both temporally and spatially extended by this narrative. Instead of sacrificing consumer goods to make weapons, modern warfare now delivered back to the victorious nation, the means of war transformed into more colourful, convenient and durable commodities. The temporal plane of history thus intermixes with the spatial in fashion as speed and progress intertwine in the aerial narrative. The technological perfection of the ‘most modern’ plane is symbolically transferred to a hat that will not wilt in the rain nor lose its colour, thus exceeding the limitations of nature. The newspaper article ultimately positions the reader as consumer after the time of the war in a new period of peace and consumer pleasures. Now declared ‘over’, the war itself has its tidy resolution in with the gifts of arms manufacturers distributed to women in the modern metropolis.

Enemy war technologies were similarly transformed into domestically useful objects, in order to discharge the threat of the foreign war machine and relate it ‘back home’. Alongside other news of war in the Pacific during August 1945, a photo series appeared on the first page of the Sydney Morning Herald, with the title ‘Germans turn V2s into saucepans’ (see Fig 6.2). The page was composed of two photographs: the first photograph showed two workmen hammering at two large bomb containers above an image of a woman inspecting a new kettle with a pile of identical saucepans, lids and thermoses stacked high behind her. The caption read “German workmen, who during the war turned out large numbers of generators for V2 rocket bombs, are now dismantling them for conversion into cooking utensils.” The threat of gigantic rocket bombs, a fusion of vehicle and weapon that was an enemy innovation and that would help develop the American space program, was ‘de-fused’ by the spectacle of mass-manufactured consumer goods. Like a promise of peace and a profusion of plenty for every home, the break-up of the German war machine into pots and pans also re-scales the military into a new relationship to the body, fragmenting the gigantic bomb and re-casting it into the portable and finite shape of a household item.

---

GERMANS TURN V2s INTO SAUCEPANS

German workmen, who during the war turned out large numbers of generators for V2 rocket bombs, are now dismantling them for conversion into cooking utensils. AT RIGHT: A woman inspecting the finished articles.

Town Defended
By A.L.F.
Renamed Farouk

CAIRO, Aug. 18 (A.A.P.)—
Mersa Matrsh, Western Desert base partitioned at one time by Australian Sixth Division troops, and later by members of the Ninth Division, has been renamed Port Farouk in honour of the Egyptian King.

After the withdrawal of the Australians the town was lost in June, 1942, during the retreat to El Alamein. For a time it was used by Rommel as his headquarters—though subjected to constant air raids and a number of naval bombardments. In November the same year the port was recaptured, together with its salt works preserved.

"SQUATTERS" PROBLEM

Compromise In Britain

LONDON, Aug. 18 (A.A.P.)—
The Ministry for Health has warned millers "squatters" in dustier camps throughout Britain as they must quit them before the end of the month. At the same time it has told local municipal authorities, immediately and without prejudice to the importance of the camps, to prepare "campsites" with proper sanitation.

Cold Wind Buffets Sydney; Small Craft In Peril

Fig 6.2  Germans Turn V2s Into Saucepans', Sydney Morning Herald, 19 August 1945, p. 1.
The convergence and interplay between the private home and the public spaces of the city continued to mark the representation of air transportation in public relations stories in the immediate post-war period. Appearing next to an article on Mascot’s suitability as a large modern airport, a photographic series demonstrated delivery of air cargo by parachute for “towns not situated on air routes” in the USA. The first picture showed a military plane dropping parcels with parachutes attached, and underneath a photograph depicted a smiling, well-dressed woman, identified in the caption as an ‘air hostess’, inspecting cups, saucers and plates that had been delivered by air, with no apparent breakages. The speed of transport of consumer goods, especially in streamlined and ‘modernised’ design forms incorporated motion as a quality into the goods themselves. These spaces of transport and circulation also created new subjects for these objects. The terminal point of these processes of domestication of the material geography of war here was performed through a figure of post-war femininity, the air hostess.

Operating as mediator between military service in the airforce and the civilian pleasures of travel, between the nation and its others, both an accessory to international travel and one of its agents, and fulfilling the contradictory roles of wife, nurse and mother, through her sublimated sexuality the figure of the air hostess appeared in the post-war years as an access point to the zone of imported consumer goods. Her civilian, yet neatly uniformed, presence enabled this magical transformation of weapon to commodity, and she was an always orderly and consistently beautiful intermediary of modernity. The air hostess in her role as proponent of modern commodity culture was not a new phenomenon, but a continuation and extension of an older role that appeared with the introduction of department stores in the nineteenth century. The ‘shop mashers’, “peasant girls trained in the fine arts of Salesmanship, Manners and Style” had been highly visible and important figures in the formation of a democratised erotics of consumption in department stores in the nineteenth century. As the increase of traffic in objects extended to become wedded to an increased mobility of persons, shopping in motion needed a sales-girl in motion, and now an architecture equal to this increase in circulation of people and things.

The travelling feminine body as the vehicle of modern fashion draws on the modernist homology between woman and technology, discussed in my earlier analysis of the aviatrix, and whose trivialised afterimage remains as the airline

9 ‘Dinnerware Delivered By Parachute’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 9, 1945, p. 3.
hostess. As the civilian airplane became a peculiar fusion of the sites of home, cinema, and hospital, of mundane needs and sublime desires, the ‘air hostess’ performed the diverse and contradictory roles of navigator, nurse, waitress, nanny, girlfriend, mother, and movie star. A film made in 1956 in the Australian Diary Series produced by the Department of Information, ‘High Standards demanded of Air Hostesses’ describes the training process for ‘future glamour girls of the air’. "Chosen for their poise, tact, and general all-round ability they undergo a thorough training in which they will study such subjects as geography and the care of children." The role of air-hostess was seen to be an excellent training for the eventual feminine achievement of becoming a mother and wife:

Airlines lose many hostesses through marriage, although they must complete a twelve-month contract. Their duties in the air give them early insight into parental chores. Mothers can confidently leave their children with these girls thoroughly trained in infant welfare.

Whether serving food aboard aircraft (and so learning "how not to spill soup in Mrs Fotheringham's lap") or operating safety equipment, the air hostesses' training emphasised the importance of beauty and glamour: "Each girl is taught by experts the individual make-up plan she should follow... When it comes to hairdressing the cap plays an important part and the hair is trimmed to suit its contours." The cap and uniform of the hostess, as well as the pilot, evoked military precision and order in the air.

The military industrial complex and the world-wide circulation of consumer goods were related in the sequence of items in a 1953 newsreel. The voice-over of the newsreel made explicit the modernist homology between the specularisation of the female body and technological modernity. The audience was invited to construct a link between the Australian-British aerial defence program, civilian aviation and women's desire to be looked at by showing a 'flying swimsuit show' under the title 'Further Interesting Visitors'. The reference to "interesting visitors" was a link to the previous item in the film sequence to the British Minister for Defence, Duncan Sandys, who was visiting Australia to inspect the Woomera rocket range. The newsreel's male narrator commented as a girl in a 'modern' swimming costume walks down the steps of an aircraft:

Ah, air travel does broaden the mind... If you can forget Woomera for a moment, try to concentrate on this guided missile. She's flown in to show swimsuits which would have just as much effect on the sands of Britain as

---

12 Department of Information, 'High Standards Demanded of Air Hostesses', *Australian Diary* no. 90, 1956, NFSA.
13 Department of Information, 'High Standards Demanded of Air Hostesses'.
14 Department of Information, 'High Standards Demanded of Air Hostesses'.
the sands of Bondi. In case you hadn’t woken up, this is an airborne mannequin parade flying northwards to show the latest in beachwear. The flying fashion show is a new idea, but it’s likely to catch on in a big way. These girls are flying on to Brisbane and Cairns.\footnote{15}

This construction of the explosive potential of the ‘airborne mannequin’ interrelates women, technology, speed, militarism and progress. In a travelling fashion show the aircraft becomes a site of female visibility and pleasure -- tinged with danger “she’s a guided missile” -- for the male passenger/viewer.

These transformations from militarism to consumerism sought to re-make the facts of war into the signs of peace. The conditions that frame this process were multiple and heterogeneous, but here I seek to take into consideration the role that women and the domestic played in the general mitigation of wartime fears and threats of technological disaster. As Wolfgang Schivelbusch explains, after Freud, the social process by which new technologies are familiarised can be seen to be analogous to the psychic transition from intense fright, or shock, to a diffused fright response in anxiety. Connecting a theory of ‘the stimulus shield’ (developed by Freud in response to the traumatic neurosis produced by industrialised warfare in the first world war) to early accounts of the shocks of city life, Schivelbusch notes that a generalised anxiety is a precondition of the modern traveller’s psychic resistance to the constant threat of technological breakdown and the attendant danger of accidents. Quoting Freud, he names the “moment of fright” as “that sudden, violent and unexpected accident experience that the psyche finds itself unable to deal with”.\footnote{16}

The scale and range of the violence of air war and mass bombing during the 1940s was as such a shocking experience. Although this method of war had not spread as far as the main Australian cities and state capitals, this dissolution of fright into anxiety was intrinsic to the initial popularisation of the new transportation technologies. The role of the airport traffic controller, as a manager of risk and change was, like that of the air hostess, an agent of the dissolution of shock in the urbanisation of aviation.

\footnote{15} Cinesound Review no. T140, 1953, NFSA, AVC 007372.
he brings them in, he sends them out:

pilots like to hear his voice

Dark, wavy-haired Evert Andrews, 34, of Randwick... has fashioned a career for himself as an aerodrome “traffic cop”. His clear voice, calmly issuing landing instruction, is a friendly signal to captains and officers of commercial aircraft calling at Kingsford Smith international airport, Mascot, Sydney, from many parts of the world.17

The new ‘Senior Aerodrome Controller’ according to the post-war Department of Information publication, *Southwest Pacific* in 1945 was a human guiding-beacon drawing planes and passengers safely to land at Mascot (see Fig 6.3). As a figure of technique in control of the new technological complex, the ‘man in the glass tower’ was portrayed as a hero of rational, orderly modernity, with every person and machine under his command managed, every variable planned for and every problem calmly anticipated and without mishap. On the one hand the controller was to “make considered decisions and stick to them”, while on the other still remaining “temperamentally flexible and prepared to accept the fact that everything about aerodrome control has not yet been written”.18

The new technology was exciting and inspired confidence in passengers and pilots while in the air, yet errors could be introduced by the very human decisions that had to be made about where and when to land, such as in an anecdote told by Andrews of a defective pilot, who on approaching the airport became confused and chose the wrong parallel runway, almost crashing into the tower. The controller, installed in the panoptic glass tower, thus operated at a super-human level, exhibiting ‘forward planning’ and keen judgement, to eliminate the kinds of mistakes which could be made by individual pilots landing at the large airport. His access to the technocratic ‘panorama’ constituted his powers, as he always had at his disposal the overall view. The controller’s strategy is one of audible and visual totalisation: to see and hear the big picture.

Not only a hero of rationality, the controller was also an agent in the ‘civilian-isation’ of aviation. The men who worked alongside Evert Andrews, and Andrews himself, had been trained by the RAAF to serve at “aerodromes and seadromes in Australia

‘The man in the glass tower’, *South-West Pacific*, p. 31.
and New Guinea” during 1942 and 1943. In 1944, “he was attached to United States forces controlling aerodrome movements at vast Pacific air bases”. The policy of post-war reconstruction co-ordinated the return of such men to civilian life and gave them roles in economic and urban re-construction in the immediate post-War period.

Underpinning this technocratic panorama, the concept-city -- described by Michel de Certeau as an imaginary totalisation of the unknowable, unrepresentable and shifting structures of urban space -- was favoured by planners and city fathers. Walter Bunning, in a book with a foreword by H. C. Coombs, the ‘Director-General of Post-War Reconstruction’, contrasts the city that early administrators of Sydney promised its population in the eighteenth century with the nineteenth century form of Australian cities that persisted in 1945. By placing passages describing the plans of Captain Hunter in 1789 and Governor Phillip in 1790 alongside an aerial photograph of inner-city Sydney taken in the year the war ended, Bunning compares the ideal -- the promised “prospect of future regularity” (Hunter) and the regulations that would “preserve uniformity in the buildings, prevent narrow streets, and the many inconveniences which the increase of inhabitants will occasion” (Phillip) -- to the real as seen from above -- “narrow ugly streets, lanes and alleys” in which children were forced to live “a lane life”. Bunning passionately embraces the position of judging and organising the everyday world of others, unknown to him and un-named except as the people who live in ‘the slums’. He also contrasts the messy and labyrinthine nineteenth century city to the grand projects of the twentieth century:

But how did it all get like that? Why did we not follow the planners’ early visions? It was all done by the generations of men and women who lived here. We have changed the face of the Continent. What we see around us is the work of our own hands. But the dirty, shabby suburbs and the sprawling, shapeless towns are not the only things we have made. We have transformed millions of square miles of bush or scrub to pasturage and wheatland; we have built great bridges and dams, railways and electric power stations, and we have laid the foundations of a great future city, Canberra.

The Cumberland County Plan (CCCP), a cornerstone of the post-war reconstruction project in New South Wales, sought to re-make Sydney in the image of the other great projects that ordered and transformed of nature, following the European trend

---

22 Bunning, Homes in the Sun, p. 8.
to urban planning. By constructing the un-planned urban slum as a wild, ‘second nature’, the plan mobilised an over-arching view of the planned, clean and controllable world as the ‘future’ of Sydney, and the shabby and messy disorganisation as the ‘past’. The Plan was especially concerned to implement the latest ideas on city planning from a transportation perspective and the chapter that discussed airport planning in Sydney, titled ‘Transport’, began with the understanding that modernity was all about travel. The chapter’s first sentence indicates the glorious task at hand: “Transportation, wrote Kipling, ‘is civilisation’.” 23 The Cumberland County Planners had been interested in the activities of CIAM, and Le Corbusierian concept of the ‘city of circulation’ was alive and well in the 1940s: “Transport, more than any other medium, integrates human activities... Within this phase of mechanised movement, planning must co-ordinate the various transport media within a single organism for human working and living.” 24

When approving the introduction of Plan in legislation with the passing of the Local Government (Town and Country Planning) Bill in the NSW Legislative Council in March 1945, the Hon. J. H. Tonkin expressed his “very deep regret that the Government cannot put the clock back twenty years”, lamenting that “if it could, the conditions in Sydney to-day would be entirely different.” 25 Tonkin went on to say that it would not be:

any exaggeration to say that the city of Sydney is one of the worst-planned in the British Empire... We find that the city itself consists of nothing but a series of lanes, starting from nowhere and ending nowhere. There is no tie-up from the city proper to any of the outer suburbs. The city has carried out its functions and finished them at its boundaries; the suburbs have carried out their functions and finished them at their boundaries. 26

But worse than any run-down slum or poor road, was the airport: indeed, the airport was symptomatic of the state of urban decrepitude.

Our airport, to which visitors come from the other side of the world, is in a most unsatisfactory position, and the road from it to the city is not of which the Government can be proud. It runs through a fell-mongering district, and visitors who travel along it see some of the worst of our suburbs. The roads from Melbourne and from the west come into the city where the traffic is congested, creating a bottleneck... 27

---

25 New South Wales Legislative Council (NSWLC), Parliamentary Proceedings, 1945, p. 2619.
26 NSWLC, Parliamentary Proceedings, p. 2619.
27 NSWLC, Parliamentary Proceedings, p. 2619.
The airport itself, in contrast with the roads serving it, posed a more pressing problem of under-development. In 1939, a Mr G.C. Johnson had put forward a ‘Modernisation’ plan to the Botany Municipal Council, envisaging a diversion of the Cook’s River and reclamation of land with sand dredged from Botany Bay, achieved by resuming land from golf courses and sports grounds from the south banks of the river.28 This early scheme is very close to the eventual river diversion and re-design of the airport that was begun Bradfield’s ‘Master Plan’ in 1947 and finally completed in 1956 (see Fig 6.4). Johnson, an ‘practical engineer’ and pilot, anticipated excavation of the shores of the Bay by “hydraulic methods” in order to create a “circular aerodrome with a diameter of one mile and a quarter”.29 However, the wartime lack of resources and the unresolved issue of whether the aerodrome would be controlled by the NSW state government or the federal government resulted in the plan being lost or ignored, as a State parliamentarian reported in 1944, when he tried to locate the plan it was not known of by any government authorities.30

Despite the ensuing debate about how many aerodromes there should be in New South Wales and in which suburbs of the city, Sydney was agreed to be the “gateway to the East, the Pacific Islands, New Zealand, and the United States of America” and further, aviation was of such economic and political importance that “the claims of Mascot aerodrome to be the chief airport of Australia” were seen by State parliament to be paramount.31

Not to have an international airport would challenge Sydney’s claims to be the “second white city of the British Empire”, as it was described in a 1947 newsreel written and directed by Frank Hurley.32 Over aerial footage of the city from “four miles up”, the newsreel’s narrator, proclaimed, that Sydney, “this young metropolis”, “is proud of its modern buildings, a maze of masonry, criss-crossed by busy streets”.33 The increasing integration of capital cities in the world transport network was a result of wartime developments, but this situation caused some concern among politicians, as illustrated by an interjection during a debate in State parliament on the need for the Federal government to contribute to Mascot’s development. During a debate on a motion to enlarge the aerodrome and provide for

31 NSWLA, Parliamentary Proceedings, 14 November 1944, p. 951.
32 Department of Information, Australian Diary no. 2., 1947, NFSA ABC 001690.
33 Department of Information, Australian Diary no. 2.
MODERNISING MASCOT AIRPORT.

The plan above has been evolved by Mr. G. C. Johnson, who is an engineer and a pilot, for the extension of the Kingsford Smith Aerodrome Mascot, to bring it up to modern requirements. The plan provides for the diversion of Cook's River from its present course and the resumption of portions of two golf courses.

(See story on this page.)

Fig 6.4

'Mascot Airport, Modernisation Plan', Sydney Morning Herald, 9 January 1939, p. 12.
“quicker and adequate transport from the aerodrome to the city”, Mr Tonge interrupted a long speech by the member for Croydon, Mr Hunter, that “The aeroplane is the worst thing that has ever been invented, because it has caused untold suffering to the people of London and other parts of Europe.”

Mr Hunter urged that Australians “had to use our influence to ensure that in future this machine will be used not to destroy humanity but rather to knit the peoples of the world more closely together so that wars will definitely be a thing of the past.”

Hunter also implored the people of New South Wales to “build for the future”, as:

We live in an age of speed, of terrific and almost unimaginable speed, and we must keep abreast with its requirements... we must have an airport worthy of this great city -- such a one that will give to our people the efficiency that will be demanded under post-war conditions, so enabling Australia and our city to worthily hold their places in the post-war era, and letting out planes go round the world on missions of peace and construction, rather than war and destruction, as at present.

The airport, then, was both the foundation and apex of a seemingly inevitable future of peaceful world communications. The rhetorical strategies employed by politicians sought to impose this future, denying the fears and misgivings of those critical of it. In the vision that was to become dominant and be expressed in the whole notion of post-war reconstruction, war would be narratively resolved, bringing a peaceful and economically plentiful future. Unfortunately this future would never quite arrive, for as soon as it did, it had to be invoked planned for again and again: indeed, from the 1930s onwards the airport and city planners tardily created their designs for expansion after the demand had exceeded the previous ones.

In 1944, Dr Bradfield, then Chief Engineer at the Commonwealth Department of Civil Aviation and the man in charge of the airport expansion project, met with other government officials to “have a preliminary discussion respecting the acquisition of the lands affected by the proposed [airport] extension”. At the meeting, Mr Mouat, Property Officer of the Department of the Interior, “stressed the difficulty of obtaining vacant possession of property even after acquisition. He pointed out the grave housing position in Sydney today” and that the Commonwealth would probably have to provide some form of housing scheme for the dispossessed owners and tenants. Mouat thought that the main factor impeding progress of the extension would be the time it would take to obtain vacant

---

34 NSWLA, Parliamentary Proceedings, 14 November 1944, p. 960.
36 NSWLA, Parliamentary Proceedings, 14 November 1944, p. 961.
37 ‘Notes on Conference’, 17 November 1944, AA (NSW) SP857/10 PR/1236 Pt. 1.
38 ‘Notes on Conference’, 17 November 1944.
possession. Bradfield's reply to this was not recorded in the minutes of the meeting, but he did request that all the costings and surveys be finalised by January 1945.

The areas to be acquired included houses and factories in the small locality which had been known as Lauriston Park, but which had been subsumed into Mascot. As well as houses the areas proposed for resumption included local employers such as the Wimbles Inks Factory and Mascot Granite Works and open public areas including Ross Smith Park and the Ascot Racecourse. Although the plan was not officially unveiled to the public until August 1945, the story appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* as early as January with a photo of Ross Smith Avenue, titled 'These houses may go to give planes room' (see Fig 6.5). Although the article mentioned that Federal Cabinet would consider alternative airport sites at Bankstown and "an undisclosed third place", Mascot seemed to be the preferred option. Detailed plans for Mascot had already been completed, but were not yet approved. The *Telegraph* reported that the scheme would make Mascot "Australia's most modern airport", with 10,000 ft runways, new administrative buildings, passenger lounges, cafes, restaurants, Customs, port doctors and airline offices. No mention is made by either the newspaper or the planners of the residents of the houses, nor what they think of the plan. Like Walter Bunning's 'planner's eye' view, the discourse on the new plan focused on the efficiency and amenity provided by the new 'more modern' airport, elevating the new post-war world and its needs above any other, dissenting, voices. Even the housing shortage, despite warnings by people like Mouat, was not canvassed as a possible problem.

In a letter to Mascot Council, Mouat requested that the council agree to close parts of King Street and Kent Road, and open alternative access through another part of the suburb in order to extend the runway to 6,000 ft. This length of runway, Mouat emphasised, was "required to meet the needs of the International planes arriving from Europe and from the United States, and its construction is a matter of extreme urgency". The urgency for the extension project was echoed in news reports of a crash into a 15ft high sewer outlet on 19 July 1945 in which twelve Navy and Air Force officers were killed. *Smith's Weekly* published an article after the incident calling the aerodrome "a death trap". Unlike previous reports, the article did

---

40 'Resumptions Planned To Extend Airport', *Daily Telegraph*, January 1945.
41 'Proposed acquisition of part of King Street, Mascot', letter dated 19 February 1945, AA (NSW) SP857/10 PR/1152 Pt. 1.
42 'Inquiry Into Airport Urged', *Daily Telegraph*, 3 August 1945.
Fig 6.5 ‘Resumptions Planned To Extend Airport’, Daily Telegraph, January 1945.
mention the problems faced by one of the people whose land was being resumed by the airport extension. The paper reported that a market gardener was disputing the Commonwealth’s valuation of his house and property, creating a situation in which “pilots in charge of aircraft worth up to £100,000 are forced to risk their lives and their machines while an argument goes on over a few paltry pounds, and Mascot, Sydney’s principal airport, remains one of the most dangerous, out-of-date landing grounds in all Australia” (see Fig 6.6).44

A letter sent to the Surveyor-General on 30 July recommended that the Commonwealth offer Mr Greetham, market gardener, £6,500, some £500 more than the land had been valued by the government, in order to resolve the dispute, considering that eviction, compensation for loss of income and re-accommodating Greetham and his family would cost more than £2,000. Further delay in completing the runway and continued dangers to “all planes landing or taking off on the existing 43’ runway” were also factors that the letter mentioned increased the urgency of moving the gardener. But the most important factor was that unless the runway was extended the lack of landing length would prevent full loads on long distance flights: “The planes to England and America are at present only carrying half loads and this in itself is a constantly continuing loss to the Commonwealth and to the service”.45 The dispute over the house remained a problem until early 1949, as the owner would not vacate until he had received the payment for the house. A photograph from the Sydney Morning Herald in August 1945 shows how close the King Street house was to the runway (Fig 6.6).46

Just after the photo was taken, the house had actually been acquired, when an order had been signed to compulsorily acquire the land, but the tenant did not move until four years later on 22 January 1949.47 A letter from the Director-General of Civil Aviation’s office stated that the son of the family remained in the house to guard against “squatters” and that “in view of the local housing conditions and the possibility of undue publicity [the advice of the Department of Interior] is requested for the best method of arranging the removal” of the house as it had to be demolished immediately for works to proceed during 1949.48

44 Smith’s Weekly, 28 July 1945.
45 ‘Mascot, NSW: Extension of 43’ runway: Land owned by B.C. Greetham: 5 Acres, 3 Roods, 33 Perches’, AA (NSW) SP857/10 PR/1152 Pt. 1
46 ‘House obstructs extension to runway’, Sydney Morning Herald, 2 August 1945.
47 ‘May take land at Mascot’, Sydney Sun, 3 August 1945.
48 Memorandum to Surveyor and Property Officer, Department of the Interior, ‘Kingsford Smith Airport, NSW: Residence at 358 King Street, Mascot: Acquisition of 2nd August, 1945. AA (NSW) SP857/10 PR/1152 Pt. B.
'HOUSE OBSTRUCTS EXTENSION TO RUNWAY

An R.A.F. Liberator coming in to land over the residence of Mr B. Greetham, in King Street, Mascot. The house obstructs extensions to the northeast runway at Mascot aerodrome. Mr Greetham, a long established market gardener, received official notice to quit on May 4 and has since acquired property at Milperra, but will not vacate the premises until the bargain is sealed by the exchange of money.

Fig 6.6  'House obstructs extension to runway', Sydney Morning Herald, 2 August 1945.
The first expansion of the runways, from 4,900 to 6,000 feet, still had to contend with a railway line built across the north-east runway, and as a photograph published in 1945 showed, construction workers had to flag the planes across the tracks before an electric signal station was built to stop trains crossing while planes were landing (see Fig 6.7). An editorial in the Daily Telegraph described this situation as “at best a fantastic makeshift; it could provide the ingredients of serious tragedy”.

At the beginning of the war, the Federal government had been held responsible for the dangerous conditions that caused an air disaster in Melbourne in 1938 and resulted in what was known as the ‘Kyeema enquiry’, after the plane involved in the accident. In early 1939 ‘airliners’ were forced to circle Sydney for hours waiting for a break in the clouds to make landings at the airport. Although short wave radio beacons had been installed at the airport, the combination of the short runways, the chimneys of surrounding factories, some as high as 300 feet, and the smoke haze produced by them as well as constantly burning rubbish tips compromised visibility and ease of landing at Mascot. These site-specific limitations led pilots to tell the Telegraph that the aerodrome would always be risky, and the editorial concluded that if the natural deficiencies of the site were correctly assessed by the pilots, then “we must obviously abandon Mascot for another site” and that the “question is not debatable; experts can settle it in five minutes”. A major article in the Daily Telegraph a month later in August 1945 raised the possibility of an inquiry into the siting of the airport, with an anonymous ‘veteran transport pilot’ (possibly Nigel Love) who called Mascot a “stop gap aerodrome and a constant menace to the safety of the travelling public”. He suggested that “To put flying on a safe basis for the post-war period, the Government must build a spacious aerodrome with at least four three-mile strips, even if they have to build it on Emu Plains, and run special electric trains to the city.”

Readers writing to the editors of both the Herald and the Telegraph offered their own solutions to these problems and proposed extremely detailed plans for completely new airports for Sydney. A Mr C.J. Munro from Cronulla suggested, in a plan he had already submitted to Sutherland Shire Council, that the area between Cronulla

---

49 ‘Railway line crosses runway at Mascot Aerodrome’, Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1945.
50 ‘Mascot Airport’, Daily Telegraph, 3 July 1945.
51 ‘Mascot Airport’.
Fig 6.7  'Railway line crosses runway at Mascot Aerodrome', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August 1945.
and Kurnell should be further airport for Sydney. Apart from “4,000 acres with extensive water frontages to bay, river, and ocean” the main advantage of the land was that it would be “free from obstruction by hills and trees. It is undulating country comprising sandhills, swamps and shallow bays, and could provide runways up to three miles in length, and thus accommodate the world’s largest land and sea airliners”. He also envisaged “a vehicular bridge across the entrance to George’s River... thus shortening the distance between the airport and the city to eight miles” and that “Kurnell, birthplace of Australia, could then be developed as Australia’s main tourist attraction, comprising an historic museum, hotel, golf links”.

Another reader, Corporal H. MacLeod, of President Avenue, Miranda, suggested that “As an air terminal in keeping with Sydney’s post-war importance must be close to the city, I suggest that the area comprising Moore Park and its environs be resumed for a new Sydney aerodrome.” Although this would mean the resumption of two high schools, golf links, and two main tramlines, the “resultant area should be ideal for Sydney’s air terminal. It is level, attractively situated, large enough, surely, and what is of paramount importance, within a few minutes of the heart of the city.” Although Moore Park was, and still is, on the edge of one of the most affluent parts of Sydney, the proximity of Centennial Park meant that the schools could be rebuilt in the “western portion of Centennial Park or in one of the many other beautiful sites around Sydney.” The writer concluded that “The cost should not be prohibitive compared with the expense and doubtful result involved in the diversion of Cook’s River and the extension of Mascot drome, for there are still the fogs, factory smoke, and the dirty, unimpressive approach to Sydney that are part of Mascot’s disadvantages.”

Despite the breadth of alternatives offered and the obvious passion for futurity that the question of a new airport inspired in the public interested and involved in constructing a post-war future for themselves, the issue had been more or less resolved, as a brief exchange in the Federal Parliament seems to suggest. In answer to a question from Mr White about a statement from Nigel Love saying that Mascot as a site for an airport was inadequate and could be dangerous, the Minister for Defence, Mr Beasley, answered that:

---

56 ‘Aerodrome site’, Letter to the editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 29 August 1945
The suggestion that a new airport should be established, for instance, at Bankstown, and the latest suggestion is that it should be built in the vicinity of Penrith... I do not know whether Mr Love is really competent to express an opinion regarding the suitability of the aerodrome at Mascot. Perhaps, the honorable member himself would be more competent. In view of the limited area available at Mascot, the best we can do at the moment is to make that aerodrome as safe as is humanly possible. I am sure that the Minister for Air will work along those lines.59

The experts, however, did not appear to be considering the question of another site for the airport and a panel of experts was never set up. Days later, the Federal Cabinet approved spending five million pounds on a 'great new airport' to give "Sydney one of the world's most modern air terminals" and the extension of the north-east runway was "adopted pending a decision on the ultimate location and design of Sydney's main airport", in order to give both "safety and modernity to Mascot".60 The timing and location of the announcement in Perth was designed to co-incide with the Fremantle by-election, and was reported widely, showing the increasing national significance of Sydney's transport infrastructure. The nationalisation or 'socialisation' of airlines was also an issue, with the proposal to take over privately-owned airlines meeting resistance from conservatives, particularly Fadden, Leader of the Country Party, who threatened to challenge the take-over of the airlines in the High Court. Unlike the issue of public ownership of international airlines, the policy of a government owned interstate airline had been extremely controversial from when it was first announced on 22 November 1944.61

The expenditure on the new airport was part of a grand vision that considered air transport a public utility, and illuminates the importance of aviation to nation-building through technological modernity.

The decision on the site for the new airport inspired debate about the form it might take, creating a highly charged space that were filled by the kinds of dreams of modernity familiar to science fiction, especially utopian in their elimination of human labour and enthusiasm for new velocities of communication (see Fig. 6.8).

One article speculated that Sydney's new airport would be designed along the lines of the great Idlewild airport which is being built in New York City at a cost of more than £30,000,000. This means that in the centre of the field an imposing building will house the control tower, offices, waiting rooms, observation balconies, restaurants, and shops.62

59 Australia, House of Representatives, 1 August 1945.
60 'Great airport for Sydney, £5,000,000 plan approved', Sydney Sun, 7 August 1945.
61 '£8,000,000 for airports', Daily Telegraph, 2 August 1945; Haddon and Cave, Air Transport in Australia, p. 100.
62 'Sydney may have replica of big U.S. airport', Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1945.
Fig 6.8 Sydney may have replica of big US airport*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August 1945.
The article envisaged the ideal airport as reconciling nature and modernity having “within the field well laid out gardens, in which passengers may walk while waiting to transfer from one plane to another, or in which friends may await the arrival of passengers”.63 The great airport resembled and in fact became a small city in itself, with eight to ten thousand highly trained and technologically knowledgeable workers. This new technological city surpassed the temporal rules of nature, as it would be:

will be open day and night. There will never be an hour in which this great air terminal in the Pacific will be without hundreds of workers on duty. It is estimated that special technicians will themselves run into thousands, especially with the application of radar to civil uses as well as the possible development of certain features of jet propulsion.64

The new airport had to be as close as possible to the metropolis, and integrated into it, in order to take advantage of the new travelling speeds offered by the post-war aviation world. The article cited an engineer (probably Nigel Love) who thought “that it was useless to have speed to land people and mail at an airport unless money was spent on underground electric systems to carry them into the city.”65 For mail, he suggested an “underground tube from the airport to the G.P.O. as in London. The mail would be put on an electric truck, a button would be pressed, and away the truck would speed”.66 Another engineer quoted in the article agreed that this was a possibility, but preferred the method of mail delivery in Philadelphia, where “helicopter delivery planes” landed with mail on top of the main post office.

In a public address on airport planning, Bradfield described his vision for such an airport, and proposed the possibility of funding the airport through visits by the non-travelling public who would be charged entrance fees, and moreover, he believed this opportunity for visitors to be a major benefit of siting the airport close to the city: “With its wide open views and the constant movement of traffic, it is a natural centre of interest and attraction.”67 He pointed to European and North American examples of the public’s fascination with airports as spectacles,

such as at the La Guardia Airport, New York, where it is claimed that the income from the tobacco kiosks alone is enough to cover capital charges. Huge revenue is made from ordinary sightseers, who are charged a ‘dime a time’ to enter a special gallery above the aircraft loading platforms...

Restaurants and open-air beer gardens were, before the war, a feature of European airports and are common practice in the U.S.A. today. It does not

---

63 ‘Sydney may have replica of big U.S. airport’, Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1945.
64 ‘Sydney may have replica of big U.S. airport’, Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1945.
65 ‘Sydney may have replica of big U.S. airport’, Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1945.
66 ‘Sydney may have replica of big U.S. airport’, Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1945.
67 Dr K.N.E. Bradfield, ‘Airport Design in Relation to Town Planning’, address to The Town and Country Planning Association, Victoria, 27 March 1946, p. 4.
follow that the Australian public will react in the same way... but it is likely that if sources of amusement and interest are provided in congenial surroundings, they will be attracted by them. The nearer the airport to the population and the better the means of access, the more revenue will be produced by the airport.\textsuperscript{68}

What is most striking about this vision is its detachment from the messy and already-occupied space of the city. This imaginary airport, in becoming a city itself, detaches from the conflicting and contradictory claims on space experienced by the planners of the 1940s and beyond and seems to float, satellite-like, above the real situation of the urban in the mid-twentieth century. None of the inconvenience and dirt of the heavy industrial site at Mascot is apparent in the new, sublime airport, and most importantly, no squatters, housing shortages, cows, cricketers, noise nor pollution from the planes themselves. The only limitation mentioned in the article is that the budget for the new airport approved by Federal cabinet would not be enough to fund any adequate airport development, whatever its site, and that “Changes are so rapid that any schedule of costs will be out of date within a year.”\textsuperscript{69}

The combination of money already spent and the low land values at the Mascot site, considering its closeness to the city, seem to have been the key factors influencing the Federal decision to spend the budget allocation to develop Mascot as the new ‘modern air-terminal’. The Lord Mayor of Sydney agreed that:

If Mascot can be developed to meet the requirements of the large transport planes of the future, it is the ideal site for the new airport for Sydney... The important factor is that Mascot is handy to the city. Airports of the future take the relative position of seaports... We cannot build Sydney near the airport, so the airport must be brought close to the city.\textsuperscript{70}

The local council, however, was not so sure about this logic, and the Mayor of Mascot expressed his reservations: “We are anxious to know what the Government intends doing about Mascot aerodrome... There has been an unwarranted delay in making some announcement of the future plans, and many of our municipal projects are held up, pending a decision.”\textsuperscript{71} The *Herald* reported that “the municipality [of Mascot] was flooded with rumours about what was going to happen and everybody was unsettled. The council was not happy about the Government selecting Mascot as the new airport... [because] the council would lose considerable revenue” if a large amount of land was resumed and it could not go

\textsuperscript{68} Bradfield, ‘Airport Design in Relation to Town Planning’, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{69} ‘Sydney may have replica of big U.S. airport’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August 1945.
\textsuperscript{70} ‘Mascot favoured as big airport’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August 1945, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{71} ‘Mascot favoured as big airport’, p. 3.
ahead with its plans to provide sewers for the suburbs surrounding the airport until the Government revealed its plans.\textsuperscript{72}

the master plan

During the ten years that it took to re-build the airport, between 1946 and 1956, the Bradfield plan, as carried out by the Department of Works and Housing, profoundly changed the landscape of the northern shores of Botany Bay. The changes were on such a scale that the new shape of the shoreline is visible from satellites and the estuarine and marine ecology of the bay around the airport has never recovered.\textsuperscript{73} The Cook’s River was diverted south to allow for the runway configuration to be changed to include north-south and east-west runways. Sewer mains over Muddy Creek were relocated, nearly 2 million cubic metres of sand were excavated to create the diversion and a 2 kilometre long channel along Muddy Creek was built to allow the river to discharge back into the Bay.\textsuperscript{74}

While these physical changes to the city were not visible to most of its inhabitants in the spectacular public spaces of Sydney they represented a re-configuring of the natural environment of the city on an unprecedented scale. However, the changes that were to come with the introduction of jet flights to Sydney were to fundamentally transform the experience of living in the city for almost all the citizens living in the inner west and south of Sydney. And as the next chapter examines, in the next twenty years the changes to the city’s soundscape would be even more incredible than the changes to its landscape.

* * *

This chapter has shown that the discourse on the city of circulation examined in chapter three was intensified and consolidated in material form at the airport immediately after the second world war. The figure of the air hostess, as aerial housewife mediated the shock experiences of military uses of aviation into a managed performance of glamorous and exciting spectacularisation of international travel through a processes of domestication of the material geography of war.

\textsuperscript{72} ‘Mascot favoured as big airport’, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{73} Fitzgerald, The Sydney Airport Fiasco, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{74} Department of Civil Aviation, Annual Report, 1946-52, AA VIC MP391/WO132.
Discourses on post-war planning constructed the planning of the expansion of the city, and in particular, of the airport at Mascot as a project of rational, orderly modernity, but this project was not evenly nor universally received as a positive development. The eviction and demolition of private homes to expand the airport was generally accepted as a progressive move, but the actual location of the airport at Mascot was questioned by many people who did not accept that Mascot was necessarily the best choice of site for Sydney’s international airport. The Cumberland County Plan, as a localised expression of post-war reconstruction, was especially concerned to implement the latest ideas on city planning from a transportation perspective, which can be summed up in the comment by the Premier of New South Wales: “We cannot build Sydney near the airport, so the airport must be brought close to the city.”73 As I discuss in the final chapter, these decisions have continued to impact on present events, especially in a similar project of airport expansion during the 1990s.

Although local councils did not express such enthusiasm for the Federal Government selection of Mascot as the new airport, the pre-eminence that the airport eventually took in the urban form can today be visually detected in a tour around the suburbs near the airport. The airport took precedence over other transport uses such as the railway to the coal fired power station and trams taking workers and passengers to the airport, which were dismantled as part of the airport expansion. Suburban streets of houses in Botany and Mascot end abruptly at a wire fence and flat field, leading to the distant gleaming silver buildings of the new Qantas terminal and dark strips of the three runways built out into Botany Bay. On the roads leading to the airport the mix of global transport companies, airline headquarters and international hotels jars uncomfortably with the familiar signs of (sub)urban decay: red-brick federation and timber houses with windows boarded up and piles of junk decorating their front yards.

In this physical inscription of planning and its lack, the ideology of a meta-space of urban planning is extremely problematic. The decision to locate and develop an international airport in Sydney’s most densely populated suburbs denied that there could be negative effects associated with modern technological advances. This claim to this concept-city that emerged and operated in the planner’s discourse unravels in a city that is instead chaotic, multi-level, unruly and filled with memories and emotions. The space practiced by the man in the glass tower is an apt metaphor for the planned space of the airport as he sits inside his sealed envelope of undisturbed

73 ‘Mascot favoured as big airport’, Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1945, p. 3.
air. There are no sounds of the city to disturb him, his gaze calmly ranging across
the landscape, but his vision is directed outwards, and the residents of the city
cannot look back.
Chapter Seven: An Exciting New Sound

Sound is an alteration in pressure, particle displacement, or particle velocity which is propagated in an elastic medium (air). But sound is also the auditory sensation produced through the ear by the alterations described above.

The first part of this description belongs to the objective realm of science, while the second, requiring the presence of a subject of perception, finds its place in the domain of phenomenology... the perceptual object is, to a large extent, a cultural phenomenon which is both socially and linguistically constructed.¹

As the panoptic techniques of the town planner and territories of the technocrat proliferated, post-war urban narratives focused on the visual and spatial wonders of future cities. These urban futures seemed always already implicit in the present -- the next technological innovation outdated as soon as it arrived. But it also my conjecture that the technocratic attitude to the future and the rhetoric of the sublime actually shaped the development of construction projects. This can be borne out by examination of public predictions about the future made at key points in the spatial history of the airport in the 1950s.

A significant juncture, or point of discontinuity, in this history occurred during the 1950s when jet aircraft were about to be used for overseas and domestic flights from Mascot. The unknown qualities of this new transport technology, and the kind of urban form that it would create allowed a great deal of speculation about the future to coalesce at the point of change the jet represented. In this chapter, I concentrate on the events surrounding introduction of jets in Australia, and particularly Sydney. This change to the ‘acoustic ecology’ of Sydney, and other centres of population which have international airports within their city limits, has had reverberations which are still being felt in the 1990s. This chapter will explain the terms and conditions that gave rise to the notion of acoustic ecological analysis during the 1960s, defined by Murray Schafer as the relationship between humans and their acoustic environment.

In the context of this discussion of jet aircraft in Sydney, I wish to explore the ways in which this shifting border actually constituted the sound of the aircraft for those

who heard it. Whether one heard it as an excessive noise, an intrusion into the home as a time and place when private individuals “claimed a right to silence”, or as the perfect realisation of technical power and a demonstration of the audible glory of the new age depended on one’s orientation and expectations about the future. Most significantly, the steep gradient of the relationships between urban developers and dwellers created a one-way flow of debate during the 1950s and 60s: no detailed response to the impact of the aircraft noise was included in any official documents right up until the 1990s. The technocrat, the aviator and the advertisers, for most of the twentieth century, have turned a ‘deaf ear’ to the warnings that many people made even before the advent of commercial jet flights. The differential aesthetics of this ‘new sound’, that is, whether it caused excitement or annoyance, was to profoundly disturb the symbolic and material relationship of the plane to the urban environment across the world.

Murray Schafer’s notion of the ‘soundscape’, or the total acoustic frame of all sounds in a geographic location, offers some effective tools for understanding the relationships between sound, space and technology in industrialised societies. I also examine the usefulness of Schafer’s understanding of ‘sacred noise’ for extending my earlier analyses of modernity and the sublime. This chapter argues that not just technological landscapes, but technological soundscapes were portrayed as sublime by discourses on progress and modernity. Enthusiasts for such modern sounds had to constantly prevent any descent from acoustic sublimity to acoustic abjection, and in doing so, had to portray the jet as ‘silent’. Such representations of the silence of the jets became absurd and untenable after the early 1960s, by which time most people living near the airport had been interrupted and disturbed by the sounds of aircraft, and indeed in 1963, legislation came into effect banning flights during a ‘curfew’ period from 11pm to 6am.  

keeping pace with the jet age

Well before jet planes arrived in Sydney, an article in *The Australian Women’s Weekly* in 1951, carried the technologically enthused headline ‘Mascot keeps pace with the jet age’ (see Fig 7.1). The article included photographs that spread across two pages

---


241
Fig 7.1  ‘Mascot keeps pace with the jet age’, *Australian Women’s Weekly*, 22 August 1951, pp. 12-13.
and surrounded the text. Both the article and the photographs worked together to create a sense of heightening excitement about the internationalised space of the airport. The images pictured cosmopolitan ‘intercontinental’ travellers disembarking from ‘two overseas planes at once in the early morning’: one a “Pan-American Stratocruiser from San Francisco” and the other “a BOAC Constellation from England, that came in at the same time”. In 1951 this was still a rare enough happening to constitute a photo-opportunity.

Not only were the passengers increasingly experiencing distinct transformations of senses of place and time, this simultaneous and hybrid inter-nationality created new occupations as airport employees worked to orient, co-ordinate and diffuse intercontinental travellers into the city and nation. In Women’s Weekly photo collage, the identity and function within the airport of a woman sitting at a desk and talking into a microphone was explained as: “Shanghai-born Anne Tenenbaum broadcasts announcements at the Overseas terminal. Anne speaks five languages.” The meeting of cultures, geographies and temporalities in the airport terminal called for new, multi-lingual workers and an increasing focus on communication and passenger flows. The layout of the photographs on the page themselves create a journey through the airport: from the passengers disembarking the two planes from two different continents; passing through customs; to the ‘behind-the-scenes’ operations of checking the planes for faults, and loading frozen food aboard a plane destined for Canada. The photograph of Anne Tenenbaum functions as a link between the public and the ‘back-stage’ parts of the airport.

The narrative of these images and their accompanying text portrays this work as a desirable, exciting, and crucial, no matter how mundane. The story within this juxtaposition of images also seeks to allay the fears of jet age travellers, who were constituted as needing to be educated about modern travel. A caption beneath a photo of uniformed men poring over a flight log declares that “Nervous travellers would gain confidence from a glimpse of the thorough and painstaking work behind-scenes at Mascot”. The sensible rationality of the planners is reflected here, founded on a discursive operation that seeks to transform fear and apprehension about technological change and the future to a wonder and rapture at the efficiencies and managed risks of the modern city.

Everyday scenes in the customs department waiting room at the Overseas Terminal, Mascot Airport. These New Australians, mainly Dutch,

---

4 ‘Mascot keeps pace with the jet age’, Australian Women’s Weekly, August 22, 1951, p. 13.
5 ‘Mascot keeps pace…’, p. 13.
were tired after their long flight when they arrived by KLM at 5.30 am. There is an official interpreter at Mascot, Dutch-born John Rodgers. War bride Mrs. Ben Smith flew from America with her children Burns Randall and Donna, and was met by her mother, sister and niece. Dutch migrants J.M. Huft, his wife, and three children find their first moments in Australia a solemn occasion. They later left for Bathurst camp.  

But not all travellers could become New Australians:

Age can look after itself. Adam Khan, 72-year-old Pakistani, became quite an identity at the Overseas Terminal for a few days after he refused to board a plane home and took up residency in the passenger lounge.  

Yet the main text of the article offered a persistently ordinary, more homely view of the airport under construction, in stark contrast to the landscape of glamorous travel that the photographs served to illustrate. The article’s author described the airport-under-construction as “nothing more spectacular... than a number of lorries scurrying over white sand”. The writer wryly observed that “General feeling at the airport is that planes may come and planes may go, but the Mascot reconstruction scheme will go on forever.” The claims of the planners to anticipate the needs of the jet age were interrogated by the Weekly’s (un-named) correspondent, when the writer demurred that “nobody can predict what will be the runway requirements of planes in five to ten years’ time. The present scheme may be completed only in time to begin a newer and more ambitious one.”  

Modernist imaginings like the ‘Intercontinental airport’ described by the planners and engineers in the previous chapter ostensibly came to completion in 1956. Yet the project of building the new airport did indeed begin again as soon as it ended, when the diversion of the Botany goods rail line was necessary in December 1958 to allow jet aircraft to land in the following year. Over the previous ten years Qantas had consolidated all its flying operations at Mascot, ending its association with flying boats based at Rose Bay and catering facilities at St Mary’s, and started to build hangars and testing facilities for jet aircraft at Mascot, necessitating constant expansion of their on-ground accommodation. The airport, as an urban form anticipated during the 1930s and 40s, finally started to look and function like a small city within a larger one.

---

9 'Mascot keeps pace...', p. 13. 
10 'Mascot keeps pace...', p. 13. 
12 W.H. Shaw, 'Planning the Qantas Jet Base - Mascot', unpublished manuscript, 'Development' file, Qantas Archives, Mascot, p. 4.
With the airline’s investment in jets, however, came the most profound troubling of the modernist vision of the airport. The planners of Sydney’s cityscape were anxious to create a urban form that ‘kept pace with the jet age’. As a mass-consumed object, the jet aircraft itself seemed to promise an optimistic attitude towards progress and technological change. The planes that were soon to arrive on the extended runways were larger and more costly than any previous aircraft, yet despite their greater size they appeared more sleek, streamlined and faster. The passenger jet’s visual appearance seemed to consummate the modernist privileging of function over form, with distinctly streamlined contours and design details.

no visible means of support

Since 1955 the Boeing company had sold jet aircraft to commercial airlines and in 1958 they began flying international airline routes. Qantas was the first airline outside the United States to use the Boeing aircraft. The first model off the production line, the Boeing 707, was ‘re-styled’ by Walter Dorwin Teague, an industrial designer who had designed the Box Brownie for Kodak, among other machine age icons. Teague was employed to give the 707 its “sleeker, faster look” and also to give the whole airline a corporate identity. The 707 had no ‘visible means of support’ as the machine-like propeller engines of pre-war aircraft were gone. The aerodynamic smooth surfaces of the plane seemed to project it forward into airspace even when it was standing still. Even the typeface used for the Boeing’s logo was angled forward around an arrow to reflect the speed and grace of the new velocities of the jets.

Industrial designers in 1950s had taken careful note of aircraft design, and the aesthetic of contemporaneity and poised sense of ‘forward thrust’ that aviation design lent to other consumer objects can be measured in its influence on other spheres of industrial design, particularly other forms of transport. The most celebrated example was the design of Cadillacs by General Motors, when in 1948 Harley Earl, future ‘Vice President Styling at GM’, used a design detail from the Lockheed P-38 ‘Lightning’ to give the Cadillac range ‘graceful bulk’ with prominent ‘fins’ at the rear of the car’s body. General Motors also owned Allison, an aircraft

13 Polly Powell and Lucy Peel, 50s and 60s Style, Apple Press, London, 1988, p. 67. Teague Associates continue to be industrial designers for the Boeing company, and also designed the interior of Air Force One (www.wdia.com).

14 Bayley, Stephen, Sex, Drink and Fast Cars, Faber and Faber, London, p. 13; Powell & Peel, p. 66.
engine company, and Earl had seen the new plane in secret at an English airforce base during the early 1940s. Earl was obsessed with aircraft design and military symbolism, naming GM’s post-war sports car the Chevrolet ‘Corvette’ after a navy vessel. He also demanded a wraparound windshield for his ‘Le Saber’ car because thought it looked like the canopy of the a military jet.\textsuperscript{15} These stylised designs, celebrating consumption and material excess, were incredibly successful and GM sold five million cars each year during the mid-fifties.

The production and consumption of such cars during the 1950s prompted Roland Barthes to comment in an essay on the ‘New Citroen’ that automobiles functioned for post-war society much as Gothic cathedrals did for an earlier age:

\begin{quote}
I think that cars today are almost the exact equivalent of the great gothic cathedrals; I mean the supreme creation of an era, conceived with passion by unknown artists, and consumed in image if not in usage by a whole population which appropriates them as a purely magical object...\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Barthes description of the then new model ‘DS’ or ‘Goddess’ tallies with many of the qualities of the new model jets: “at once perfection and an absence of origin, a closure and a brilliance, a transformation of life into matter... and in a word a silence which belongs to the realm of fairytales”.\textsuperscript{17} The streamlining and incorporation of all the elements of the car into a finalised and perfected whole, and the resulting decreased sense of transition between each element of the ensemble produced for Barthes a “new phenomenology of assembling, as if one has progressed from a world where elements are welded to a world where they are juxtaposed and hold together by sole virtue of their wondrous shape”.\textsuperscript{18}

The contours of such a sublime object reveal to Barthes a smoothness that is “always an attribute of perfection because its opposite reveals a technical and typically human operation of assembling: Christ’s robe was seamless, just as the airships of science-fiction are made of unbroken metal”. The new Citroen’s design characteristics were influenced by aeronautic design, and in particular jet design, which had to conquer the limitations of humanly assembled matter when projected at a great velocity through the atmosphere. The design of the aerofoil and body surfaces of jets had to create an entirely smooth envelope without even the tiniest bump or dip, so that air flows would be disturbed as little as possible and the dangers of metal shear and pieces of the aircraft detaching in-flight would be

\textsuperscript{17} Barthes, ‘The New Citroen’, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{18} Barthes, ‘The New Citroen’, p. 89 (my emphasis).
minimised. Thus, part of the ‘excitement’ of the jet age lay in its realisation of the sublime smoothness of the imaginary airships of science fiction. The closure and silence of the flying saucer could now be within the reach of everyday modes of transportation.

However, despite the attention to details in the visual dimension of the jet plane and the all-round sense of ‘neomania’ (Barthes) for the new forms of transport of the jet age, it was not the specularity of the new planes that was to be the most striking characteristic of the new technology. The gap that started to grow between the strange promise of silence made by aircraft manufacturers and promoters of jet travel and the incredible volumes of noise that they actually delivered can be seen a measure of the disjunctions between several competing visions of modernity. These visions circulated around the kinds of problems that the new distribution and mass consumption of technology posed. If ‘everyone’ had access to a car, new roads, bridges and freeways had to be built and old neighbourhoods had to be demolished and re-constructed in the process. Mass private transport such as automobiles, as well as mass public transport such as trains and planes, would demand more resources to be devoted producing energy to fuel them and space for them to move in. In order to ‘create space’ for the vehicles of mass democratic society, some people were displaced and others were be the displacers. From the perspective of those displaced, this new and improved future was a disorganising force always already out of reach by its infinite deferral -- they would have to accept temporariness and transit until the ‘modern’ arrived. Standing the other side of this displacement, for the “men of techné, of the scientific rationalism and practical reason... that were so much part of post-war expansion”, “the great arch of bourgeois science and technical control of the world” was about to land in the middle of the western developed urban environment, and this dislocation was the realisation of modernity itself.

For those managing change the future was not to be always deferred, but planned for, constructed, produced and realised. As social and cultural historians have sought to demonstrate “A community... is multifactored and multi-purposed, and understanding its components depends partly on whether one is looking out or

---

19 Australian car production and consumption proceeded apace during the 1950s, see John Arrowsmith and George Zangalis, Holden: The Story of General Motors in Australia, International Bookshop, Melbourne, 1965. In 1956 the top 5 manufacturers, GMH, BMC, Ford, VW and Chrysler produced between them 168,225 new cars, p. 14. In 1963 this had more than doubled and 374, 163 new cars registrations were registered, p. 16. At this time Australia had the second highest road accident rate in the world.

looking in, that is, whether one is or is not a member of the threatened group.”

To take this understanding of community as formed differentially even further, these boundaries of inclusion and exclusion constantly shift and change and perhaps even the those directing displacement one day find themselves displaced (as I discussed in the concluding chapters of this thesis). It is fairly self-evident that the people who voiced criticism of technological change in the 1950s often stood to lose rather than benefit from the coming change. Those who envisioned modernity as bringing positive change to their environment were often closely linked to the institutions that desired or profited from large-scale development: governments, airline companies, tourist operators and developers.

a whole heap of future

When Norman Ellison wrote a short piece on the impact of new aircraft designs on Sydney airport ‘for the layman’ in Pocket Book Weekly in 1946, he was thrilled to relate the scale and power of the new jet engines. He advocated his reader to think beyond -- impressive though they were -- purely financial and topographical views of the airport. Yes, the airport’s first stage of re-development had cost 5 million pounds and would eventually occupy 2000 acres. These facts were impressive in themselves. But the most interesting ‘view’ of all possible visions of the airport could be had “when one focuses on the future”. To align the reader’s sights for this view, Ellison suggested that ‘he’ first “re-read that generalisation as to the second and third stages of the airport project. It says: To provide for giant airliners of the future.”

The new aircraft designs were going to be based on engines smaller and more than twice as powerful than the engines of the late 1940s. These propeller engines could power planes of 230 ft wingspan and carry 200 passengers - such as the ‘Consolidated Vultee Model 37’ from America and the ‘Bristol Brabazon I’ from England.


Ellison noted, though, that one ‘rule’ of the new aviation game had yet to be clarified:

That concerns the jet and its stupendous rearward kick. We haven’t heard much yet about what this does besides propelling the aircraft. We don’t know whether, when the aircraft is on the ground, the jet gases exude with great heat or great violence, or with poisonous fumes or what... We’re entitled to wonder, also, whether these new aircraft are going to affect the conventional emplaning and disemplaning procedure. In these, in the case of airliners, the aircraft is usually close to either the airline aerodrome establishment, or to the control building. But if the new aircraft have a kind of mechanical halitosis, or if they breathe fire or violence, then either the existing aircraft-building close-up will be ended, or the building - and maybe the tarmac - will need anti-jet or anti-rocket protection.23

Ellison concluded that the Sydney’s ‘futurised’ airport provided things to ponder for both the airport designer and the ‘layman’. Ellison, as an aviation writer and journalist, explicitly inscribed the future into the everyday lives of Australians by such speculative writing on the kinds of technological change that was about to be realised in Sydney. His description of the jet engine is a discourse on the sublimity of the jet age, its awesome power and violent effects on the environment showing up the limits of human embodiment and conventional building materials. His final paragraph underlines the potential rapture and ‘perilous flows’ to be found in the new world that the airport represents: “There’s a lot of money and brains and manpower involved in Kingsford Smith Aerodrome. Yes, and there’s a whole heap of future”.24 But the ‘mechanical halitosis’ that Ellison’s sources suspected of the jet even in the 1940s, was confirmed by the 1950s to not just affect those inside the airport, but also those living and working outside it.

The authors of the Cumberland County Council Plan (CCCP), in their design for a greater Sydney, had been concerned to “co-ordinate the various transport media within a single organism for human working and living” and at the same time “correct the problems of residential sprawl, congestion and blight associated with past trends of centralisation”.25 They sought to plan the areas surrounding the airport in order to provide for runway expansion and the separation of freight, domestic and international travel into dedicated terminals, but they neglected the influence of the flight paths themselves on the surrounding areas. The Plan did recommend, however, that “Alternative sites, such as Towra Point, have been

23 Ellison, ‘This New Intercontinental Airport’, p. 19.
25 Cumberland County Council, The Planning Scheme for the County of Cumberland, NSW, CCC, Sydney, July 1948, p. 155.
examined during the preparation of the County Plan and are now protected from unnecessary urbanisation for possible future use".26

Writing in 1957 just before jets were about to fly from Mascot in review of the CCCP in his book *Sydney’s Great Experiment*, Dennis Winston was positive about the plans to build an expressway linking the city with the airport:

Even since Hargrave’s first experiments in 1882 the County of Cumberland has been an important centre of air activity. Sydney’s Kingsford Smith Airport commemorates the historic flight of Kingsford Smith across the Pacific in 1928 and is now being enlarged to allow for 500 aircraft movements daily. The airport is only four miles from the centre of the city and the County Plan includes an expressway route to reduce travel time to the minimum. Many thousands of visitors will gain their first impressions of Australia from the journey along this expressway; its high quality design and landscape treatment, and its early completion, are matters of national importance, as is also the proper provision of air terminal buildings in the city with adequate space for traffic circulation and parking.27

But he was also very critical of the unofficial ‘single’ airport policy in place since the 1946-49 redevelopment of Mascot, rather than building an entirely new airport at another location further away from the urban area, given the doubling of aircraft movements in the ten years since the end of the war:

But with the spectacular growth of air freight and passenger traffic -- and increasing noise nuisance and danger in the neighbourhood of a modern airport -- it is doubtful whether Kingsford Smith will provide adequate air facilities for the County for much longer. The speed of modern motor transport along modern highways makes proximity to the city less important than it used to be, while the size, number, noise and danger of today’s aircraft make it highly desirable that the airport should be away from the urban area. It seems that the County Plan should have included provision for the reservation of land for a future airport in addition to the present one at Mascot. In 1946-47 460,000 passengers and 6000 tons of freight passed through airports in the County; the corresponding figures for the year ending December 1954 were 985,000 passengers and 22,700 tons of freight. In spite of development figures of this kind the Minister of Civil Aviation did not agree with the Cumberland County Council that further reservations for airport purposes, at Taren Point or elsewhere, would be desirable.28

Winston in his critique knew that “the size, number, noise and danger of today’s aircraft make it highly desirable that the airport should be away from the urban area”, but notes almost as an afterthought that the Minister of Civil Aviation did not

---

26 Cumberland County Council, The Planning Scheme for the County of Cumberland, p. 157.
agree with the Council that quarantining land from development would be worthwhile. It was seen to be too expensive for the State to bear the cost of controlling development. When County planners recommended the acquisition of open spaces and routes for new roads for £15.7 million, the State government sought financial aid from the Federal Government, but in December 1950 Prime Minister Menzies refused assistance to the scheme on the grounds that “it was not a matter of Commonwealth concern.”

As Peter Spearritt’s history of Sydney shows, the ambiguity of the airport as national space in the State capital exposed the underlying conflict between State planning and national progress:

This stance was taken despite the fact that the Commonwealth was a major landholder in Sydney (controlling large parts of the harbour foreshore for defence and quarantine), that Commonwealth immigration and economic policies had a direct impact on the city’s growth and that the Commonwealth authorities (such as the Department of Civil Aviation’s responsibility for Sydney’s airport) frequently made decisions affecting Sydney.

The Cumberland County Council’s Plan exploration of alternative airport sites was to go the way of their other feted and failed proposal for ameliorating over-development in Sydney, the Green Belts, an idea developed in post-war Britain. The Green Belt was designed to encircle the pre-1950s city with parkland and was to be paralleled with a public transport link. These urban delights were forever postponed when the State Minister for Local Government released part of the designated green belt for development in 1959.

The problem of aircraft noise had been commented on by Sydney residents throughout the 1940s and 50s, but the distinct lack of sympathy from planners and public authorities can be detected in reports that counted aircraft noise as part of the process of modernisation. In 1947, a Sydney Morning Herald writer even attributed aircraft noise to natural causes telling people who were “awakened late at night or too early in the morning by the sound of an aircraft liner passing low over your home” to blame the North-East wind. Instead of human agency being responsible for the noise, the wind, a ‘fairy tale’ character was responsible:

---

It is no use metaphorically raising your fist -- or actually raising it, if you are given to that sort of demonstration -- at the invisible pilot, for he has nothing to do with the circumstances that cause him to fly above you. Nor is the airline guilty, or even the Department of Civil Aviation... The North-east wind, the vigorous but less vicious brother of South-east wind Esquire, that twisty, red-nosed villain of Ruskin's fairytale, "King of the Golden River" is the real culprit.33

The article, appearing in a feature section of the paper and accompanied by a map of minimum altitude approaches to the airport, proceeded to give lengthy descriptions of the landing procedures at Mascot, letting readers know that there was no cause for worry when the planes flew alarmingly low over their houses and offices. After detailed exposition of aircraft weights, landing and takeoff speeds and climbing inclines for different models the author made clear exactly who the airport was designed for:

Complainers may see by now that nothing can be done about this low-flying business. Had those who originally placed Sydney's airport at Mascot thought about the matter and visualised the size and power of aircraft used in this year of grace, they might have gone farther away from the city. But that would have deprived air travellers of an advantage which Sydney has over most other city airfields in the world -- a short distance to travel between the airfield and the central assembly point in the city itself.34

The siting of the airport and its operations were then in a space 'beyond' popular dissent and criticism. The last words of the article were to be the last words in the unidirectional flow of discussion between 'residents' and 'planners': "Any angry householder who clambered to his roof would need a long broomstick indeed to reach the aircraft and give it an admonitory thump on the hull as it passed by!".35

The increase in plane sizes and movements at Mascot were of little concern to state and federal governments apart from how to design and fund new runway and terminal facilities during the 1950s. However, the effects of the new technology caused much anxiety at the local level. This concern revolved around what might happen to the inner-city after the new runway was constructed, and indeed exactly what those responsible for municipal matters should do about it. In May 1959, two months before the jets arrived, the Deputy Mayor of Canterbury Council warned a council meeting that the environmental consequences of the jet age would be detrimental, and that would be on top of the problems already facing the suburbs near the airport. Acknowledging that while "The noise is bad at present", Alderman Beaman predicted "When the overseas jet airlines begin using Mascot it will be at

34 Elliot, 'That Aeroplane Over Your Roof', p. 22.
35 Elliot, 'That Aeroplane Over Your Roof', p. 22.
least five times as bad.”36 He suggested that Canterbury Council should join a committee of councils including Randwick, Marrickville and Botany, that had been set up “to try to alleviate the nuisance from the jet aircraft” and most importantly, that the Council should fund legal action to “minimise the noise nuisance”.

According to the *Free Weekly*, however, the Council was far from unanimous on the proper course of action. Aldermen McLean and Schofield opposed the action, with McLean saying “Litigation would be a waste of money” and that “Council was going a bit too far to concern itself with noise nuisance from jets”. Schofield’s comments ended the article with the profoundly determinist view that “Council could not stand in the way of progress”.37

The report was illustrated by a picture of jet in flight over a city with the title “THIS ONE DOESN’T MAKE ANY NOISE”, and its caption ironically seemed to confirm that the plane must be very noisy, as the plane was “one of the huge jets of fleet of seven on which £500, 000 has been spent in installing silencer equipment.”38 Outside the jurisdiction of the local councils, the magic fix of technological ‘progress’, or the particular vision of the future to which many local, state and federal politicians were to commit their constituents throughout the fifties and sixties, would naturally find its own technical solutions to technical problems. This strategy demanded total commitment from all citizens to the collective vision of Sydney as a modern, world city, and Australia’s first stop on global jet routes. Finally and most dangerously, this total commitment did not allow suburban home subjects to express doubts about their belonging to this city.

If propeller aircraft movements over Sydney in the 1940s and early 50s were already acoustically uncomfortable and disturbing for inner-suburban residents, then the arrival of the jets was to confirm that the future was an unpleasant place to be -- unless, of course, you were inside an aeroplane.

---

37 ‘Alderman warns...’, p. 7.
38 ‘Alderman warns...’, p. 7.
The first of the new jets arrived in Sydney on 2 July 1959 after a trans-Pacific flight averaging 550 mph (885kph). The journey took sixteen hours and ten minutes, almost half the previous time taken for the distance. Five thousand people turned out to watch the jet land and many said they had come to see the arrival “because they had watched Sir Charles Kingsford Smith open another era in aviation more than 30 years ago”.

This flight was a different, more profoundly shocking experience for the crowd. Contrasted with to the adventurous gesture made by Kingsford Smith in the 1930s when his distance ‘conquering’ flight cohered Australians around a popular national hero, no-one knew the name of the pilot of the first Qantas jet flight. The acoustic transformations made by the jets to the environment had already started to fragment communal belongings to the modern city and now fatally divided the local residents from urbanites and national citizens. The experience of living within earshot of the airport after the jet’s arrival 1959 was not able to be recouped with in a discourse of national or civic pride in advanced technology. This is highlighted by a comment from a Marrickville Council Alderman, who was reported in the local Marrickville/Earlwood paper: “We don’t want to stop progress but the noise made by the jet is frightening. Surely the designers can do something to lessen the noise”.

This cry of protest, which was not an isolated one, is even more poignant when brought to bear on the promotional material distributed by the airlines on the cusp of the jet age. As the sounds of aircraft engines grew louder, the tones of the airline copywriters grew more hushed and susurrant:

Jet age quietness. You can hear a watch tick, event talk in whispers if you wish, while you enjoy almost “total quiet” flight, high in the sky where even silence is golden. There’s no pulsating throb and roar of engines, but a low, gentle hum. Later, unless you’re looking through the wide windows, you won’t even know you’ve touched down. But you will arrive relaxed and refreshed... right on time.

39 “Rather than assist in finding solutions to the problems of aircraft noise, the commercial airlines have turned a deaf ear”. Murray Schafer, The Tuning of the World, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1977, p. 87. Falling on Deaf Ears was also the title of the NSW Senate Select Committee Investigation into the Third Runway’s final report in 1995.
40 Daily Telegraph, July 3 1959; Jennifer Gall, From Bullocks to Boeing.
42 ‘Golden Jet booklet’, Reader’s Digest, May 1959, p. 84J.
This description of the sounds of the jet age comes from a booklet accompanying the May 1959 issue of Reader’s Digest magazine (see Fig. 7.1). The booklet’s cover advertised that this “Golden Jet Booklet has been specially bound in order that it may be detached and kept as a souvenir of Australia’s finest mainline fleet”. While a tiny line on the inside cover of the booklet discreetly drew attention to nature of the booklet as an ‘advertisement’, the copy and images of the booklet appear to be a factual report about Ansett-ANA’s leap into the jet age. Ansett was to be “first in Australia with the jet giants”, following Ansett’s purchase of Lockheed aircraft fitted with General Motor’s Allison engines. These were not strictly jet engines, but propeller-jets, so Ansett’s advertorial had to ‘borrow’ the ‘jet age’ rhetoric to lend its new domestic service the associations of speed, scientific navigation techniques and passenger comfort that the jets were understood to bring. “A new sensation in air travel...”, ‘Electra/Flight’ was to be “an enthralling experience of flight on the very threshold of space”.43

From ‘this’ future the ‘next’ future was visible in the interface between the jet age and the ‘space age’. Jet flight promised to take the traveller to the threshold of a new inter-planetary topography that challenged the geocentricity of earlier notions of humanity’s range of livable environments, by making outer space intimately available to the airline passenger. Deeply connected to the modernist narratives of progress discussed throughout this thesis, the positing of the jet as the stepping stone to outer space creates a fantasy of popular space travel that is continued throughout the booklet. Using space-age navigation techniques, the installation of ‘radar eyes’ allowed the Ansett-ANA planes to “probe miles ahead to guide the jet giant through calm corridors around or above ‘weather’”.44

But most strikingly the silence of outer space — as a vacuum is the only atmosphere where vibration will not produce sound — was magically transposed to the upper stratosphere, where the jets ‘spread their wings’:

There’s an exciting new sound in the skies! The jet giants are here, proudly spreading their wings in Australia and flying first for ANSETT-ANA. Faster, smoother, more luxurious that any airliners you have ever known before... After you walk the golden carpet to your waiting ANSETT-ANA airliner, you’ll notice how the richness of gold surrounds you on your flight. Inside, cabins carry a gold motif throughout their modern, colour-planned décor; everywhere, our Golden Jet insignia meets your eye...45

43 ‘Golden Jet booklet’, Reader’s Digest, May 1959, p. 84A.
44 ‘Golden Jet booklet’, Reader’s Digest, May 1959, p. 84G.
45 ‘Golden Jet booklet’, Reader’s Digest, May 1959, p. 84F.
It's new, all new... ANSETT-ANA.

Golden Jet Service

There's an exciting new sound in the skies. The jet giants are here, absolutely speeding their wings in Australia and flying the new ANSETT ANA 'Golden Jet Service' where, in the words of the Australia's best and youngest pilot, the Lockheed Electra and all new Viscount III are now flying times between eastern capitals by 90 minutes. Expect to the Melbourne-Sydney flight which now takes only 3 hours 30 minutes. Overall, with the new speed and luxury world, there's a exciting Golden Jet Service. Passengers sometimes drool over the new ANA exclusively offer the airlines and the service to make every flight a cherished memory.

After you walk the golden carpet to your waiting ANSETT ANA.

ANSETT-ANA
First in Australia with the jet giants

Fig 7.2 ‘It's all new... ANSETT-ANA’, ‘Golden Jet booklet’, Reader's Digest, May 1959, p. 84 F.
Jet age quietness. You can hear a watch tick, even talk or whisper if you wish, while you enjoy almost 'total quiet' flight, high in the sky where even silence is golden. Earlins forodiating theh and part of engines but a few gentle hums. Remember, a few looking through the isle windows may seem a few hours a board, but on arrival, rested and refresh. tigh. ote.

Jet age luxury. Seats and cutlery slides are finished with silver and gold and are equipped with cup service, paper glasses, and all special needs. There are infant seats and even a nursery for young children. But in addition, a wide selection of food and beverages are kept at the ready.

Jet age speed... with smoothness. The men on board are up to speed to meet the needs of passengers. They are ready to serve and meet any requests. The flight is smooth, and the passengers feel as if they are floating. The service is excellent, and the atmosphere is such that ASSISTANT JET FLIGHT is smooth and flight all the way.
The ‘golden silence’ of Electra/Flight was however only an internal silence, to be experienced by passengers inside the plane (see Fig 7.3). Advertising for the 707 jets, bought from Boeing and operated by Qantas, made similar claims about the “New Age of Travel Comfort”:

The radar-guided 550 miles-an-hour 707 Jet offers travellers a new and wonderful experience in time and space... In Qantas 707 Airliners you’ll fly far above the weather, so quiet, so secure and vibration-free you’ll find it hard to believe you’re travelling at 9 miles a minute.46

The advertising copy even associated the purity and cleanliness of nature with the interior of the plane: “Inside the aircraft is always as fresh and clean as a spring morning, thanks to the most complete air-conditioning ever installed in an aircraft. With the Qantas 707, it’s always ‘come on in -- the weather’s fine.'”47

The ‘jet age’ so deeply signified technical control of nature and the perfectibility of the human body through technology that women’s underwear could be ‘jet-age’, borrowing the associations of freedom and international glamour that the new technology embodied (see Fig 7.4). An advertisement for a new ‘American Styled Original by Berlei’ asked women to “step into jet-age comfort in ‘Sarong’” corselettes, girdles and bras. The ad showed a woman waving goodbye (or hello) in a ‘Sarong’ girdle, the brand name promising jet-age experiences of international travel to an exotic East. She also signalled her readiness to travel by holding a travel bag of the kind that airlines gave away to jet-setters in the 1960s.48 Earlier in this edition of the Sun Herald, aviation correspondent Jack Percival answered the question “What’s it like to travel in a jet airliner?”. His answer described the astounding proportions and power of the new planes:

When the pilot of a jet airliner turns on the power for takeoff an invisible hand gently pushes you back in your seat. The roar increases in intensity until the plane becomes airborne at about 160 mph. The roar, like a hurricane lashing a building, continues during the climb...when the planes reach cruising height and the power is pulled back to cruising requirements there is complete silence in the cabins... 49

The experience of jet flight, then, was an experience of transformation from one fairly familiar geographic space, ‘the ground’ of the everyday noises of the city to an unfamiliar and wondrous upper atmosphere of complete silence. The roar of the

49 Jack Percival, ‘Jets have come to the Pacific’, The Sun-Herald, 5 July 1959, p. 66.
Fig 7.4  ‘Berlei Bras -- Hordern Brothers -- Step into "jet-age" comfort’,
engines is left behind, a crucial moment for the traveller, as the silent space of the plane is ‘above’, ‘ahead of’ the maelstrom of the modern world and makes the leap into the future. Percival at least admitted that the jets did make noise, in contrast to the magically silent vision of advertisments: “Most jet airliners make a lot of noise on the ground, and the airport authorities at London, New York, Chicago and San Francisco and Los Angeles are receiving a growing flood of protests.”50 He also admitted that the diffusion of jet-based transport into urban centres was going to be problematic and that even Sydney was not ready for the kinds of new technologies that were being developed: “Most of the world’s so called international airports, including Sydney have runways too short to handle the biggest jet airliners with a full load of fuel, passengers and freight. Qantas has a technical advantage because it has ordered the smaller Boeing.”51

The space of modernity is split here into two distinct levels that is fundamentally mediated by the jet. The first level is the heterotopic, messy, contested site of city living, where ‘grounded’ subjects experienced loud and unwanted sounds, experienced and categorised as noise pollution and only those who could afford the fare were allowed entry to the second, higher level of ‘golden silence’. These two spaces were sealed off from each other by a relation to modernity that was formed by economic class. Only those who could afford the most expensive kind of air travel, as non-jet travel was still filled with the ‘roar’ of propeller engines, were to be admitted to this silent space. Modernity’s others, defined here by their limited access to economic mobility would have to stay in the first heterotopic space, and consume the utopian jet space second-hand, perhaps by buying jet-age products like the Berlei ‘Sarong’. This second-order consumption holds within it the promise of mass travel, but also points to the coming normalisation of air travel, as the fares for long-distance trips were coming within reach of mass-consumers, bringing the jet-age within the reach of most, if not all, Australians. No longer unique and distant from the crowd, air travel would become increasingly banal after the 1960s. But at this key moment, the jet was still part of an exciting world beyond most consumers.

Externally, the jets made a sound that could possibly be exciting if it were a unique and isolated sound event that could be witnessed by an appreciative listening subject. After 1959, not many people could actually hear this as an exciting sound, as increased frequency and amplitude of aircraft noise created the bass-heavy sonic vibrations of the jets. This low-frequency noise converged in a sound wave that overwhelmed the background noises of the city, and a new relationship between

50 Jack Percival, ‘Jets have come to the Pacific’, p. 66.
51 Jack Percival, ‘Jets have come to the Pacific’, p. 66.
industrial noise and the soundscape of the city now emerged. As Murray Schafer has detailed in his numerous comparative studies of noise regulation and sound perception, the ambient din of industrial production has created a ‘congested’ sound environment, or ‘soundscape’ in modernity. The term ‘soundscape’ is analogous with ‘landscape’, and is used to describe “the sonic environment surrounding the sentient”, or more precisely “a sensuous geography derived from the ears”, rather than just the eyes.52

The soundscape is to be understood as “the total acoustic environment, including all noises, music, natural, human and technological sounds.” Increased volumes and frequency saturations of technological noise, in the form of background noise from machinery, has produced what Schafer calls a ‘lo-fi’ soundscape in which individual sounds are increasingly hard to distinguish and some sounds have completely disappeared. ‘Hi-fi’ soundscapes are ones in which each sound event can be clearly distinguished over a large distance, or expanded ‘acoustic horizon’.54

‘Soundscapes’ are distinguished from ‘soundfields’, as the soundfield is “the acoustic space generated by the sound source, that is the area spreading out from the sounding or voicing agent”.55 Thus the soundfield of the jet aircraft, as one of the loudest sounds to ever be produced by a machine, can be understood to be greater in range and dimension than any other sound in the city. Jet aircraft also have a moving soundfield in two dimensions, descension/ascension and towards/away from the listener. The physical distribution of aircraft noise along flightpaths therefore affects large numbers of people in very different ways, and cannot be traced to exactly one source point or location. Sometimes described as a ‘screeching’ or ‘whining’, aircraft noise includes changing high frequencies as well as the overall pattern of low frequency noise. The low frequencies cause shaking and vibration of fixed objects like walls and windows as well as movable small objects like pictures and ornaments inside houses. Aircraft noise also profoundly challenges one’s sense of subjective placement in the landscape, shifting one’s sense of being a moving self in the acoustic environment to being a part of the ground that is moved past by a very fast object.

---

54 Rodaway, pp. 84-87.
55 Rodaway, pp. 84-85.
Because of the strength and frequency of such sound events in contemporary cities, aircraft noise confounds aural geographies and the very terms of soundscape analysis. Aircraft noise has become both ‘keynote’ and ‘signal’ for suburbs under the flight path. The concept of ‘keynote’ in soundscape analysis describes a sound that is “heard often enough in a particular society to form a background against which other sounds are perceived” and ‘signal’ is defined as “figure or foreground: ‘any sound to which the attention is particularly directed’”. Aircraft noise could also be understood as a ‘soundmark’, although a particularly problematic one, as a term derived from ‘landmark’: “a community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by people in that community”.

These useful and perceptive terms from Schafer’s analyses represented a ‘Foucauldian turn’ in socio-cultural acoustic studies when he first initiated his World Soundscape Project in the 1970s. As a turn away from a negative practice of ‘noise regulation’, inherently nostalgic and simplistically concerned with the elimination of noise pollution -- which Schafer had found ineffective and “feeble in a society that tended to equate increasing noise with progress” -- soundscape studies offered an obverse approach to the problem of noisy environments: positive education. This about-face in approaches to noise regulation seeks instead to ‘manage’ or ‘tune’ the world, so that cacophony is turned into something more like symphony.

The connection that Schafer made between hearing and perception of places has made a significant contribution to complex and situation-specific analyses of cultural geographies, and has continued relevance to making engaged and useful interventions into current debates around place, communal identity and technological change. But I believe that it is critically important to recognise the emergence of soundscape studies at the same time as global projects of modernisation and their attendant proliferation of technologies of travel and communication. These changes have profoundly transformed the urban (sonic) environment. The birth of the methods and object of soundscape analysis parallels a sense of sonic dislocation, or acoustic overload among urban dwellers in the late twentieth century. The soundscape designer, something like an auditory psychoanalyst, is a therapist of city space, looking for dysfunctional and pathological sound environments and returning them to equilibrium or at least ‘normal’ functioning. Soundscape designers need to be far more than therapists,

however, to mitigate the effects of massive auditory overload to the point of hearing loss, that have triggered the struggles over Sydney airport since the 1950s. Because aircraft create significant air pollution, as well as noise pollution, the problems of airport operation in urban space cannot just be approached as a purely acoustic one.

The remaining chapters of this thesis elaborate the effects of such acoustic congestion and the resulting perceived disruptions to place from the perspective of those living in the inner west from the late 1950s to the early 1990s. To indicate the aftereffects of the choices made by planners in the 1950s, a quote from 'The Plane Truth', a performance work about the airport discussed at length in the final chapter, illustrates the sense of a 'disfigurement' and a 'shattering' of place that has characterised the post-1950s inner-city suburbs: "The verb to LIVE no longer applies to those who dwell under or near the flight path. To ENDURE is closer to their experience."59 The new soundscape of the jet age, while only partially audible in 1959, has been under construction since machine engines started operation in the seventeenth century. Before I further discuss the reaction to the jets in Sydney, I wish to consider how this notion of 'noise as progress' in Schafer's studies of urban experiences of acoustic alienation illuminates the relationship between sound and the modern sublime.

the sacred (and sublime) noise of modernity

To develop his soundscape analysis, Schafer identifies a procession of increasingly noisy machines from about 1760 to 1840, including mechanical weaving machines in the English textile industry, leading to the invention of the power loom in 1785.60 These machines relied on new materials for their durability and speed, principally metals such as cast iron and steel as well as new sources of energy to power them such as coal and steam. Thus, from about the early nineteenth century new factories, lit by gas, could operate twenty-four hours a day, and were often located close to the centre of cities so that workers could attend their sixteen hour shifts.61 The soundscape of the industrial revolution, superseded by what Schafer calls the 'electric revolution' was characterised by fast, repetitive sounds that blended into monotonous 'flat-lines' of increasingly greater volumes.

60 Schafer, The Tuning of the World, pp. 71-73.
61 Schafer, The Tuning of the World, p. 72.
Schafer’s list of industrial sound events illustrates the increasing intensities of sound that have shaped the acoustic profiles of workplaces and urban centres since the 1800s. This list progresses by volume, measured by the decibel as a unit of sound intensity. The decibel is a relational measure and proceeds logarithmically, so a difference of 20dB between two sounds means that the higher has ten times the amplitude (or is one hundred times more powerful than the lower).\(^2\) Hence a jet aircraft taking off (120dBA) has thirty five times greater amplitude than a steam engine (85dBA), or is about three hundred and fifty times more powerful:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound Event</th>
<th>Decibel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steam engine</td>
<td>85dBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing works</td>
<td>87dBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diesel-electric generator house</td>
<td>96dBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screw-heading machine</td>
<td>101dBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaving shed</td>
<td>104dBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawmill chipper</td>
<td>105dBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalwork grinder</td>
<td>106dBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodplaning machine</td>
<td>108dBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal saw</td>
<td>110dBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock band</td>
<td>115dBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boiler works, hammering</td>
<td>118dBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jet taking off</td>
<td>120dBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocket launching</td>
<td>160dBA(^3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As this list demonstrates, from the 1780s, when the steam engine was first coupled to transportation and would have come within earshot of most residents of European cities, to the second half of the twentieth century, when jets are present in the refrain of city living in most, if not all, urban centres across the globe, everyday sound events in urban environments have massively increased in power and range. Sounds between 70 and 85 dBA heard continuously over long periods are generally accepted as the level at which the human hearing is affected, and sounds above this level can cause temporary pain and permanent hearing loss.\(^4\) Some of these sounds have been subject to regulation, either by moving the source of the noise away from residential areas and continued monitoring by noise zoning, or by regulation of the times of day at which noise can be made. Obviously some sounds are considered more ‘noisy’ and therefore more subject to regulation than others. Schafer makes this distinction by contrasting popular singing or making music on holy days, which was seen as a transgression of religious rituals, with monopolised sound production

---


\(^3\) Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*, p. 75-77.

\(^4\) Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*, p.183. Schafer notes that this condition was called ‘boilermaker’s disease’, as factory workers who riveted boilers together for steam locomotion were the first known victims of industrial hearing loss.
for political or religious purposes, such as those when music was to be made inside churches or temples for the benefit of God.⁶⁵

What is particularly important here is Schafer's notion of 'Sacred Noise' which he associates with formations of power in modernity. He traces a genealogy of this noise from pre-modern conceptions of sacred natural sounds (thunder, volcanoes, storms, heavy seas) to the radio and television announcers of the twentieth century. His argument is centred on the social and cultural phenomenologies of noise, sound and power that produce silences as well as sounds. This association of noise and power "...descends from God to priest to the industrialist, and more recently to the broadcaster and aviator... Wherever Noise is granted immunity from human intervention, there will be found a seat of power."⁶⁶ The transformation of social power from nature to the church to the economy organises a new kind of sublimity through sound: the world constructed by international trade and industry might be terrifying and exciting, but it is also essentially uncontrollable and self-determining.

Thus the sound of the jets was heard differentially and depending on whether one was inside or outside modernity: 'sacred' and 'elevated' beyond human intervention by modernisers, and troublesome and in need of control by those who stood outside the airport and underneath the flightpath.

The relation between space and sound is made clear in the definition of 'Sacred Noise' as contingent on its emission from a public and official source. All other disturbing noise is seen to intrude on and emanate from private, popular and domestic activities. As Schafer makes clear "to have the Sacred Noise is not merely to make the loudest noise; rather it is a matter of having the authority to make it without censure".⁶⁷ This is reflected in the tangled history of noise regulation in the twentieth century, that seeks to contain and regulate the private and the popular on a local level, but to allow the majority of people to suffer the 'Sacred Noises' of modernity: traffic noise, public transport announcements and aircraft noise.

Interestingly, Schafer does not draw on the notion of the sublime to explain his association of sound, power and the sacred. However, it is only short step from the circumscribing of acoustic power in modernity that Schafer describes, to understanding such noisy experiences as constructing modern moments of the sublime. A considerable discourse on loud and powerful sounds as instances of sublimity pre-exist Schafer's studies. Edmund Burke in 1759, just before the spinning jennys and cotton gins started production, devoted a whole section of his

---

⁶⁶ Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*, p. 76.
⁶⁷ Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*, p. 76.
Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful to ‘Sound and Loudness’. Section XVII of Part II of Burke’s Enquiry appears between the description of sublime visions (‘Magnitude’, ‘Infinity’, ‘Colour considered as productive of the Sublime’ etc.) and the final sections devoted to the sublime, which deal with the role of smell, taste and bodily feeling in producing sublime sensations (‘Bitters and Stenches’ and ‘Feeling –Pain’). Burke begins his enquiry into sublime sounds by stating that “The eye is not the only organ of sensation, by which a sublime passion may be produced... Excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action and fill it with terror.” Burke’s taxonomy of experience corresponds with the Kantian definition of the sublime as an experience of the limit of experience, of a physical and semiotic excess that triggers conflicting feelings of pain and pleasure. Thus for Burke, “the sublime is an idea belonging to self-preservation” and “it is therefore one of the most affecting we have”.

If the noise of the industrial soundscape is sublime in both Burke and Kant’s terms, Schafer’s notion of the sacred noise could be extended to describe those sounds which mark a beyond of human comprehension. Hearing such sounds as sublime constitutes a discursive strategy that places the sources of acoustic power in a technological society within a zone of unrepresentability, unstoppable noises and political excess. Within this zone, the operations of industry and commerce become naturalised and essential to the continued progress of modernity: the human subject becomes a suffering witness to the sublime visions, sounds, tastes, smells and sensations of the modern world.

Because the sublime both confirms and threatens the boundaries and sureties of the individual human subject, it is important to underscore and recap the social and cultural orderings upon which the perception of the sublime object rests. As the treatises, enquiries and essays on the sublime attest, it takes much hard work and the consideration of many examples to develop an appreciation of the sublime. The sublime moment is only possible within an aestheticised relationship between the subject of perception and the object of its gaze or acoustic attendance. Although there are important differences between sound objects and visual objects, between the self -- and the environment -- constructed hearing and looking, the relationship of sublimity for both is one of distance and separation. The privilege of the individual who appreciates the sublime is their occupation of the tenuous boundaries between self-preservation and annihilation. The sublime is constituted in

---

68 Burke, p. 150.
69 Burke, p. 160.
the moment that the ambiguous object, as a doubled and doubling experience, is confronted. As Mary Douglas shows in her work on defilement and taboo, social classifications such as clean/unclean, profane/sacred, pure/impure produce anomaly and ambiguities, and this civilised and educated perception might be the mark of transcendence of the everyday through its aestheticisation: “It is not always an unpleasant experience to confront ambiguity… Aesthetic pleasure arises from the perceiving of inarticulate forms.”

This focus on perception illustrates that it is critically important to reflect on the relationships between self and world, subject and object that are configured by the category of the sublime, rather than to apprehend it as an inherent and essential quality of certain objects.

In terms of aircraft noise, and the later resistances to the continued development of Kingsford Smith as Sydney’s main international airport, the discourses of the planners, politicians and nation-builders of the first half of the twentieth century centre on this elevation of the sound of the jets to a place beyond experience, to locating the effects of the airport within the topos of a modern industrial ‘sacred’ whose noises could not be stopped nor censured. While the ‘excessive loudness’ of storms, the hubbub of the urban crowd, and the cries of wild animals experienced by Edmund Burke in the 1750s is quantitatively radically different from the 120dBA of a jet taking off from a runway within an urban area, it is not that qualitatively different in the kinds of social orderings that such acoustic experiences perform. Where Schafer himself wishes to place aircraft noise is apparent from the title of the section of The Tuning of the World on the noise of supersonic aircraft: “The Big Sound Sewer of the Sky”. By the same process, relationships between humans, nature and culture are constituted in habituated critical reactions to sound events. Whether one perceives industrial and natural noise as sublime, abject or banal depends on one’s relationship to nature and culture. Reactions to sound events show that they are not inherently polluting, but demonstrate difference, desire, loss and longing. The undated ‘International Sound Preference Survey’ cited by Schafer at the end of The Tuning of the World substantiates this. A brief and limited selection of data from this study illustrates the radical contingency of the meaning of sounds and points to a much more context-based, fluid relation between abjection and aesthetic pleasure when it comes to listening to the urban soundscape. For example, of the 72 people surveyed in Port Antonio, Jamaica, one hundred percent found the sounds of animals ‘unpleasant’, and none found aircraft noise ‘unpleasant’. Seven percent of Port Antonians actually found aircraft noise to be a ‘pleasant’ sound. By a fairly

---

71 Schafer, The Tuning of the World, p. 86.
simplistic contrast, and not to skew the results of the survey too greatly, twenty percent of 217 people surveyed in Zurich, Switzerland, actually found the sounds of animals ‘pleasant’ while thirty-six percent found aircraft noise ‘unpleasant’. Thus Schafer’s own judgements about the meanings and uses of sound and noise, while extremely perceptive and ground-breaking, finally lack a relativism that could actually uncover the relationship of shared meanings to the operation of everyday perception. Further research on acoustic perception has shown that sound is not perceived as an object, but rather as an ‘event’ or scene. The notion of the ‘event’ implies that sound is not a ‘thing’ but has motivation and direction, and is part of a narrative of self-location. Schafer’s study must be taken as a reaction to a particular set of circumstances and to elaborate an aesthetics of urban place, rather than a universally applicable model that could achieve a perfect sound environment.

These orderings are thus contingent on citizens self-understanding of their relation to ‘nature’ and ‘culture’. If the urban citizen accepts and participates in narratives of progress that constitute technology as a positive, yet autonomous force, thus closer to nature than culture, loud, unwanted, sounds are more likely to be disregarded. Sound events, especially loud ones, evoke aesthetic moments along the “gradient on which laughter, revulsion and shock belong at different points and intensities”. Whether aircraft noise is understood as pollution and thus inherently defiling and abject, or as sublime and thus arousing passion, enabling wonder and ultimately transcendence, is literally a matter of perspective. Those temporally and spatially too close, too familiar with the airport, were then and still remain unable to grasp its sublimity. The warnings about the jets that Alderman Beaman made before their arrival was from the point of view of someone living “a mile from Mascot”, neither within the aerial itself nor far enough away to apprehend it purely visually, and so underneath the flight path.

So as the reactions to the arrival of the first Qantas jets filtered through the local newspapers in the first few days and weeks of July 1959, local councillors expressed their suspicion of this nationalist sublime and its manifestations. On 2 July 1959, the day that the first Qantas jet arrived in Australia, the Daily Telegraph reported that “Residents of suburbs near the airport believe heat and fumes from the new airliner will damage paint on houses and cars”, and that “listeners” appointed by Botany

---

72 Schafer, The Tuning of the World, pp. 268-270.
74 Douglas, p. 37.
75 ‘Alderman warns…’, p. 7.
Council or “observers on duty... would report to the next meeting”. These fears were expressed despite the creation of positive expectation in the first part of the article and the optimistic attitude of Qantas, who had planned and advertised the flight path of the jet, when they let Sydney’s and New South Wales’s coastal inhabitants know that the jet would “fly low over Sydney at 1.45pm” circling “over Qantas House in the city before landing at Mascot at 2pm.” (see Fig 7.5) Even before arriving in Sydney, the plane had displayed itself to a local public constructed as excited and expectant: “The airliner’s pilot will fly along the NSW coast at less than 3000 feet to enable people in coastal towns to view the new jet.”

Despite being part of the invited audience attending the welcome ceremony for the jet at Mascot, which included an ‘RAAF band’, the Mayors of Rockdale, Botany, Randwick, Marrickville and Kogarah were not as enthusiastic as other officials at the event. Ald. Elphick, Mayor of Botany, had said before the arrival of the jet that “the noise of the 707 taking off and landing at night would disturb residents of districts surrounding Mascot airport”, a claim that prompted a quick refutation by the visiting President of Boeing, who travelled in the jet from Seattle. Mr Boeing suggested making a simple test to prove the superiority of the jet engine over previous technology:

Many people when they first hear the 707 think it is louder than an ordinary plane. They only imagine this because the sound of the jet is unusual. When people become accustomed to the sound of the 707 they barely notice it. This is because the 707 is fitted with million-dollar suppressors. New York authorities were also concerned with the problem of noise, so they hired an outside expert to make a series of tests. These experts, using special equipment, compared the noise level of the 707 with a propeller driven plane taking off, landing and flying back and forth above them. The tests proved conclusively the 707 was quieter.

---

76 ‘Jet airliner to circle over Sydney’, Daily Telegraph, July 2, 1959, p. 5.
77 ‘Jet airliner to circle...’, p. 5.
78 ‘Jet airliner to circle...’, p. 5.
Fig 7.5 ‘Sydney sees jet airliner’, *Daily Telegraph*, 3 July 1959, front page.
Allen concluded the novelty of the sound of the aircraft was what caused the perception of ‘noisiness’, as “the sound the 707 makes is different, and attracts the attention of people who hear it. They are used to the sound of conventional aircraft and do not hear them even though they make more noise.”

This denial of noise was continued in televisual representations such as a Movietone News item titled ‘707 Jet halves Pacific Timetable’. The film showed the jet taking off from Mascot, but without any synchronous sound on the sound track. Instead, an enthusiastic male voice filled the silence and described the incredible speed of the jet, which would make travel to the USA twice as fast as previously possible. The jet very obviously left a black trail of smoke as it took off, an image repeated in many photo spreads of the jets (see Figs 7.6 and 7.7).

Aviation journalists who scrutinised the operation of the new plane were happy to report the sounds of the new plane were nothing to worry about. The Herald’s correspondent who had been aboard the plane on its flight from San Francisco was thrilled with his flight and thought that the new plane deserved its description as a “90-seater Jet Fighter”. He optimistically believed that “Australian capital cities, particularly Sydney have nothing to fear from the big jets. Admittedly, there is considerable jet-blast noise on take-off. But the jet liner scorches away at 435 miles per hour and the noise quickly dissipates.”

Residents of Botany surveyed by the Herald did not think that the noise was as bad as they “had been led to believe” and a Mrs R. Gray of Lot 5 West Botany Street reported that it was “a bit startling for the moment” but the new aeroplane “didn’t seem to affect the TV set as some other aircraft do”.

This perception of the ‘quietness’ of the jet was further relativised in many reports that compared the pollution caused by the jets to other kinds of pollutants in southern suburbs of Sydney. A cartoon in the Daily Telegraph that illustrated the argument of an editorial titled ‘Smoke can’t hold the jet age’ showed Botany councillors dressed in mayoral robes holding a placard declaring “DOWN WITH barely visible in the mingled smoke from the jet and the Bunnerong power station (see Fig 7.8). The editorial downplayed the effect of the fumes from the jet because they dispersed within a “few minutes” whereas the “pall of smoke from Bunnerong... hangs each day and all day over large areas around the airport”.

---

82 ‘Boeing brings Blue Riband to Australia’, Sydney Morning Herald, 3 July 1959, p. 6.
84 ‘Smoke can’t hold back the jet age’, Daily Telegraph, 7 July 1959, p. 2.
Fig 7.6  ‘Boeing’s Mascot Take-off’, Daily Telegraph, 7 July 1959, p. 1.
Fig 7.7  ‘Black trail behind second boeing’, Sydney Morning Herald, 11 July 1959, p. 3.
Fig 7.8 Cartoon by Tanner, 'Botany council – Down with the boeing jet', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 July 1959, p. 2.
editor of the *Daily Telegraph* a few days later written (somewhat implausibly) by Carolyn Jones (aged 16) of Maroubra. She had not heard the jet arrive on Monday, although she “listened carefully... as I was at home” (she did not explain why she was not at school) and was moved to write after she heard Ald. Elphick on the news. She advised Elphick to:

> cease acting like a second-rate Hollywood starlet seeking publicity and, if he is seriously concerned about the health of the residents of his municipality, that he do something about the foul smells which emanate from the factories, woolstores, etc., in the Botany area. This would be much more practical and far less expensive than building a new airport.\(^6\)

These comparisons to other pollutants and downplaying of the jet’s problems became remarkably familiar over the next few days, and seemed to be a deliberate public relations strategy emanating from Qantas itself. When the second plane left the airport on 10 July, four noticeable black trails of heavy smoke emanated from the jet engines. In response to the Labor Member of Parliament for Watson, Mr Cope calling the airport a ‘farce’ after watching the plane take off, a Qantas official was quick to point out that the plane’s smoke ‘broke up’ before it reached the ground, unlike the unsightly pollution from local industry. According to the un-named spokesman, “visitors to Mascot had only to turn their heads to see smoke belching continuously from St. Peter’s rubbish dump, Bunnerong and other industrial centres”.\(^6\) As soon as the end of July though, the director of Qantas, Hudson Fysh was relieved to write to the Department of Civil Aviation that the fuss had died down and “Even the newspapers are now being silent on smoke and noise”.\(^7\)

The negative impact of the jets could be made trifling by comparison with other industries, but this comparison would become less apparent in the 1960s and 70. Firstly, these industries started to disappear from around the airport because aviation technologies needed more and more space to expand, while at the same time more residential housing was built near the airport. Secondly, the industries themselves were transformed by emissions regulations. Eventually those who sought to justify the airport’s location by comparison with other industries could no longer try to displace attention onto other sources of pollution. As Marrickville councillors argued in mid-July 1959, even those industries that the aviation companies blamed for local pollution were subject to regulation. The only course of action for the councils as Aldermen Kendrick and Gillam had warned in May, was to form a

---

\(^6\) ‘Youth’s view on the jet’, *Daily Telegraph*, 9 July 1959, p. 2.

\(^6\) ‘Mascot Jet Port “Farce”’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 July 1959, p. 3.

\(^7\) Cable from Fysh to Beall, 30 July 1959, DCA correspondence (1943-68), A A SP1844.
coalition of councils “to stop this latest menace”. The menace included air pollution as well as unwanted noise, but after cleaner burning fuels and engines were adopted in the 1970s, the smoke from the engines was less noticeable. The sound of the jets was also slightly reduced by improved engine design, but the trends noted by planners in the 1950s, of a doubling of aircraft movements every ten years was to continue into the 1970s.

bad modernities

Despite the discursive attempts discussed above to separate the space of the present into the anti-modern past, behind and below, and the technologised future, above and beyond they were really all part of the same process. As the delightful cartoon by Molnar published on 7 July showed, the airport, as the most modern part of the modernist city, was now itself ‘under a cloud’ (see Fig.7.9). But to admit this would be to admit that perhaps modernity, as it was being realised in Sydney, was not going to make the city the clean, ordered and fundamentally better place that it was supposed to be. The crucial fissures in this modernist vision were denied by the increasingly improbable utopian visions disseminated by aircraft manufacturers and politically conservative officials.

The consistent critiques of the airport made by Labor politicians were partly fuelled by attempts to pacify their electorates. But they also reflect their commitment to a vision of modernity that acknowledges and invites dialogue about its aims and effects, rather than silencing and negating opposition. As I will argue in the concluding chapter of this thesis, the decision of the Hawke Labor government in the late 80s delivered a fatal blow this vision for their constituents and dissenting politicians. The sense of betrayal and displacement that this created has been played out in representations of the airport well before the opening of the third runway at Mascot in 1994. This moment of betrayal was foreshadowed in the growing dissent to the national vision of progress that was embedded in the post-war reconstruction project. The jets signalled a semiotic and experiential overload that was construed as a discursive split in the late 1950s: depending on your position, the airport signalled the arrival of an international space that was inevitable, exciting, visionary and unquestionable in its effects, or this space, if not controlled, could be destructive,

"If I may coin a phrase, sir, we are under a cloud."

Fig 7.9 Cartoon by Molnar, 'If I may coin a phrase, sir, we are under a cloud', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 July 1959, p. 2.
annoying, unpleasant and possibly life-threatening. This chapter has argued that perceptions of aircraft noise as either abject and sublime must also take note of the socio-historical construction of these categories of experience.

As the sublime object is excessively distant, alive, new, strange, and uplifting, the abject moment is provoked by that which is excessively intimate, dead, old, excremental. The shifts in registers of experience that the differing perceptions of aircraft noise constituted in the 1950s were produced by a concurrent shift in the ground of acceptability of urban noise. While both emotions are constituted upon a sense of confounded and disturbed boundaries, and they reflect different spatial arrangements of self and other, and of the possibility of community.

What is attempted in official discourse, from the 1920s and continuing until the 1990s, is an aesthetics of technological noise, that seeks to transform it from ‘noise’ in its definition as interference, disruption, excess, to an experience of sublimity. It appears however that the jet represents the threshold at which residents of Sydney found this discourse untenable and the balance of terror and wonder that produces ‘sublime passion’ or an ‘exciting new sound’ finally unmanageable. The arrival of the jets brought a polluting overload of noise and smoke. This led to a crucial re-evaluation of the powers of national governments to regulate and control the acoustic, physical and symbolic space of the airport interface with the city of Sydney.

The official policing of industrial sound through noise regulation laws, monitored at local council level, constituted local industry as within ‘local’ space, but increasingly the airport was solidifying its position as a national space, mediating the global but ultimately superseding any local regulation or disciplinary actions. The noises emanating from the jets were real, but official discourses on the planning and future development of the urban environment sought to diagnose those who heard the noise, rather than sublime sounds modernity as ‘abject’; as failed modern subjects. To the enthusiasts for the jet age, the noise of the jets was just a bad dream, from which all citizens would awake when the troublesome protesters realised that the jet-age had arrived and they embraced all the benefits that would flow from the new speeds of travel. Always attendant to any undoing of the sublime moment, the official vision of utopian modernity forbade any expression of suffering or discontent. The alliance between airline companies and public authorities sought raise the urban citizen’s threshold of tolerance to noise in keeping with the increased production of sounds, wanted and unwanted in the urban setting. This repression of its failures through a marginalisation of the non-euphoric subjects of modernity
produced an ‘unofficial conscious’ of modernity. Ultimately unable to be just part of the background, the very presence of aircraft noise was now perceived as symbolic of a corruption of modernity to the ear of the outsider. In Sydney after 2 July 1959, modernity was no longer singular, and its unified narrative of progress had collapsed with a strange and resounding noise.

The only way that this would not be heard would be with earplugs, as a Mr Higginson from Concord suggested in a letter to the editor on 9 July:

As we are living in an age of progress and must keep abreast of other countries, I feel that if residents and workers who are worried by the noise were to adopt the use of sound absorbent type of earplug, as is the practice overseas, that they would obtain great relief. I myself have found this practice of great benefit when travelling, or in the vicinity of undue noise.

This image is a telling one, as it indicates the will to ‘not listen’ in public space. The meaning of the word to ‘hear’ also means to ‘understand’: if no-one is listening, then no-one is taking account of the dialogues and exchanges with other people that are part of the production of social space. This image, of not being able to hear each other or converse in a normal way, of being isolated and interrupted was now central to the collective experience of place for inner Sydney residents, yet not ‘official’ because the loudness of the planes was not supposed to be a problem. The next chapters explore the dynamics and contents of this unofficial conscious and the after-effects of these denials.

part three:

Strangers within the gates
CHAPTER EIGHT:

Arrivals and arrivals: the new inter-nation

This thesis has traced the problems posed by the airport's location, and these final chapters in particular focus on moments at which city planners offered solutions to those problems. I have chosen these moments in the planning history of the airport because they signify breaks and crises in the narration of that history. These events brought together the radical possibility of change at the same time as they tended towards an unchanging repetition of existing structures and tensions. This process seems to point to a spectacular progression of the *sign* of change, of modernising forces seizing hold of the site of the airport inside the space of the global, without ever truly instituting the promises of modernity that it offers. This process of selective transformation and the constitution of continuity within change becomes particularly apparent in the representations of aviation in the 1970s. At the peak of the 'jet age', a time characterised by the realisation of high modernist ideals in urban form, representations of the airport connected this site of national futures to the supposedly outmoded and colonial past. While looking forward most forcefully to the future, the airport was implicated within a narrative of 'arrival' that collapsed discourses on the 'conquest of the air' with the colonisation of the land of Australia.

Within this spatio-temporal frame, nationalist desires for Australia to be as modern and global as possible had to work against local interests who tried to remind planners of the 'problem' of the airport's location in the city. This dissent challenged modernist narratives of progress, and as discussed in the previous chapter, particularly articulations of urban and suburban belongings to national identity, that cast development of the airport as the outcome of technological progress. In this chapter, I outline the emergence of a discourse on 'internationality' that was developed in descriptions of the airport as well as in the architecture of the new terminal building itself. This 'internationality' must be read within and against national-historical narratives that emerged paradoxically at this very moment of hyper-modernity. Fears and desires surrounding Sydney's new status as a 'world city' set in train a re-inscription of the city within its colonial and imperial origins. As a chronotopic movement, the discursive and material construction of the modernity of the new terminal at Mascot within national and colonial histories

281
underlines the modern as only possible in “connection with that which has already been there”.¹

Proceeding within this speculation on the exclusions and tensions within the modernist sublime that has been under investigation in this thesis, I examine some of the features of this modernising process in the 1970s. This discussion begins with an outline of the defining characteristics of the new terminal, reflected in descriptions of it before it was actually opened. These understanding of its design as a site of ‘time’ rather than ‘space’ reflected influential ideas on the treatment of space in modernist public buildings. The next section takes a close look at the events surrounding the opening of the terminal and its unveiling to the public which constructed a bizarre interplay between the spatial and the temporal, the technologically advanced and the inherently primitive, in the visit of the British Royal Family to the airport. This intertextual process is displayed in the event of the new terminal’s official ‘launch’ by the Queen of England, which was deliberately timed to coincide with the 1970 celebration of the Bicentenary of British exploration of Australia.

The final section of the chapter examines a series of statements about the planned third runway, which was eventually opened in 1994, but was anticipated during the 1980s as the Mascot site became increasingly overloaded. This section argues that Mascot becomes irretrievably sidelined from the narrative of modernity as progress, as the urban order it constitutes is no longer tenable within broader notions of urban dwelling. As the debates over flight paths, insulation, ‘noise sharing’, land resumption continued it was the (still undecided) second Sydney airport that became the aviation utopia: all would be solved if the airport was moved ‘out’ of the city. The second airport instead condensed and coalesced the modernist dreams of the technocrat, as Mascot was overburdened with negative associations following the struggles over the third runway and the resulting impossibility of a coherence of communal desires in narratives of technological progress.

Sydney’s golden pathway

In the late 60s, the old ‘overseas’ terminal buildings at Mascot were torn down to make way for the new ‘international’ terminal. The new terminal would be

accompanied by a new 13,000 foot runway, needed for the larger Boeing 747 'Jumbo jets' and supersonic Concorde to land at Mascot. The first 747 flights would be Pan-Am flights direct to Hong Kong, Manila and Honolulu, and could carry nearly 500 passengers. The new jets, designed for the era of mass passenger travel, weighed 300 tons and needed nearly double the distance for take-off and landing, as well as more extensive passenger and freight handling areas.

The massive scale of infrastructure needed for the new jets "had created world-wide airport problems" according to a report to Parliament by the Director General of Civil Aviation in 1969.2 The report noted that, fortunately for the Department, the terminal redesign at Sydney had been started before the new jets came into operation, so the runway extension could be incorporated into the existing reconstruction plans, rather than being a separate project. The new terminal was designed to handle 13,000 passengers an hour, reflecting the increased importance of aviation for freight and passengers: in 1970 the airport was handling nearly 2000 flights per week and a total of 3 million passengers per year passed through the international and domestic terminals. This increasing intensity of global traffic created an infrastructure overload at the airport, which in turn provoked yet another major re-examination of the airport's siting in the inner-city.

The construction of the new terminal in 1968 was prompted by the Boeing corporation's release a gigantic new aircraft, the 'Jumbo' jet. The new terminal's construction was also hastened by increasing competition for these international flights from Melbourne's new airport, 'Tullamarine'. Even Mr Swartz, the Minister for Civil Aviation, was keen to distinguish between the scale of the two projects and establish Sydney as the international capital, over and above his federal, and supposedly nation-wide, aviation responsibilities. He stated in December 1968 that "Mascot was now the major overseas terminal for Australia and would continue to be".3 The Minister was worried that existing state-based pressure groups would influence the decision of international airlines to use Tullamarine as the 'No 1 Australian airport', and therefore compromise the position of Sydney as an 'international capital'. He issued a press release at the end of December that explicated the perceived threat of local tensions to the structure of national progress:

We are not interested in parochialism. We must regard the development of aviation and airports in Australia on a national scale. Therefore, the government must extend its interests beyond the confines of inter-State rivalry to embrace Australia as a whole. Development of airports on a

---

2 "Immediate start on runway extensions - $16.8m Airport project", Sydney Morning Herald, 30 September 1969.
3 "Criticism "can harm Mascot airport"", Daily Telegraph, 13 December 1968.
What was at stake here was not just the need for national transport infrastructure, but the competition between Melbourne and Sydney to become truly ‘international’, each seeking to be the ‘world’ city of Australia. Picturesque and extravagant Sydney was seen to have the edge over dull, Imperial Melbourne as a tourism centre. The secretary of NSW Retail Traders’ Association, Mr J.B. Griffin -- described as one of the most “vehement critics of Tullamarine”5 -- was moved to comment publicly on the contrast between the two cities. His descriptions of Melbourne constituted it as a non-event, still insufficiently ‘modern’ to be interesting to tourists. In fact, he dismissed the entire city of Melbourne as a tourist destination as it “had none of the tourist attractions of Sydney” and it was Sydney that “was synonymous with Australia”. Mr Griffin was resolute: “People arriving in a new city of a new country for the first time do not want to see wide streets and the Yarra River.”6

The Melbourne lobbyists were just as committed to the internationality of their city, and the Herald’s correspondent reported that “Efforts are being made to have Tullamarine known as Australia’s main terminal with Mascot just a put-down or pick-up way station.”7 With the advantage of a ‘greenfields’ development some distance from the city, for the cost of $44 million, Melbourne got “a spanking new base on a new site”, but for $75 million, “Sydney’s airport, at best, will be a patched-up job.”8 The new terminal at Tullamarine was further from the city centre, yet, unlike the approach to Mascot, traffic to the new airport was better integrated into the urban network. Road traffic to the new airport “raced down the 12-mile expressway connecting the city with the airport -- a magnificent job with grass-covered embankments and all shacks and outhouses of 12 months ago completely erased.”9

The absence of a night operation curfew at Tullamarine also raised the possibility of Melbourne becoming “the great air-freight centre” and according to a former Member of the NSW Parliament, “Victorian interests are planning to make Melbourne the biggest freight computer terminal in Australia, and plans are underway to develop Tullamarine as the focal point of aviation history through

---

4 'International traffic and Sydney airport - Statement by the Minister for Civil Aviation, Mr R.W. Swartz’, 30 December 1968, p. 1.
5 Call, Bullocks to Boeings, p. 61.
6 Daily Telegraph, 11 February 1959 quoted in Call, Bullocks to Boeings, p. 61.
museum relics’. This over-development was contrasted with Sydney airport’s perceived under-development. According to NSW politicians, Tullamarine was a “monument to the chicanery of the Victorian political establishment... Even with the new international terminal, Mascot can only be described as a slum compared with Tullamarine.” The singularity claimed by Mascot, as the only international capital of Australia, was threatened by Melbourne’s 24-hour operation and provoked questions about whether the Sydney curfew, in operation since 1963, should be lifted in the name of ‘progress’:

...the ‘minor’ airport will, on account of its geographical position, be operative 24 hours a day, while the major one will stick a ‘do not disturb’ notice on the gate and close down for the night. The time has arrived to assert the claims and insist on the recognition of Sydney as a major world air terminal by the establishment of a 24-hour operative cycle, which appears to be essential to an international airport. That there will be shouts of protest can be taken as a certainty. So what!...

It is strange inconsistancy that the term ‘progress’ can always be applied to justify the rape of a playing field for a supermarket, the demolishing of homes for carparks, or the tearing down of historical edifices for the building of glass and brick monstrosities; but when the natural progress of one of the city’s life lines is planned for, less complimentary terms are used to describe the operation.

Here urban change was cast as a force of natural history, more ‘nature’ than culture as the city was inexorably and inevitably drawn into to a world economy. To cut off Sydney from this world-wide network would be to cut the city’s ‘life-line’. The airport then represented far more than national space, it was necessary to totalising claims that Sydney should become a cosmopolis, a staging point between world and nation. These needs for an airport in Sydney marginalised other needs, such as the Mayors of Mascot, Botany and Marrickville had been arguing from the 1920s, for a liveable and healthy environment. The claim for Sydney as a world city had been constructed within geographical and political discourses – Sydney as the natural start and end point of ‘overseas’ services and the ‘Empire’ route, declared in November 1935, but in the 1970s, this discourse shifted to a technological and economically rational grounds. Those outside Sydney were bewildered by arguments as to why the airlines could not land in Melbourne and then ferry passengers on. The ‘successful’ planning of Tullamarine, a reasonable distance from the city allowed 24-hour operation of Tullamarine and facilitated its use as a landing point, but the desires for Sydney to be the nation’s ‘first’ airport expressed within these urbanist discourses constituted it as a modern national ‘monument’.

---

12 ‘Airport’ undated clipping of letter to editor, Ellison Archives, 1962-75.
The known world of the Australian subject was no longer constructed by Empire, as it was in 1935, but by a national economy and international companies. Looking ahead to the era of rapid air travel that the jet’s arrival symbolised in Australia, an editorial in the Bulletin argued in 1959 that the coming “era of aerial progress” would shift the centre of the world from Europe to the Pacific. The Bulletin saw that as “the great airports [of South-East Asia] pass out of British hands and into those of weak and semi-hostile governments increasingly inclined to bind transport up in a tangle of red-tape... the cross-Pacific services would grow more important year by year.”

According to the author, the Australian world view was still too Euro-centric and would be fundamentally challenged by the new technologically mediated space of jet travel:

It is evident that Australia needs to shorten its sights in estimating its geographical and economic positions in relations to the large centres of population. Instead of being out on a limb as in the days of exclusively sea-traffic, it is now a world transport centre, almost equidistant from Africa, industrialised Asia, and the Americas.

So when Pan-Am announced in late 1969 that the Jumbo Jets would fly from Sydney before Melbourne, the audience gathered for the opening of Tullamarine were deeply shocked: “A pin dropped on the brand-new plush carpet at the official opening of Victoria’s new international airport last Wednesday would have sounded like a roll of a tympani when Melbourne was told Kingsford-Smith airport will host Jumbo Jets before Tullamarine.”

The disappointment felt by the Melbourne crowd was their exclusion from the new centre of world economic exchange and their relegation to be ‘out on a limb’. Which city could be claim to be at the ‘centre’ of this ‘centre’ would determine its success in the future ‘internationalist’ economy. This geo-economic motive determined the stakes in the intense battle by developers and business people to make Sydney the ‘gateway’ for international aviation, despite its obvious short comings and the disparity in expense compared to Melbourne.

---

14 ‘A World Centre-point’, p. 6.
15 Jack Percival, ‘Suddenly Pan Am dropped a brick’, Sun-Herald, May or July 1970, p..???.

286
city of flows

Consolidating its position and against this background of a challenge to its ‘world capital’ status, Sydney’s new terminal was designed as a glittering building-machine, independent of the city while within it at the same time. With the construction of the international terminal, the airport incorporated the leisure and consumption sites of the metropolis into the airport itself. The airport, accessible to only those who could afford air travel, was increasingly constructed as the autonomous world imagined in the 1940s and 50s, a self-sufficient miniature city. Upon arrival, as the ‘Commonwealth News and Information Bureau’ described it in a press release before the new terminal’s opening, the “passenger steps out on to a plaza decked with fountains and garden plots... walks undercover into the terminal building and is under cover from that moment on, even when he steps into his aircraft.” The terminal building synthesised “up-to-date European and American concepts of jet airport planning”. These concepts took as their organising principle the continuous flow of passengers through the terminal from the arrival in the jet plane to their destination in the urban centre.

One of the great breakthroughs in airport design in the late 1960s had been the development of the ‘aero-bridge’, design form that erased the architectural boundary between the airport building and walkways and the aircraft itself. After spending his time after immigration and customs inspection exploring “bookstalls, duty free shops... holding lounges... restaurants... or a cocktail lounge” the passenger would seamlessly move down a flight of stairs or escalator “where an aero-bridge slides out at the same level as the cabin floor of the aircraft”. For the returning passenger the process was reversed, creating an entire impression of “streamlined efficiency and traffic moving either forward or downward.”

The techno-architectural innovation of the aero-bridge was part of an increased interest in the passenger’s continual motion whether walking, in a car, or on the plane. This will-to-movement, anticipated at Mascot, was surpassed in the design of the Pan-American ‘space-age’ terminal at Kennedy International Airport in New York. This terminal was incomplete as Mascot was being built, but of great interest to planners as a model design. A feature article by John Behr in the *Sunday Telegraph*, a year before the Sydney terminal opened pointed to the New York airport as an

17 ‘Australia’s New International Air Terminal’, p. 2.
18 ‘Australia’s New International Air Terminal’, p. 2.
A TWO-LEVEL road system will penetrate the heart of PAA's new terminal complex at the John F. Kennedy Airport, New York. The $50 million project will be finished in 1971.

Fig 8.1

John Behr, 'Jumbo-size problems for airport terminal planners', Sunday Telegraph, 4 May 1969, p. 94.
Fig 8.1

John Behr, 'Jumbo-size problems for airport terminal planners', *Sunday Telegraph*, 4 May 1969, p. 94.
exciting example of the place of aviation in the urban future world. The new terminal at JFK was to be six times as large as the existing Pan-Am structure, adding another 665,000 square feet to the original. It also signified a radical shift in the relation between building and vehicles, the built environment and the mobile environment, in a closing of the interface between automobility with aerial mobility:

The new terminal will have no concourses -- aircraft will nose straight into the building. Vehicles will drive right into the building to save the passengers’ legs and what is more important, time. A pair of horseshoe shaped, three-lane, elevated roadways will ring the inner section of the building to allow private cars, taxis and buses to drop off passengers within a few steps of any one of the terminal’s 56 check-in points... Vehicles will take passengers to within a few steps of their aircraft.\(^9\)

Airport design had increasingly become governed by the function of the terminal as a time-saving mechanism based on “complete separation of arriving and departing passengers on different floor levels”.\(^{20}\) The key to the efficient design of all new airports would be the “direct and fast flow-through of passengers along the same floor level. Passengers should not have to retrace their steps to complete formalities or be forced to move up and down stairs or ramps or winding corridors until their progress becomes virtually an ‘obstacle race’”.\(^{21}\) These imperatives of flow created the danger of the airport being just an ugly, uninteresting building, as Behr warned, but this was preferable to “several major international terminals around the world [that] fail to provide some of the basic facilities for efficient and speedy handling of passengers.”\(^{22}\) These were “noisy places, full of tension where passengers face an exhausting obstacle race” because they had been “created to become cultural and architectural national monuments at the expense of efficiency and simplicity in layout”. The purpose of these new international places, according to designers, should be to give the passengers a “sense of having arrived”, but, tragically, these “monumental” terminals too often gave passengers “rather a sense of being lost”.\(^{23}\)

The Telegraph’s aviation correspondent cited the new Schiphol terminal at Amsterdam as outstanding for its balance between an exercise in function, constructed for the fluency of time rather than the solidity of space, and its need for a pleasing built form. Schipol had been operating since the mid-60s and had attracted the attention of designers, planners and architects. In his four visits to the terminal as both an arriving and departing passenger Behr had not once had to ask


\(^{20}\) Behr, ‘Jumbo-size problems...’, p. 94.

\(^{21}\) Behr, ‘Jumbo-size problems...’, p. 94.

\(^{22}\) Behr, ‘Jumbo-size problems...’, p. 94.

\(^{23}\) Behr, ‘Jumbo-size problems...’, p. 94.
for directions, which he interpreted as a sign of the terminal’s superior design and morphological transparency. The Schiphol terminal was even more striking for its “spaciousness and unhurried quietness, even at peak periods”, due to “sound absorbing materials and a specially designed public address system that is loud enough to be heard without making conversation difficult [producing] an almost cathedral-like stillness”.

The entire layout and passenger management procedures of the Dutch airport made it the “most relaxing and pleasant” the author had ever visited, and he wrote as an experienced international air traveller, having passed through “the world’s major international terminals, excluding central and southern Africa and South America.”

The modern airport terminal provided a fabulous interval in the international passenger’s journey. Above all it was envisioned here as a clean, empty space, with all architectural interference eliminated in a perfect signal-to-noise ratio. Especially notable for its claim to be devoid of distracting historical traces and culturally-specific obstacles, the airport as space, symbol and site of modernity created a de-localised environment, in which the smooth flow of the journey took precedence above all other purposes. This pure form of airport design claimed not be formed within any local-national history. Its design worked to negate any disposition towards other times and spaces, offering instead the architectural transparency of modern design principles. Yet this transparency was complicated by modernism’s own spatio-temporal formation. This narrative of progress still needed its ‘others’. These others were recognised within official spectacles at the airport site, continually staging ‘newness’ against ‘antiquity’.

The new airport was large and self-contained enough to give rise to its own fortnightly publication. The Tarmac Reporter, a publication distributed free to employees at Mascot. The first edition’s editorial stated “our editorial policy is to present an unbiased, informed, and entertaining newsjournal... to every one of the more than 10,000 bods who earn their daily bread in the vast 1,600 acre complex know as Sydney airport (sic).” The Reporter promised news of airport events and personalities, especially “little known airport activities so that every reader may gain a greater appreciation of just what makes a major airport tick”. Not just an in-house publication, the Reporter was also a vehicle for the dissemination of Department of Civil Aviation material, with the lead story on the front page.

24 Behr, ‘Jumbo-size problems’, p. 94.
25 Behr, ‘Jumbo-size problems’, p. 94.
27 ‘Comment...’, p. 2.
revealing the ongoing connection between governmentality and the airport. An article by Senator Robert Cotton, Minister for Civil Aviation, informed his readers that Australian total passenger movements for 1969 totalled 6.8 million, “equivalent to more than half our entire population”. Paragraphs of this article were identical to DCA press releases of the same period. Writing in The Tarmac Reporter, Cotton sought to remind Australians that “Sydney Airport is a major national asset in terms of transportation, trade and tourism. It is a major community asset which provides goods or services, or both, for virtually everyone in the nation.” A press release issued by Cotton on 22 October, six weeks before the first issue of The Tarmac Reporter, contained the practically exactly the same statement: “Sydney Airport is a major national asset in terms of transportation, trade and tourism. It can be fairly said that the Sydney Airport provides services and supplies of one kind or another for virtually everyone in the Nation.” In a conclusion not included in the press release, Cotton promised the Reporter’s readers that in the future, the airport would become a “better neighbour”, when “a longer main runway, quieter jet engines and other technological advances [would make] Sydney airport more efficient still, and less obtrusive.”

In this ‘entertaining’ yet informational style of The Tarmac Reporter, a discourse on everyday modernity is continued through other sites at which the spectacle of modernisation is visible. In the pages following the Cotton article, as this metonymy takes place moving the signs of the modern from the technology of the building onto the body of the air hostess. She becomes a new kind of ‘star’, celebrating the technical urge in modern fashion. The increased locomotion of the air hostess body, as she had to serve passengers on the Jumbo Jets and therefore cover far more ‘ground’ in the aeroplane, meant that her uniform needed ‘modernising’ and ‘internationalising’. Her personal presentation was very much on display to the male traveller and the Tarmac Reporter asked its readers to participate in judgement of her dress and deportment. Asking whether her uniform needed to be updated from ‘midi’ to ‘mini’, the Reporter invited comments from passengers. Many of the responses already given associated the longer uniform with tradition and matronly decorum, and the miniskirt with freedom. Indeed, when Canadian Pacific ‘Executive Jet Service’ Passengers, “mostly business executives”, first saw their hostesses’ uniforms, two hundred of them were moved to write complaint letters to the

company’s president. The letters included the following reactions to the longer ‘midi’ skirts:

‘Ugh...’, ‘Instant Frump...’, ‘Dowdy and Victorian...’, ... ‘I flow with my grandmother as a child. Why do I have to continue now that I am a lecherous old man...?’, ‘Can my mother become a stewardess on CP Air? She is 60 and can supply her own uniform’.32

Other articles and advertisements advised employers to pay attention to their corporate image through the appearance of their female workers:

How do your girls feel about their uniforms -- do they consider them fashionable or old hat?... If a girl feels fashionable in her uniform it makes a big difference to her attitude... This will be reflected in her attitude towards her work, towards the Company. Being proud of her appearance will stimulate loyalty. She will be proud and identify with your group aims. 33

The advertisement further advised employers: “Ask your industrial psychologist: Good looks will pay dividends”. An unattributed article titled “About Face” featured photographs of workers who had been to the ‘Pat Woodley Grooming Course’ and an advertisement on the following page gave a guarantee from Pat Woodley to “make any girl prettier”.34 Part of the re-design of the terminal, the worker’s bodies were drawn into a new relationship to international space. The female airline employees were encouraged to ‘modernise’, paralleling the airport design’s elimination of the unruly and grotesque elements of outdated architecture. Previous eras, signified in a roundabout way in the ‘Victorian’ dowdiness of women’s work clothing, had been characterised by ornamentation, excessive attention to surfaces and too many decorative elements. Feminine clothing and deportment would have to be ‘up-dated’ just as much as the styling of the terminal, or its datedness and ‘obsolescence’ would be made more conspicuous when thrown into relief against the smooth surfaces and aerodynamic forms of the new fluent space of the terminal.

33 ‘Fashion uniforms with Casarella’, *The Tarmac Reporter*, vol. 1, no. 1, 4 December 1970, p. 4. The company’s motto was ‘Serving Australia Uniformly’.
34 ‘Pat Woodley Grooming and Model School’, *The Tarmac Reporter*, vol. 1, no. 1, 4 December 1970, p. 4
January 1958... the Superconstellations sent out from Melbourne on the first round the world service through New York... Australia had thrown a boomerang to circle the globe...36

Released in 1963, a promotional colour film for Qantas appropriated Aboriginal symbols of dynamism and flight for the performance of national identity within the new technology of air travel. The film opened and closed with images of aboriginal desert peoples throwing a boomerang for hunting intercut with Qantas jets. The film’s soundtrack mirrored the visual interplay between ‘old’ and ‘new’ as it cross-faded the sound of jets taking off into clapping sticks and didgeridoo music. The placing of the modern alongside the ‘primitive’ was a story-telling strategy that displaced aboriginality into the past, while holding it as a foundational moment of the Australian nation. In the last moments of the film, the very well elocuted narrator grew lyrical about the future of air travel, looking down from the sublime heights of modernity: “Yesterday the great south land was lost in distance... but looking down at two thousand miles an hour and at seventy thousand feet, who knows what will happen next... perhaps men will throw a boomerang around the stars?”37 The film’s final image was an animated drawing of a boomerang thrown around the earth from the East Coast of Australia. As this cartoon-like earth floated in space against a backdrop of stars, the words “THIS STORY HAS NO ENDING” appeared on the screen. The imbrication of the symbol of the ‘boomerang’ with the trajectory of national progress and modernity as a limitless expansion of habitable territory into outer space is symptomatic of a wider impulse to bring modernism into play with ‘primitivism’.38 Here, the modern aesthetic of the sublime was open to these incorporations and displacements at a local level. While eliminating all historical traces from the ‘clean and proper’ site of the airport, the international modern needed a great deal of ‘othering’ of space and times to create its trajectory onwards to a fantasy of the inter-planetary and inter-galactic future. Occurring

35 The etymology of the word ‘boomerang’ displays its intercultural and inextricably colonial aspirations. Although the Macquarie dictionary defines it as “1. a bent or curved piece of hard wood used as a missile by Aborigines, one form of which can be thrown so as to return to the thrower. 2. a scheme, plan, argument, etc. which recoils upon the user. 3. Colloq. that which expected to be returned by a borrower,” p. 231, the dictionary’s introductory section explains the confusion this word has caused since 1788. Not widely recorded in First Fleet vocabularies, except in Port Jackson, a contemporary source reported it being used widely and erroneously by “sailors, stockmen, and others who have paid no attention to the aboriginal tongue”, p. 38.

36 The big boomerang. Collins for Qantas, 40 min, 16mm, sd., b&ew and col., 1963.

37 The big boomerang.

across many cultural forms, the demolition of the old buildings and the construction of the new terminal engendered of series of narratives measuring the nation’s progress through the short history of aviation in Sydney. These stories were told in newspapers, film and audiovisual texts that engaged the spaces of the past with the present and future at the airport.

The destruction of the old terminal prompted a series of two print features on the history of Mascot in November 1969, also a date marking fifty years anniversary since the first flights at the aerodrome. As the Daily Telegraph introduced them, these narratives “traced our spectacular flying history” from “two-seaters to jumbo-jets... straining struts to whistling turbines”.39 The first article in the Telegraph began after the Western victory in the First World War in 1919 when “men looked skywards for new peaceful horizons to conquer”.40 The second article concluded the series and appeared on a page headed by a photograph showing a world war one-era plane flying alongside a Jumbo Jet. The second piece outlined the great events of post-war aviation and finished with a glowing description of the “driving force behind Pan-American’s pathfinding flights into the Pacific”, the airline’s founder, Juan Trippe. Trippe had outlined his ‘democratic’ vision of consumer-oriented leisure society based on air travel in the 1930s, which was quoted extensively in the article:

The true objective of an airline is to bring to the life of the average man those things which were once only the privilege of the fortunate few.

The average man’s holiday has in the past been the prisoner of two grim time-keepers — money and time. His enjoyment of the world has been circumscribed by the high walls of his economic jail.

We can level these prison walls only by bringing travel costs way down and by shortening travel time.41

The realisation of Trippe’s dream had “founded in a world of inflation in which enormous re-equipment costs have made a lowering of basic international airfares an impossibility.” The introduction of the ‘more economical’ 747 Jumbo Jet offered the next generation of travellers the possibility of ‘breaking the prison walls’ of limited access to air travel for most people. Behr wrote in the third-person plural, including the reader in anticipating, along with himself and Trippe for a relative reduction in air fares in the 1970s: “The best Trippe and we can hope for is that airfares will remain static during the next few years...”42

41 Behr, ‘The flying machine: Curiosity...’, p. 16.
42 Behr, ‘The flying machine: Curiosity...’, p. 16.
Also celebrating the new terminal and commemorating the destruction of the old one, Cinesound, an Australian company still producing newsreels until the early 1970s, issued a retrospective of footage shot at the old ‘overseas terminal’. The Cinesound Review was compiled of publicity highlights, celebrating overseas visitors (and deportees) who had passed through the old building. This cinematic reminiscing began with an edited parade of all the “great stars as they passed through the portals” of the airport: an enthusiastic welcome for Tanya Verstak, the Miss Australia of 1961, as she returned home after a trip promoting Australia overseas, the arrival of American rock star Johnny Ray, and finally the departure of the Petrovs, two Russian spies who were deported from Mascot. The news footage showed chaotic scenes as a crowd tried to stop the Petrovs boarding the plane back to Russia. The struggle was so intense between the crowd and the Russian security to get the ‘secret agents’ aboard that Mrs Petrov had to board the plane with only one shoe.

The collective excitement generated by these human arrivals and departures was only outstripped by the arrival of the British Comet aircraft, which the narrator of another Cinesound newsreel enthused “outdrew Johnny Ray when it comes to welcomes”. It took twenty minutes before the crew could leave the plane when a crowd of 35,000 “surged forward” to greet the plane and its passengers. As discussed in the previous chapter, this enthusiasm for technological spectacles was in noticeable decline from the 1960s onwards. As ‘average’ citizens had access to air travel, increasingly, its material objects were becoming trivial, accessible to most people and familiar through popular cultural representations of tourism. Modern air travel was also becoming associated with a sense of dead weight of time, as jet-age speed degraded the sensory experience of travel as movement into a sense of immobility while travelling. Air passengers were ‘sealed off’ from the world and seat-belted into a small space for several hours at a stretch. This sense of the stasis of time and space in air travel also stemmed from an excess of ‘waiting time’, as flight schedules, security procedures and transit stops meant travellers were spending a great deal of their trip inside airports, unable to leave because of immigration procedures or simply on call for delayed or cancelled flights.

The sublime world of jet travel for the traveller now bordered precariously on the brink of banality. The sense of excitement over the latest celebrity to arrive at the airport was no longer as universally felt as the Cinesound film makers collected the high-points of the 1960s and presented it to an increasingly ‘globalised’ Australian audience. While air travel headed towards banality as a spatio-temporal experience,

44 Cinesound Review, no. 1258, 1955, NFSA Acc. no. 28813.
the airport itself headed towards abjection, constantly needing to be re-incorporated into an aesthetics of the sublime, as airport designers worried away at the problem of how to ‘stage’ technological wonder within the building itself:

I can only very briefly refer to the questions on the aesthetics of aerodrome building. It has been pointed out that not only are most aerodromes rather ugly, but they all tend to look alike. There is an astonishing contrast between the aerodrome and the real beauty of a stripped modern transport aircraft.⁴⁵

The airport still represented and materialised the spirit of cosmopolitanism, and the architecture of the terminal was still a stage for speculating the rest of the world, but this world was now not so much ‘overseas’ as most people did not use boats to travel to Europe and the USA, but passenger planes. The new ‘international’ building at Mascot was so named as the terminal point for a space no longer defined by the outdated terminology of a maritime culture as ‘overseas’ but ‘international’, as shifts in discourses on Australian national space constructed different relations to the world. Here, the ordering of global space was imbricated with the national as a political space; the world was brought to a national ‘home’ and national subjects dispersed into the ‘world’. As the newsreel’s narrator intoned approvingly in 1970, the disappearance of the old building and the construction of the new one represented a “launch in to a period of mass air travel undreamed of just a few short years ago”.⁴⁶

While the terminal re-construction proceeded, the timing of the opening of the new terminal was planned carefully to coincide with Queen Elizabeth II’s Royal Tour of Australia to mark the Captain Cook Bicentenary year. The Bicentenary importantly re-focused attention on Sydney, rather than Melbourne, as the ‘birthplace’ of the nation. The Royal tour commenced well before the terminal opening in May. Another Cinesound Review portrayed and celebrated the Tour as an act of tourism, presenting a summary of the Royal’s travels around Australia. In this sequence constructed in the newsreel, the Royals participated in a series of episodic observations of places and events, turning the Australian landscape into object of the Royal gaze and Australian subjects into the means by which colonial power was mediated, written onto this landscape. This tour was initiated and terminated at Sydney airport. During the months that the Royals were in Australia, the new terminal was finished off and it awaited their departure to be ‘officially opened’.

---

⁴⁶ Australian Movie Magazine, no. 7315.
Rival newsreel company Movietone produced a filmic history of the Royal visit to the airport that, rather than following the Royal’s trip, retold a continuous linear history of the airport, through flashbacks to Australian ‘aeronautical highlights’. The newsreel commenced with exterior views of the new air terminal at Mascot in Sydney. A series of flashbacks followed, beginning with shots of Mascot in the 1930s: the arrival of Kingsford-Smith in the ‘Southern Cross’ in 1931; the arrival of German aviator Elli Beinhorn in 1931; and the arrival of Charles Ulm in ‘Faith in Australia’ after the first official airmail flight to New Zealand in 1934; Charles Scott in 1931 or 1932; Amy Johnson after her solo flight from England to Australia in 1930. A view of the control tower at Mascot in 1946 was followed by a close-up of the plans for the new airport, with the new control tower and runways marked. A scale model of the new terminal building was shown, and scenes of construction in progress. The interior views of the completed building included the customs hall, baggage carousels, departure hall, duty free shop, bar, and the operation of the air conditioning unit. This was all just a prelude to the final scenes of the Queen opening the new terminal shortly before the Royal Family board their plane to the sound of a twenty-one gun salute. The item ended with out-of-sequence footage of Her Royal Highness as she unveiled a plaque commemorating the opening of the terminal, followed by a close-up of a second plaque commemorating aviator Charles Thomas Ulm. 47

The Cinesound Review that covered the Royal visit began with Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip’s arrival at Kingsford-Smith Airport at the start of their Sydney tour, in time for the Royal Family to visit the Royal Easter Show where they saw ring events, a woodchopping competition, toured the ‘Pacific Panorama Pavilion’ and talked ‘informally’ with the crowd. The Royal Family then travelled to Melbourne via Tasmania, where the Royal Family watched a football match between Fitzroy and Richmond.48 Before the Royal Tour concluded back in Sydney, the Royals paid a visit to Queensland on the Royal yacht ‘Britannia’ and flew to Canberra. At Lang Park in Brisbane the Royal family arrived in an open car and watched a parade of thousands of school children; the children then formed the words ‘Cook 1770-1970’ in the centre of the arena. Finally travelling to Canberra for another nation-forming ritual, the Queen and Prince Philip attended the Anzac Day march and laid a wreath on the Stone of Remembrance.

47 Movietone News (Opening of New Airport and Royal Departure), 7 May 1970, NFSA A2600.
Travelling back to Sydney by yacht the Royal family arrived at the wharf at Kurnell in Botany Bay on 29 April, where they were greeted by Aboriginal children waving flags. As 29 April was the two hundredth anniversary of Cook’s landing, the Queen and the Royal family watched an historical re-enactment of the ‘first meeting’ of Aboriginal people and Europeans. As the Queen looked on, aboriginal people playing their forebears momentarily shook spears at ‘Captain Cook’s’ party, then stood by peacefully while white actors in period costume impersonated their ancestors and performed the founding moment of the British colony of Australia and the glorious origin of Australian nation by raising of the Union Jack. This repetition of the colonial moment in political ritual was celebrated when a “spectacular fireworks display” was held over Sydney Harbour in the evening. The Queen’s last official duty in Australia was to open the new international terminal at Mascot on 3 May. The Royal family were farewelled by various dignitaries, including Premier Askin, and a military guard of honour, before boarding their British Airways plane, the first to leave from the new terminal.49

This staging of a connection between the pre-colonial arrival of Cook and the post-colonial departure of the new Queen was not just made by the accident of a few days separating the dates of these events. It was figured in news reports, government documents and even the design of the new building and public artwork included inside it. This spatial narrative of modern internationality carefully distributed within its trajectory selections other spaces and times. The modernist fantasy of ‘abstraction’ of space and de-materialisation of the local here seems negated by a trajectory local events, struggles, negations and re-negotiations of ownership. The ritual re-enactment of the colonial moment of arrival creates an intersection of other times with the present, most crucially moments of colonial power. Noting its status in modernity, Susan Stewart, drawing on Baudrillard, argues that the ‘exotic object’, like the antique, “functions to lend authenticity to the modern system of objects... that the indigenous object fascinates by means of its anteriority”.50 The modernist fantasy of the expulsion of historical time thus rests on a containment and narrativising of the past, of transforming banal anachronism into imperial time and historical progress, most visible in the nostalgia for the ‘primitive’ with which the form of the new airport terminal engaged.

Artwork inside the terminal drew in other times and spaces, such as a bas-relief mural by Guy Boyd that sought to “illustrate the aboriginal legend of how

50 Stewart, On Longing, p. 146.
Mudichera was transformed into two flying foxes”. Here, non-specific to any of Australia’s over two hundred indigenous language groups or any identifiable geographic locations, ‘aboriginal’ mythic time itself was translated and incorporated into a discourse on the modern sublime.

The plaques that the Queen unveiled before departing also memorialise history and construct other times within the chronotopic narrative of internationalism. The plaque of Charles Ulm unveiled by the HRH on 3 May was positioned in the room’s design so as to “dominate a wall in the departure section” of the international terminal. The plaque and its inscription sought to “officially and individually recognise” Ulm, who had been overshadowed by his co-pilot Kingsford-Smith. Indeed as the whole airport was named after the hero, Kingsford-Smith, not Ulm, and the plaque was a step to recognising that “Both men were great in their own way and complimented [sic] each other in their joint ventures and pioneering flights.” The narrative of the air pioneer places early air travel after colonial and aboriginal time, but before modernity.

Not only marking the modern through and against a temporal ‘other’ the design of the new terminal also included sites that mediated ethnic and racial otherness: at the ‘Copper Grill’, travellers and members of the public could “watch the arrival and departure of international aircraft” through “special copper treated glass windows” that ran the length of the restaurant. The restaurant’s manager stated that “in keeping with the international flavour of the restaurant, most of the staff are multi-lingual and the food and wine service is equal to world standards”. “Sydney’s most exciting restaurant set in the heart of Australia’s most modern air terminal” was also designed to attract ‘Sydney diners’ with a ‘unique atmosphere’ and offered Los Trios Latinos, who entertained “with music for dancing or listening, 7 pm to midnight, Wednesday to Sunday”. International airlines also designed their lounges as miniature museums collecting exotica and exhibiting the colonial-historical powers of modernity: Air-India opened its ‘Maharajah Lounge’ at the terminal in November 1970, furnished with “works of art and certain decorative items... brought from India for the Lounge which was designed by Mr. Donald Johnston,

53 ‘Queen today opens new air terminal’, p. 15.
55 ‘Sydney International Airport Copper Grill Restaurant (advertisement)’, p.3; ‘World class catering and facilities at new terminal’, The Tarmac Reporter, vol. 1, no. 1, 4 December 1970, p. 5.
who has been responsible for the décor of all the Air-India offices in the South Pacific’.56

The Queen’s departure and the staging of the Cook landing for her benefit should be understood within these exotising narratives to construct the airport terminal as ‘international’. They also stand within the larger structure of re-enactments of arrival that has been a continual theme of Australian public life and official ritual. This history meshes with the long and disturbing history of the circulation of aboriginal people themselves in exchange between imperial centres and their colonies. In this circulation of colonised peoples, their bodies were made part of imperial networks of commodity exchange and fetishism. This importing of colonised peoples to the Imperial metropolis functioned as a precursor to the colonial exhibitions which displayed the distant riches from the margin and made the sights of Empire available to those at its centre.

The performance on Australia Day 1970 of aboriginal people showed them bearing witness to the colonial arrival. This performance paralleled and inverted the pre-modern, colonial model of Imperial display, in which the exotic native was transported and exhibited at the Imperial centre. The Royal trip to the former colony by modern transport mimics and inverts the gaze of eighteenth century royalty and naturalists, and nineteenth century promoters who imported indigenous peoples for display at world fairs and exhibitions. When the ‘modernised’ Queen travelled to visit her subjects and see the changes in her remote land, she staged for the nation a sense of control over ‘otherness’ in space and time.57 The narrative of the national needs ‘another time’ and ‘another space’ to mark out its own spatial home and in occupied territories like post-colonial Australia, further needs the closure of the other as a ‘dead race’. The narratives that I have recounted here all seek to define a point of origin of Australian history, which reaches its end with the opening of cosmopolitan, international monument to the jet age.

This tragic and destructive history of colonial spectacle and symbolic exchange between different parts of the empire highlights the uneven spatial rhetorics of the techno-colonial. The Royal flight demonstrated power over mobility that was not yet available to most residents of Sydney, let alone the aboriginal peoples of Botany Bay. Further underlining the accidental history of this place, the airport is on the land of the Cadigal people of southern Sydney, two of whom travelled with Governor

Phillip to England four years after Cook’s landing in 1792 to be examined as ‘curiosities’. Only one of the two, Bennelong, eventually returned to Sydney, but Yammerawannie died of pneumonia in London.\(^{58}\) These events were not officially commemorated during the Royal visit to Kurnell.

The speed and safety of air travel enabled the British royalty to visit the edges of their Empire, to ‘compress’ the distances between Commonwealth countries into travel time and turn the work of post-Imperial politics into the spectacular leisure of a Royal tour. The colonised people no longer needed to be transported to the Queen’s court, as she could easily make the journey herself. What performer and critic Coco Fusco terms the “colonial unconscious” is thus constructed through the official conscious of modernity.\(^{59}\) Jane Jacobs has described the “audacious banality” of this ritualising of the colonial moment of arrival, as it seeks to turn a political history into an everyday spectacle.\(^{60}\) This ordering of official and unofficial history relegates some events to the unspoken, unrepresented and unacknowledged margin of Australian society, while others are periodically repeated and incorporated in to the ritual time of the nation. Events which are spatially and politically marginal, such as Aboriginal land claims and indigenous peoples’ continuity with the national present, are thus translocated in such rituals from the foundational centre of the Australian nation to its edges. After Victor Turner, Ann McClintock, in her study of Imperial narratives of cleanliness, describes this process as a management the threshold between coloniser and colonised by “ritual and liminal scenes”.\(^{61}\) What appears as a ‘willed’ haunting of Australian national space by its others is part of this construction of liminality. The threshold between nations, as signified in the naming of the inter-national terminal, is a key site for these liminal scenes to take place. Here, the timing of the Queen’s departure so soon after the 29 April re-enactment is not an accident of history, but a conversion of the idea of progress into a material spectacle.

The Federal Government’s ‘News and Information Bureau’ welded these two events together in a press release issued in May 1970:

> From the observation deck of Australia’s new international air terminal, which was opened by the Queen on May 3... on looks across historic Botany Bay to the rocky coastline and almost untouched wilderness where Cook and his men landed on April 29, 1770.

---

58 Fusco, ‘The Other History...’, p. 42  
59 Fusco, ‘The Other History...’, p. 47.  
60 Jacobs, Edge of Empire, p. 157.  
Today with the air filled with the rumble-roar of jet aircraft, it is hard to believe one can be transported so easily 200 years into the past to the beginnings of a new nation.62

The airport now functioned as a kind of passageway between times and spaces, encapsulating disparate temporal imaginaries within one single spatial one. 'Transportation', once a disciplinary procedure expelling criminal elements from the 'mother' country, was now discursively constructed as freedom and liberation at the site of Botany Bay. Because of its liminal and marginal status, the airport fused and confused the chronotopes of arrivalism of colonial exploration and the international economy of tourism into one temporally simultaneous and spatially adjacent imaginary. Displaced by these moments of arrival, and apprehending the further expansion of the airport throughout the 1970s and 80s the people of Sydney prepared to depart their neighbourhoods.

Before I proceed to discuss in the next chapter the obverse imagery of 'departure' that characterised representations of the airport (post-third runway) in the 1980s and 90s, rather than these more utopian 'arrivals' in the 1970s, I will discuss the ways in which the airport, because of its liminal status, also figured in subversive political rituals. This decentring of the site of the airport was an important strategy available to local subjects who wished to express their opposition to development at Mascot, and at Botany Bay.

Minister ‘culprit’ says Captain Cook

Imperial rituals and liminal scenes themselves remain open to appropriation for other, more subversive ends. As the grand claims of master narratives of national progress became increasingly divergent from local concerns about the benefits and costs of technological development in the city, locally-based resident groups formed and sought to re-direct urban development in different, less spectacular ways.

From the late 1960s, the location of several large industrial sites on the shores of Botany Bay, in particular the Port Botany freight-handling project and the Kurnell oil refinery, had created a sense of a turning point for who appreciated the fragile ecology of the bay. The 13,000 ft runway extension alone had needed nine million cubic yards of sandfill and half a million tons of rock and concrete blocks to prevent sand erosion on beaches near the runway. The final aim of the project was to raise the new stretch of runway 34 feet above the sea floor and 14 feet above sea level.63 Not unexpectedly, the runway extensions had caused huge sandstorms and beach erosion at Brighton and Kyeemagh. When the roadside and waterfront buildings were threatened by complete destruction in a large storm, the Botany and Rockdale councils sought compensation from the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) so that they could shore up the seafront against further destruction. Large regeneration projects were needed to protect the foreshore from even normal wave movements after the first runway project, as well as to remedy the siltation and erosion caused by the runway extensions.64 By 1969 the Department had acknowledged that the extension was responsible for the erosion and paid for lining the banks of the bay “with anti-erosion plastic fibre”. The Maritime Services Board (MSB), seeking to understand how and why this had happened, planned a “million dollar hydraulic model of the Bay... to study the effect of wave action on various planned port and airport developments”.65 For the first time, the airport was seen to be part of a larger interaction between development and the environment of the bay, which was reflected in a call for a unified planning approach to the entire bay, as it was perceived as reaching development overload.

The lack of a rail link to integrate the airport with the port and the rest of the city meant that containers were transported by means the narrow roads that passed

63 Gall, Bullocks to Boeings, p. 67.
through residential suburbs. Each State and Federal government authority was responsible only for part of the solution -- the MSB was only responsible for "the bed of the bay up to high water mark and has powers to reclaim and develop parts of it", while the Department of Main Roads was only concerned with eliminating "bottlenecks" in the approach to the airport, and the DCA's powers and interest in the bay ended with the reclaimed land that now constituted the runway extensions (see Fig 8.2). Each authority neglected to notify each other of future plans and projects and once in development, they did not communicate with each other "and frequently their views overlap or blatantly clash". 

The result of all this frenzied planning without a coherent strategy, according to environmental experts writing in the Sunday Telegraph in 1969, had resulted in the urgent need to make a single authority responsible for the Bay so "THAT road and rail transport facilities grew to meet the load demand, THAT industry's needs were fully served, and THAT people who have to live on the shores of the bay are not forgotten". Those who lived on the shores of the bay and felt 'forgotten' by planning authorities consistently lobbied their representatives throughout the 1960 and 70s, trying to get flight paths changed, traffic noise and pollution lessened by making freight companies use rail rather than road and the dunes and marine environment conserved on the foreshore of the bay. As a House of Representatives committee on airport noise reported in June 1970, the objecting residents were an 'obstacle' to national progress, and perhaps they should be the ones to move: "In densely populated suburban communities around Sydney Airport, it may be appropriate to assist persons who are acutely affected to move to more suitable neighbourhoods." But the report did also acknowledge that "It may be less disruptive to move the airport to a more suitable site."

When the Whitlam Labor government came to power in 1972 the latter option was seriously explored, and in 1973, the Prime-Minister announced that Galston, northwest of Sydney had been chosen as the second airport site. The Federal Government changed its mind after 11 September, when 2000 protesters gathered on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra with coloured balloons and placards declaring

---

68 Bryan Boswell and Kevin Perkins, 'Botany Bay planners all at sea...', p. 6.
69 The move to rail was thwarted by the Transport Worker's Union. Peter Murphy and Sophie Watson, Surface City, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1997, p. 100.
‘Botany Bay planners all at sea...’, *Sunday Telegraph*, 5 October 1969, pp. 6-7.
“‘Gough goofed at Galston’ and ‘Hands off Galston’”.\(^{71}\) Other sites away from the city were canvassed, none of them finally chosen. In the meantime, the Whitlam government was dismissed and the Fraser government came to power. Plans leaked in August 1976 for massive airport expansion into the 80s and 90s were quickly opposed by local councils, who advocated the second airport plan instead. A Botany Council alderman warned that:

> Hundreds of people could lose their homes if the Federal Government pushes ahead with its plans to extend the airport... No consideration has been given to the welfare of local residents, who have put up with noise and inconvenience caused by aircraft for many years.\(^{72}\)

The airport reached capacity in 1976 yet again, as predicted in the early 1970s, and in the absence of an easy decision on a second airport site, plans started to take shape for the project that was to become known as the ‘third runway’. NSW Premier Wran blamed the ‘Melbourne dominated Federal Cabinet’ for the continued delay on a decision about a second Sydney airport, as he believed they were deliberately trying to increase the importance of Tullamarine, as outlined at the beginning of this chapter.\(^{73}\)

To return to my earlier focus on the ritual process and the strategic mimicry of colonisation, in all of this interstate and inter-party wrangling of the 1970s, the most effective protest available to the Botany Bay residents was to yet again re-enact in parodic form Cook’s landing at the bay (see Fig 8.3). On Australia Day 1976, the Botany Bay Independent Action Group (BIAG), dressed as Captain Cook and his crew landed by dinghy near the Port Botany site. Accompanied by speakers from the Builders Labourers’ Foundation and the Rail unions, ‘Captain Cook’ sentenced three politicians and two public servants for their involvement in the desecration of the bay. The sentences were all ‘for life’ and designed to reflect each individual’s ‘crimes’:

> Mr L. Punch, Minister for Works and Ports to 50 lashes and to live opposite the container terminal for the rest of his natural life.
> Sir John Fuller, Minister for the Environment, to live at the side of the coal loader for the rest of his natural life.
> Mr T. Lewis, former Premier, to live at the side of the runway at Kingsford-Smith airport for the term of his natural life.
> Mr Coffey, chairman of the State Pollution Control Commission, to live at the foot of the coal silos and be fed by fish from the polluted waters of

\(^{71}\) Gall, From Bullocks to Boeings, p. 67.
\(^{73}\) ‘Airport extension strongly opposed’, p. 1.
AUSTRALIA DAY DEMONSTRATIONS:

"Guilty" says 'Captain Cook'

After a demonstration of the landing of Captain Cook, performed by tweedsmen for the benefit of the Sydney Independent Aboriginal Group, on Sunday, those participating in the public assembly were 'guilty' for their activities in the Sydney Bay area, which was set aside for the use of the Aboriginal people.

A demonstration of the Sydney Independent Aboriginal Group was attended by the tweedsmen for the benefit of the Sydney Independent Aboriginal Group.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.

The demonstration was attended by the Tweedsman for the benefit of the Aboriginal people.
Botany Bay for the rest of his natural life. Mr Silva, representative of the Maritime Services Board, to work in the bowels of supertankers for the rest of his natural life.\textsuperscript{74}

This ritual carnivalesque inversion of the established relationships between the official and the unofficial, the local and the national, did not achieve all of the changes desired by Botany Bay residents. Yet the ‘pronouncement’ exposed who had power and prestige, who was in control of mobility and who was condemned to immobility, and illuminated the lack of decision-making power by precisely those who had none except to live or not live in a particular suburb. The President of BIAG, Nancy Hillier, invoked national-historical events and national pride, but for very different ends from the narrative of economic progress mobilised by the Federal Government:

Our men went overseas to fight for our heritage and now the Government is giving it away... If Botany Bay was intended to be a deep water port it would have been made that way. God created Botany Bay for all people to enjoy not just for a minority to become wealthy.\textsuperscript{75}

Statements about local dissenters to airport development made in documents that outlined a proposed public relations campaign for the third runway in 1982. The campaign was commissioned by the Australian Government Advertising service, under direction from the conservative Fraser Government through the Department of Civil Aviation, after the plans for a third runway at Mascot, duplicating the existing parallel runway, were announced on 7 October 1982. This announcement was made after extensive deliberation by the Major Airport Needs of Sydney (MANS) committee of enquiry set up post-Whitlam in 1976. The State (Labor) government had withdrawn from the MANS committee in September 1979, when it became clear that the enquiry was going to recommend expansion at Kingsford-Smith. These documents not to be read simply as an example of the governmental distortion of reality, although they did indeed misrepresent the ‘facts’, but for the ways in which they shape the reality of the national future. These documents operate by their own logic and internally consistent rationality. The statements about the space of the airport and its relationship to communal and national desires for the future proceed according to a ‘general politics’ of truth as Michel Foucault defined it:

the types of discourse which [each society] accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques


\textsuperscript{75} ‘Australia Day demonstrations...’, p. 1.
and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those
who are charged with saying what counts as true.76

The lines of ‘truth’ established rested on the hypothesising, measuring and
understanding of the ‘electorate’, as they were mass researched and discussed by
political researchers and the public relations industry. These campaigns allied the
political technology of public relations to the ‘civil’ space of the media to persuade
voters and consumers that the third runway was a positive step to the future. The
campaigns targeted the ‘middle Australian’, who was constituted as living in the
middle ground of the nation, ‘close enough’ to the airport to recognise it as part of
infrastructure, yet not ‘too close’ and therefore irredeemably opposed to it. The
authors of these campaigns marginalised all who opposed development as failed
subjects of modernity, and thus not able to comment or engage in rational debate.

The pitch by Grey & Murray Evans agency began by quoting Richard Nixon’s thesis
on the existence of an influential, but ‘invisible’ social bloc, the “Silent Majority”,
familiar to Australians from Robert Menzies’ claim to speak for the ‘forgotten
people’. Grey & Murray Evans believed that “the majority of the people of Sydney,
and certainly of the State, are supportive -- to varying degrees -- of the plans
announced by the Minister. Unfortunately, they are, indeed, largely ‘silent’”.77 The
campaign analysis contrasted this silent majority to “those opposed to the new
runway [who] are vocal in the extreme”. The campaign’s authors placed the ‘vocal
opponents’ in three categories based on their rationality and possible acceptance of
the third runway message.

1. The Lunatic Fringe

These people are opposed to uranium mining, dams in Tasmania, and
are good at defacing posters, especially those advertising cigarettes. They
are fond of whales and aboriginal land rights, but, quaintly, smoke pot.
There is almost certainly nothing that can be done to gain their support, nor
to neutralise their opposition.

2. The Concerned Citizenry

These people are genuinely concerned that the expansion of Sydney
Airport will adversely affect their quality of life, and that of their
neighbours. They will, largely, live in areas likely to be affected. Their
opposition will be based on varying mixes of information and
misinformation, and is largely -- if not totally -- emotional rather than
rational.

77 Grey & Murray Evans, ‘A presentation to Australian Govt. Advertising Service for Dept.
of Aviation’, 10 November 1982, ‘Kingsford-Smith Development’ File, Department of
Aviation Library, Canberra, p.1.
3. The Manipulators

Small in number, we hypothesise that this group of local politicians, educators and unionists know a good issue when they see it, and coldly calculate the votes and other benefits to be gained from opposing (or supporting) the airport expansion. 78

The campaign proceeded from the assumption that advertising company, and their employers, the Federal government, knew the ‘truth’ of the matter: further airport expansion at KSA was ‘rational’. So conversely, those that opposed it were ‘irrational’, operating from feelings and passions about the issue that could not be justified within the campaign’s (and the government’s) own discourse. The advertising agency recommended that the ‘informational campaign’ addressed itself firstly to the runway’s opponents only as ‘Concerned Citizenry’, and secondly to the ‘Silent Majority’: “The former must be persuaded; the latter reassured.” After that was accomplished, the “Manipulators will fall into line”, and the authors went on to dismiss anybody and everybody else “(As we have noted, there is almost certainly nothing that can be done about the Lunatic Fringe).” Those that were ‘concerned’ and ‘citizens’ were constituted at the symbolic centre of the nation, really only worried about the nation’s progress, but misguided in their efforts. By naming those who opposed expansion ‘the Lunatic Fringe’, the document set them up as already marginal and ‘mad’, therefore beyond reason. The anti-airport protests were instantly allied to an array of other socially marginal movements, and their commitment to environmental and indigenous politics trivialised in a sentimental ‘fondness for whales and land rights’. The ‘Manipulators’ were themselves easily ‘manipulated’ but only if the government could gain that ‘middle ground’ through the concerned and silent majorities.

Despite a glaring lack of empirical research to back up any of these claims, the document successfully constitutes its own truth, as it tells its reader, “it is important to note (and this can be confirmed by perusing the press clippings) that the opposition to the new runway is emotional, rather than rational.”

The report then asks rhetorically “How serious is the problem?” and in answer to its own question confirms that it is a “problem and it is serious” by quoting ‘Jack Barker of the US Federal Aviation Authority’: “No three-quarters of a million pound jet can tiptoe out of an airport”. The authors of the report warned that “when radicals in search of a cause join with unsure, uninformed people seeking to protect their homes and their quality of life, the potential for violence and upheaval exists.” In 1982, when the report was being written “… in normally law-abiding Germany,

---

78 Grey & Murray Evans, p.2.
tear gas and rubber bullets are being used to fight off rioters protesting the expansion of the Frankfurt airport.” While acknowledging that “even the most brilliant advertising and public relations will not alter the fact that ‘no jet can tiptoe out of an airport’, the authors advocated “attack[ing] an emotional problem with an emotional solution. The attitude of much of our target audience is... ‘don’t confuse me with the facts, my mind is made up’”. So to “break through these preconceptions” the authors recommended that the Department should adopt a “major heavyweight campaign with strong emotional values”.

From the mock-up of a print advertisement and storyboard of a television segment included in the submission, Grey & Murray Evans’ ‘emotional heavyweight’ campaign was based on a yet unelaborated ‘five point’ plan as well as a corporate logo incorporating the Southern Cross and a jet, and the patriotically modernist slogan “THE GO-AHEAD AVIATION NATION”. The print ad promised the public that “These new plans will take Sydney, the 21st airport in the world, truly into the 21st century” and stated that “8 million people use this airport each year. They have a right to better facilities, fewer air traffic delays, smoother travelling all round.” The print ad constituted the ‘rights’ of the travellers as taking precedence over any rights of urban subjects to their own city and use of public space, but the televsional narrative undertook a different approach to the ‘emotional’ commitment to modernity and silence of the majority.

The tv ad was to begin with a shot of a bald eagle in a tree next to a runway. As the script accompanying this image was to inform the audience, the bald eagle is “the symbol of America”, and this particular (lucky) eagle “breeds and rears its young... to spread their mighty wings... right here at NASA’s space centre within sight of the Space Shuttle Columbia... a tribute to Man and to Nature.” The script continued over shots of the Space Shuttle taking off and NASA’s mission control room to declare that this was a “true example that care for the environment can go in hand with technological progress”. What this pairing of two key symbols of American nationalism had to do with Sydney’s third runway becomes clear only in the next sequence of shots which showed “David Hood, Sydney Airport Project Director” talking to NASA’s Christopher Kraft about the eagle and NASA’s co-operation with Australia by plans for the US Space Shuttle to launch Australia’s first satellite in 1985. Joining David Hood back in Australia, the storyboard continues and follows him talking as he walked around KSA. Hood was then to demonstrate that the (still unexplained) 5 point plan was “developed to achieve the balance between caring for the environment... and the progress we must make because we are the gateway to

79 Grey & Murray Evans, p.7.
Australia and Australia’s gateway to the world.” The ad was to close with a shot of the exterior of the Sydney Airport Project office and a voice-over by Hood saying “See for yourself how much better it will be... and why Australia must always be -- the go-ahead aviation nation”.

In its construction of a rationality of emotional commitments to the future, the campaign aimed to appeal to fantasies of ‘the machine in the garden’ in the co-existence of pristine nature and high-technology as well as desires for Australia to be seen by its national others as ‘modern’. The advertisement actually ‘borrows’ the symbols of American national progress and technological advancement, as the Australian space program did not have such spectacular scenes to lend to narratives of national pride. This move elides the contested space of the local yet again into the national sublime: no mention is made of any detrimental effects of the airport on those who lived nearby (perhaps happy as bald eagles to ‘nest’ next to runway). Instead, the sublime is located on a world-scale and nearly in outer-space. Here, local subjects must participate in the monologic drive to the future, constructed as obviously ‘better’. The symbolic language of the advertisements is ‘heavy-weight’ and simplistic, but the co-existence of nature and high technology has long been a feature of utopian desires for future cities. Most apparent in the simultaneity of the ‘eagle’ and the ‘spacecraft’ is the invisibility and elimination of human agency from the technological environment. Now cast as ‘second nature’ the machinery of space flight is metonymic for the global space of the airport, part of the nation’s ‘gateway to the world’.

The advertising campaign by Grey & Murray Evans promised official affective ‘correction’ to the ‘incorrect’ public emotions displayed by the airport’s opponents. Designed to appear in the local press in two target groupings, ‘Noise Exposure Areas’ and ‘Protest Groups/SSA (Sydney Second Airport & Extension)’, the campaign’s aims to tell the ‘truth’ of urban development were consistent with the Fraser government’s position that the airport expansion was ‘scientifically’ justified and possible within current ideas of urban planning.

Abel Barton Advertising (ABA), in a competing pitch for the campaign contract constituted their approach differently, but within the same ‘techniques of the true’. The ABA campaign at least mentioned the perception of noise as a problem, but worked to include any divergence from the Federal government position as an error in the individual’s rationality. ABA’s proposed slogan was “We all need Runway 3”. This would be successful, the authors believed because it “relates directly to everyone in a personal way”. The campaign recognised that attention needed to be
diverted from those who had vested interests in airport development to address citizens as the beneficiaries of airport development:

We do not say... the State needs, or ... the Department needs. We simply say "We all need Runway 3". This directly involves the individual and commits him to take a personal stance.

This proposition will bridge the way to the major issue, Sydney’s second airport -- for example: “We all need Sydney’s new International Airport”.

The ABA proposed print ads began under the headline ‘ANNOUNCING A NEW ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE’, the arrival being the “new parallel runway proposal for Sydney’s Kingsford Smith Airport” and the departure, curiously, was a promised “welcomed departure from much of today’s airport noise.”

Even though it was apparent from Noise Exposure Forecast maps published as part of the mocked-up print ads that noise affected areas were going to be very similar if not slightly expanded, the ad copy stated that “All flights on Runway 3 will arrive and depart over Botany Bay, taking a large proportion of airport traffic away from residential areas.” The ABA campaign also indicated that the second airport would eventually solve the long-term problems of the location of KSA, “But in the meantime, it is essential that we develop our existing Airport, to service the immediate needs of every man, woman and child in New South Wales”.

A script for a radio promotion in the ABA submission created a ‘dialogue’ between two people in an airport terminal, with the ‘MAN’ asking the ‘WOMAN’ “why do YOU need Runway 3?” Her befuddled answers allow him to explain the Department’s position:

WOMAN: Runway 3?
MAN: Yes... Runway 3... the new parallel runway planned for Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport.
WOMAN: Oh? A new runway?
MAN: At present, some flights have to fly over residential areas when taking off or landing.
SFX: Whoosh of jet overhead.
WOMAN: Look... there’s one up there now....
MAN: That’s why we need Runway 3... as all Runway 3 flights will arrive and depart over the water expanse of Botany Bay, taking much of the aircraft noise away from residential areas.
And Runway 3 will help keep expensive arrival and departure delays to a minimum... and that could save you money.
WOMAN: Well, on that I agree.
MAN: Building Runway 3 is the first step towards solving our long term airport needs.
WOMAN: Well, you’ve got me, I can see we do need Runway 3.

Neither of these campaigns were implemented. The election of the Hawke Labor government in March 1983 put the Fraser Liberal government’s plans for airport expansion in doubt. As I discuss in detail in the next chapter, these campaigns exhibit rhetorical strategies identical to the Labor party’s arguments for airport expansion into the 1990s. These documents argue that ‘all’ Australia needs airport infrastructure in Sydney. This political discourse of universal need that they develop, and the fact that they were even commissioned in the first place, demonstrates the constant pressure to appear to gain agreement from all citizens for national development, even when this development sets the national in tension with the local. After the 1983 election, the Hawke government returned to earlier Labor policy, developed under the reformist leadership of Gough Whitlam in the early 1970s, that promised to build a second airport outside most densely populated parts of the city. This policy was seriously compromised by delays in the building of a second airport, and the decision of the Hawke government in 1989 to expand Mascot as an interim measure. Both Labor and Liberal government campaigns to ‘persuade’ ‘ordinary’ Australians that their policies were rational and legitimate appropriated imagery of the sublime, either through the ‘excitement’ of the American space program or in a discourse on an ‘economic’ sublime of magnificent wealth beyond national boundaries that awaited realisation if Australia embraced global tourism and business.

* * *

These pressures of development have had a deep influence on events and have manifested in ongoing and unresolvable tensions between state, local and federal politics in Sydney. The events outlined in this chapter have shaped the environment of the suburbs around the airport. The decision not to build a second airport in Sydney, despite the turn to the abstract space of the global economy that they represent, are not made in abstract, unlocated space. The massive capital investments that airports and other architectural ‘super-objects’ represent divert funds from alternative projects at the same time as, noticeably in the case of Sydney, they guarantee the persistence of such structures in their established locations. Local opposition to such investment, when routinely blocked by political institutions, is quickly exhausted and has to find other methods of critique.

---

This chapter has described events that articulated the airport, chronotope of futurity, with maritime travel, a chronotope of Imperialism, through a grand narrative of arrival. Firstly, I analysed the design of the international terminal as it expressed the modernist design principles of function over form and facilitated the smooth transition of the traveller’s movements from building to plane and back again. This distribution and coherence of movement was represented as the ultimate realisation of the modernist fantasy of a space–time that had superseded the limitation of local inflection and geographical space. I questioned this narrative of progress by demonstrating the ways in which the definition of this space of international travel rested on a process of ‘othering’. A temporal othering took place through representations of ‘primitive time’ in indigenous artwork in the terminal building, as well as in exposure of women’s fashion to scrutiny and ‘modernisation’. A spatial othering took place through an emphasis on tourism, especially in the specularity of the female body and the interplay between maritime and aviation technologies. Both Cook’s landing on the beach at Botany Bay and the modernist conquest of the air were performed in the political rituals of the Queen’s opening of the airport terminal in 1970. The narrative of national progress composed an equivalence between the British colonial project and Australian economic development; just as Cook ‘discovered’ Australia, the Queen’s flight ‘discovered’ the international space of air travel and trade. This grand narrative of progress and the sublimity of both spaces were questioned in the local parody of Australia Day celebrations in 1976. The emergence of a discourse on the ecological value of Botany Bay, questioned the terms of the narrative of economic progress. Although considered ‘emotional’ and therefore ‘irrational’ by the grand narrative of national politics, the discourse of ecological damage set up an alternative rationality that could not be accounted for by statements such as “we all need runway three”. The next chapter, “The politics of dislocation” examines the effects of this fragmentation of national unity through a focus on expressions of local and regional critiques of this grand narrative. This next chapter concludes this section, Strangers within the Gates, and completes the series of case studies of aeriality through events and figures.
Chapter Nine:
The politics of dislocation: airport tales

It's every Australian family's dream - a quarter acre block, a barbie, a pool room... and an airport over the back fence.¹

The poster for the 1997 Australian film comedy The Castle frames a snapshot of a happy family between a cartoon-like sketch of a dark and ominous shadow of a jumbo jet descending and the words 'Ordinary Family... Extraordinary Story' (see Fig 9.1). The family in the photograph smile and wave confidently at the camera, seemingly oblivious to the plane descending only a few feet above their heads. The object of the 'Australian family dream' refers, of course, to the subject of the film's title, the family house in the background of the happy snap. And with all ironies intended, their dream does include the 'airport over the back fence'.

The film's promotional strategy emphasised its qualities of locality and ordinariness, especially in the production team's declared objective of reconfiguring Australian cinematic space. The film's publicity promised loudly to "bring the Aussie Backyard onto the Big Movie Screen where it belongs".² Yet, as this chapter argues of other tales about airports in suburbia, the 'Aussie Backyard' (as a space between the domestic and the technological) that is visualised in this film is a profoundly interrupted space: interrupted by competing narratives of the global, the national and the local.

The suburban house, as the film's setting and sphere of action, is extraordinary partly because it is 'next-door' to an airport. The homeliness of this particular backyard is thrown into relief when houses meet the kind of architectural cast-offs only visible at the very margins of suburbia. The boundaries between suburb and infrastructure are exploded when the suburban street borders onto a wasteland or a 'non-residential' zone

It's every Australian Family's dream - 
a quarter acre block, a barbie, a pool room... 
and an airport over the back fence.

ORDINARY FAMILY... EXTRAORDINARY STORY.

THE CASTLE

such as an airport. Such unimpressive locations have often been ignored in favour of city centres and downtowns by both filmmakers and planners because, as American artist and urban activist Martha Rosler has observed, airports are part of the transport infrastructure of a globalising society and so remain “in the realm of the technocrat” and thus “do not encode capital in the way large urban structures do”. This spatial juxtaposition of the everydayness of the backyard against the international vectors of travel, tourism and international trade is mirrored by a narrative that creates a connection between the domestic and the distant without any transition or mediation through the ‘public’. The strategy of the film, and an inherently funny one, is to show up and eventually transcend the separation of the space between the suburbanite and the technocrat.

This chapter is not a detailed history of the inexorable media focus and debate about the decision to build a third runway at Mascot. I instead examine how the historical and public event of dislocation after the runway opening was represented in a set of stories. These stories imagined the domestic as displaced and relocated by the urban world that the new runway produced: an increasingly globalised, corporatised and world-scale city. This chapter seeks to focus the implications of this shift from home as interior and closed space to the ‘outsidedness’ of a home next to the runway. Here I am examining the ways in which a series of texts perceive and create these relationships through a narrative of ‘ordinariness’. I argue that the kinds of speculative work that these texts achieve is above all to convert a ‘sense of place’ into an event.

In these stories this relationship between home, the nation and the world is above all ‘dialogic’, that is, these stories create dialogues, but not correspondences, between travel and home, urban flows and suburban belonging, tradition and modernity. In keeping with my study’s continued focus on the ‘extroversions’ of place signified by the airport, I will argue that narratives of progress in modernity are constituted through organisations of spatiality.

---
As Australia’s economy has proceeded from a resource-based to a service-based one, greater mobility of people and goods have created pressure on an outdated and badly managed tourism and transport infrastructure. The decision to build a third runway was made, against forty years of Labor party policy on 22 March 1989 by the Hawke government. The alternative proposal, and one favoured by councils in the inner west and south of the city, was to direct the funds earmarked for any future developments at Mascot to building a totally new airport. The Hawke government, when it announced its decision on the third runway also agreed to begin immediate construction at a second airport at Badgery’s Creek. Badgery’s Creek is a ‘greenfields’ site in the hinterland of Sydney’s traditionally Labor voting and low-income western suburbs. The second airport project would cost over one billion dollars and was projected to take at least six years to build. Although no transport links existed to the site in 1989, the second airport proposal included some funds towards improving road access. The State Liberal government, however, wanted to keep Mascot as the main international airport in Australia. Mascot’s inner suburban location was seen to benefit developers and businesses in central Sydney. The suburbs around Mascot airport were traditional Labor seats, so there was no electoral advantage to be had from opposing further development. The Liberal’s pro-business and ‘small government’ policies were opposed to public funding of new infrastructure. The massive capital investment at the site since 1921 from both public and public sources, via the Federal Airports Corporation (FAC) and Qantas, at Mascot would be lost if international and domestic jet flights were redirected to Badgery’s Creek.

Indeed, the State Government Department of State Development, under the direction of Liberal Premier Greiner, had spent over $400,000 to promote the third runway project. The State Government engaged an international public relations firm, Hill & Knowlton from 1988 to 1990 to convince key politicians and opinion leaders, such as radio talkback hosts, that the runway was actually needed. Hill & Knowlton had already been running

5 Prime Minister Paul Keating opening the third runway, 4 November 1994, quoted in Fitzgerald, The Sydney Airport Fiasco, p. 1.
a campaign promoting the third runway as a necessary infrastructure project for the State Chamber of Commerce and its coalition of airline and tourist interests called the ‘KSA Taskforce’. The shift to a combination of business and government clients did not signal a conflict of interest for the Liberal government bureaucrats. John Saunders, Director-General of the Department of State Development during 1989-1990 told an investigative journalist, Evelyn McWilliams, in 1996 that “The State Chamber of Commerce and the KSA Taskforce had much the same customer base as [the Department of] State Development. So why not share the cost of one PR consultancy.”

Other lobby groups targeting the Federal cabinet in the months leading up to the 1989 decision included the ‘Supporters of Runway 3’ group. The prime mover in the group was Sydney property developer, Syd Londish, also chairman of the Sydney Convention and Visitors Bureau, and his campaign took advice from Sir Peter Abeles, Chief Executive of transport company TNT as well as executives from Ansett and Australian Airlines.

The final approval of the runway project was subject to a positive ‘Environmental Impact Statement’ (EIS), but as many commented, any objectivity that the EIS process might have had was severely compromised when the FAC awarded the contract for the study to Kinhills, an engineering and construction firm that had been contractors for projects at the airport. Kinhills were interested in tendering for the project if the EIS was positive, and in fact did later carry out work for the third runway. Gary Punch -- a Labor politician whose seat of Barton was under the flight path and who had resigned as Aviation Support Minister in 1989 after the cabinet decision to build the runway -- denounced the choice of Kinhills in parliament in May 1990. Punch called the award of the EIS contract to Kinhills over other contractors who were not tendering for airport construction projects “a deep seated and organised intention to ‘produce a study to achieve a predetermined result’”. Even in 1990, independent assessors had argued that the EIS methods and aims fell short of previous studies:

The FAC’s proposal to build and operate a third runway at Sydney airport asks some parties to accept adverse consequences, such as additional noise disturbances... the Draft EIS is much less comprehensive than the MANS study

---

8 Evelyn McWilliams, ‘Airport Policy: public or private?’, Reportage, UTS Department of Social Communication and Journalism, Summer 1996/97, quoted in Fitzgerald, The Sydney Airport Fiasco, p. 23.
10 Mike Secombe, ‘Runway EIS firm may bid for work’, Sydney Morning Herald, 19 May 1990, p. 3.
conducted from 1977-79... recommendations are not... in terms of net economic
benefit... [the EIS] uses rules of thumb and other derivative measures.12

The Senate inquiry into the Third Runway decision conducted during 1994 and 1995
reiterated the criticisms made by literally thousands of people and organisations of the
EIS. The Inquiry in part allowed the recently elected State Labor government to declare
its opposition to its Liberal predecessor’s airport policy. The Inquiry did not directly
criticise the State Liberal’s expenditure and support of the decision to build a third
runway at Mascot, but in hindsight, the Inquiry’s report described the untold effects of
the decision:

On the evidence put before the committee, it is no exaggeration to say that
the consequences of the construction and operation at KSA... have scarred a
city... Unless some lessons are learnt... all future attempts to expand capacity at
Australian airports will be treated with suspicion... In hindsight, the
construction of the runway can be seen as an engineering triumph, and as an
environmental and social tragedy.13

The Inquiry recommended “that Commonwealth and NSW governments co-operate as a
matter of urgency in the construction of a rail link” to the second airport site and that the
NSW government should develop a timetable for other infrastructure development.14

Construction work at Badgery’s Creek was noticeable by its absence in the years
following the announcement of the third runway project. In December 1994 a House of
Representatives report warned that the domestic terminal at Mascot would not be able
to handle the increased traffic of the Olympics and recommended that “the Government
set target dates for the completion of various stages of Sydney West airport, including
the year in which the airport would be opened, and that the Government publish this
information.”15 Despite this advice, no such timetable was published and throughout the
1990s the site chosen for a second Sydney airport at Badgery’s Creek remained largely
untouched. The Federal Minister for Transport and Communications, Senator Collins,

12 Sydney University comments on third runway EIS, 10 December 1990, Marrickville Library
Local Studies Collection.
13 Senate Select Committee on Aircraft Noise in Sydney, Falling on Deaf Ears, November 1995, pp.
El-3.
14 Senate Select Committee on Aircraft Noise in Sydney, Falling on Deaf Ears, ‘Recommendations’.
15 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Transport, Communications and
Infrastructure, Inquiry into the Sydney 2000 Olympics. The adequacy of existing and planned aviation
turned the ‘first sod’ at Badgery’s Creek in June 1992 to symbolise the commencement of stage one construction, but no further work was carried out after that time.16

The election of the Howard Liberal Government in March 1996 began the whole site selection and evaluation process all over again. In December 1996 the Labor Shadow Minister for Transport issued a press statement that reported the sale of substantial piece of Commonwealth land near Badgery’s Creek, and interpreted this as a sign that there would never be a second airport at the site. Meanwhile, the domestic terminal at Mascot was completely rebuilt and opened in late 1999, well in time for the Olympics in 2000. Both Labor and Liberal parties have mooted plans for privatisation of the airport management, and the Labor government blamed the failure of its airport privatisation legislation in 1995 for the delays in building Badgery’s Creek.17 In October 1997, after estimates were released by Qantas that it would cost the company one billion dollars to move its facilities to Badgery’s Creek, the Sydney weekend paper, the Sun-Herald, reported that Qantas was lobbying for a ‘fourth runway’ at Mascot.18

When faced with the massive resistance to closure of Mascot airport in the long-term, like their predecessors in the 1940s, Federal politicians had decided that it was easier to change the suburbs under the flight path rather than move the airport itself. The initial announcement of the Hawke government in 1989 to commence building at Badgery’s Creek looks in hindsight like an elaborate hoax played on the residents of Sydney. The enthusiasm of Hawke’s successor, Prime Minister Paul Keating, for the third runway project and the discourse of economic ‘reform’ through globalisation and infrastructure development was spectacularly displayed in his ‘photo opportunism’ at the third runway opening. Both local and metropolitan newspapers liberally quoted his speech on the day:

> It’s something the nation had to have... It is a huge reform for tourism, it’s a huge reform for the comfort of passengers and the service facility it provides... It is a tribute to the courage of the Labor Party and the Cabinet that it knew this facility needed to be built -- but we’ve shared the load by insulating 3,500 homes in a way that has never been done around any major airport anywhere in the world... This is a great day for Sydney and a great day for Australia.19

---

The front page of the *Glebe and Inner City News* showed Keating in a suit standing in the middle of the runway holding a pair of scissors, evidently pronouncing the runway open in the political ritual of ribbon-cutting (see Fig 9.2), as did a photograph in the *Herald* (see Fig 9.3). Their captions, however, set in tension these ‘reforms’ and the experience of their readers, by paraphrasing his speech: “It’s the Runway we had to have”. This headline resonated with Keating’s comments during the 1980s economic recession, when he told the nation to grin and bear economic hard times, and advised the country from his position as Treasurer to the increasingly ‘economically liberal’ Labor government, “it’s the recession we had to have”. This comment articulated the necessity of individual suffering for national progress, but the newspapers’ twist on his words criticised the articulation of the airport project with this economic philosophy.

The *Daily Telegraph*’s description of the runway opening was far more euphoric and distinctly excited about the new development. Instead of the Prime Minister, the tabloid’s front page showed a Qantas plane landing on the new runway. The article accompanying the photograph spoke of the runway as Sydney’s third “front door”, an “elegant strip able to handle as many as 65 takeoffs and landings an hour and cope with jets as large as Boeing 767 or Airbus A300”. On the same day that the runway was officially opened Marrickville council sought an injunction in the Federal court, claiming that flight movements over Marrickville would more than double after the new flight plans were put into place. The injunction was rejected by the Court as the new flight paths did not breach civil or criminal law. The Judge hearing the case, Justice Lockhart, said that the court “decided the issue on legal question and not on social and political questions, which are entrusted to others”.

On the 5 November the *Sydney Morning Herald*’s editorial was dismissive of the $183 million noise compensation package to be paid to Marrickville residents who were in the ‘insulation zone’ as a Labor party bribe to its electorate:

Most taxpayers will wonder at the fairness of this... handout. Their sympathy for those benefitting under these measures will be lukewarm. In all but a very few cases, residents who bought their house knowing there was a noise problem, knowing the airport was never going to close and knowing that it was bound to expand.

---

"It's the runway we had to have", *The Glebe and Inner City News*, 9 November 1994, front page.
Airport legal challenge rejected

BY ANABEL DEAN

Marrickville Council failed yesterday in a last-minute legal challenge that could have prevented the opening of the third runway.

The council had argued that the implementation of temporary air traffic control measures would have dramatically increased aircraft noise over suburbs north of Sydney Airport and would have been excessive for residents not yet protected by noise abatement measures.

But in the Federal Court yesterday, Justice Lockhart said he was ruling on legal issues and had no power to pass judgment on whether the increased noise levels would be tolerable or ought to be allowed.

These were "social and political questions" entrusted to others, he said.

The decision to implement new air traffic control arrangements (taking effect today) were neither wrong in law nor a breach of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) or Federal Airways Corporation (FAC) acts.

The CAA, the FAC and the Federal Minister for Transport, Mr Brennan, had argued through their lawyers that the inconvenience of postponing the new air traffic arrangements made it unfair to grant the injunction.

Outside court, the Mayor of...
The *Herald* completely reversed this position during the following days when it actually set up a complaints hotline that recorded up to 300 phone calls a day from people outside the projected noise affected area and firmly within the Herald’s growing target market of educated middle class readers in newly gentrified inner city suburbs like Haberfield, Summer Hill and Drummoyne, as well as the established readership of harbourside suburbs like Lane Cove and Hunter’s Hill. The callers reported to the *Herald* that they either couldn’t get through to the official hotline at the FAC or that when they did get through, they were told they were “imagining things”.

A coalition of Labor-left faction MPs, all of whom had vested interests in the airport noise issue as their electorates were under the flight path, lobbied their party colleague Laurie Brereton, Minister for Transport, to take the complaints handling away from the FAC and give the power to investigate breaches of flight paths and curfews to an independent ombudsman. The *Herald* reported that the Minister repeatedly ignored calls to him to discuss the issue, and Alan Ramsay, one of the paper’s most influential columnist was called a ‘cunt’ by Brereton during a telephone conversation on the airport issue. Shortly after the insult, Brereton hung up. The cartoon accompanying this column showed Keating and Brereton having a ‘storm in a tea cup’ on the runway with their ears firmly plugged. Peter Baldwin, Minister for Consumer Affairs, and one of the Left faction MPs being inundated by protests was drawn hiding in a bunker to the side of the runway (see Fig 9.4).

Despite the embarrassing press coverage of the Labor party’s handling of this issue, the choice of national economic over urban planning and popular sentiment continues to drive airport policy in Australia. The alliance between airlines and government, and the negation of dialogue with those affected by the process reflects the unevenness of processes of globalisation and modernisation.

As this thesis has argued, these changes to the city have created Sydney’s airport as a contested site on symbolic, spatial and practical levels. In the remainder of this chapter I focus on the appropriation of the symbols of globalisation in representations of the domestic in the context of such decisions. Although it is crucial to maintain an 

---

26 Alan Ramsay, ‘You can’t hang up on Sydney, Laurie’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 1994
Fig 9.4 Cartoon by Ward O'Neill 'You can't hang up on Sydney, Laurie'--
'Sydney morning flugelhorn -- thunderous protest', Sydney Morning
Herald, 3 December 1994.
awareness of the interplays of politics at the governmental and corporate level, without an analysis of the fragmentation of the grand narrative of ‘reform’ at a local and situated level, the powers of cultural analysis are severely limited. I now focus on the reception of these developments in three different stories that create dialogue between the events outlined above and their local effects: firstly, in a film, The Castle, secondly, ‘The Departure Lounge’, a public park project, and thirdly, The Plane Truth a play about ‘an airport and other low-flying acts’. All of these texts question the space of the technocrat and economic reformist by siting domestic space in very close contact with the abstracted and high-speed space of globalisation. Such stories, I argue organise ‘home’ in the era of globalisation as separated from such exaltations of economic excess by only the smallest of margins. In all of these stories home subjects are both outside their homes and outside the sublimity of the world-scale economy and tourist industry. The site of the domestic on the ‘outside’ displays the spatial ambiguity of Benjamin’s modern arcades ("both house and stars"). Rather than modernist travel stories that construct ‘home’ as a site of nostalgia and essential, authentic belonging, these airport tales strategise the social and political function of home in modernity. The ambivalence to home in these stories embraces both contempt for and celebration of homely identity. Most importantly, the homes in these stories are dialectical images because they explore home-making practices in difference rather than home-as-place in identification with a place and time.

Although I am taking Benjamin’s notion of the dialectical image beyond its original historical and geographical context in his writing about the social conditions of Fascist Germany before the second world war, I use his work here to theorise imagination as social practice.27 This approach has much to offer an analysis of urban change (or lack thereof). While I agree with the view that contemporary collective architectures overwhelmingly aim to turn the collective into manageable flows -- as the artist and urban activist Martha Rosler observes of the morphology of north American airport terminals: “‘Public spaces’ are rethought here as ‘non-private’ spaces, spaces of consumption and control or spaces of disorder, characterised by homelessness, crime, vehicular traffic”28 -- I content that perhaps this is not the whole story. Going beyond a totalising definition of homogenous and singular ‘public’ is a preliminary strategy. Certain spaces have the potential to be mobilised as dialectical sites. Each manifestation of a ‘public’, as a convergence of individuals at a particular place and time, offers a

27 Appadurai, ‘Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy’, p. 5.
fulcrum for engaging the social and the spatial. Such imaginary, playful space most often appears precisely at the point of the greatest tensions between official and unofficial political forms. In this thesis I have sought to map the disjunctures between pressures to commercialise and corporatise collective architectures and communal stories that circulate through and inside these places.

With this connection between imagination and social practice in mind, it is possible to map a body of work that has achieved such a fragmentation and re-orientation of public spaces away from the managerial focus on the ‘public’ as objects of ‘traffic’. In the 1990s diverse cultural projects have sought to problematise the grand narratives of urban ‘development’ and globalisation that continue to transform public space in cities. Such projects have engaged with collective architectures -- not just the obviously spectacular forms of consumption economies such as shopping malls and leisure/tourist spaces -- but the invisible side-effects of these processes. These projects share a concern with the places that you pass through on your way to somewhere else: the disposable and dispelled apparatus of modernity.

In particular I have been influenced by a series of debates surrounding ‘public’ art work during the 1980s and 1990s. One important example here is the ‘In our path’ project which, as documented by photographer Jeff Gates from 1982 to 1995, involved local residents and artist in understanding the impact -- and questioning the aims of -- the ‘Century Freeway’ in south Los Angeles as it cut through an existing neighbourhood.29 Another is the considerable comment surrounding Rachel Whiteread’s site-specific sculpture ‘House’ in London’s East End in 1993, which grew from unusually wide media coverage of a temporary art project on a piece of vacant land in London into a debate on British housing policies and the aesthetics of domestic memory in England.30 Indicating a broader trend towards re-thinking notions of public space in a local context, both projects have engendered debate and rethinking of the relationships between communities, representation and urban design. Along with many other projects seeking to insert representations of place within debates over spatial change, they share a common concern to develop a notion of ‘landscape’ as that goes beyond a distanced, ‘drawing-room view of nature’. To conclude, and begin, this re-thinking of landscape involves taking representations of place extremely seriously for what they can tell us

about the state of urban worlds. Such representations may also, through the less serious exercise of laughter and irony, figure their possible change.

an airport over the back fence

Released in a year of Hollywood blockbusters like *Men in Black*, *The Castle* was the thirteenth most popular release in Australia in 1997, and was the most popular Australian production of the year. The film was bought by Miramax for an American re-release in 1999, with Australian dialogue such as 'barbie' re-dubbed as 'barbeque' and an extra, higher-quality soundtrack added. This distribution deal inserted a distinctly 'Australian' film into the global media market, creating a brief inversion of the dominant media flows from the North to the South, West to East, Hollywood to world market. The oddity of this event was underlined by the self-promotion of the film as a strategically local and anti-heroic media event: a low-budget film with no international star in a suburban setting about a local issue, and an ensemble of local actors who were more familiar to Australian audiences from the daily routines of domestic television soaps and commercials rather than the global market of feature films.

*The Castle* was the first feature written by the television comedians Rob Sitch, Santo Cilauro, Jane Kennedy and Tom Gleisner, and produced by their company, 'Working Dog'. The team's reputation for comedy and satire had been established by their breakfast radio programs, television comedy series *The Late Show*, and the very popular current affairs parody, *Frontline*, screened on the government-funded Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) television network. *Frontline*'s scripts were characterised by their immediate linking of topical news events to a critique of news-gathering practices. The on-location setting of the episodes and guest appearances by

---

33 Locally made films' share of national cinema attendance in Australia was 3 per cent during 1999. Lynden Barber, 'Sidetracking you in anticipation', *The Weekend Australian Review*, 5-6 February 2000, p. 20.
politicians and celebrities brought a ‘reality effect’ to the weekly show that highlighted the rhetorical pretensions of television news and current affairs.\textsuperscript{34}

The team’s approach to film-making in \textit{The Castle}, directly translated from this television experience in both process and product, makes for a deliberately ‘small’ screen, home-video aesthetic. The completion of shooting in ten days also attests to their televisual emphasis on story rather than film-making as ‘art’. In the release publicity, the filmmakers express their approach to the film by firmly establishing the break that their work represents with the national-cultural politics of the 1970s and 80s. They set their film against the tradition of the Australian big-screen heroic epics such as \textit{Breaker Morant} and \textit{The Man from Snowy River}. An aesthetic of fast shooting and low production values, as well as choice of location, signifies a self-distancing from the grandiose bush-mythology of such films.

Indeed, when the film’s advance publicity promised to “bring the Aussie Backyard onto the Big Movie Screen where it belongs!” the film also signalled yet another displacement of the predominant anti-urban cinematic imaginary of Australia, especially fascinated until the 1990s with the sublimity of the landscapes of the desert and the bush. A description of the protagonist from the film’s synopsis clearly places the story and setting within and against an established ‘quality’ Australian film-making tradition that narrated national identity in colonial spaces:

If you thought Burke and Wills [colonial explorers who crossed the continent from south to north for the first time in 1860, although most of their party didn’t make it and they themselves perished of thirst and hunger under at tree in mid-summer] were the worst equipped people in Australian history, you’re in for a surprise.

‘The Castle’ is a sweeping saga that takes the harsh Australian outback, the rugged characters of the ANZAC legend, the spirit of Banjo Patterson and ignores them in favour of a greyhound racing, low-truck driver who never meant to be a hero.\textsuperscript{35}

Statements such as these deliberately and humorously undermine the ‘AFC genre’ identified by Australian film academics Susan Dermody and Liz Jacka in the 1980s, so named as the films identified with it were funded via the Commonwealth Government’s Australian Film Commission (AFC). During the 80s, and even well into the 90s, the AFC gave directors such as Gillian Armstrong and Peter Weir (who now work in Hollywood)

\textsuperscript{34} Barthes, ‘The Reality Effect’, p. 11-17.

unprecedentedly large budgets to produce a series of character-based ‘quality’ films such as My Brilliant Career, Gallipoli, and Picnic at Hanging Rock.36 The distinguishing features of the genre were the films’ ubiquitous historical settings and realist aesthetic. The wide-screen mythologising of the Australian rural landscape in these films paralleled their exploration of questions of national and personal identity, creating a sense that cinematic explorations of struggles over identity and place in Australia were held firmly in the past or the bush, and preferably both.

The Castle instead can be placed in a generic trajectory which runs in 90s Australian cinema from Muriel’s Wedding, Sweetie, Strictly Ballroom, through to Floating Life,37 all films that explore the stories of contemporary suburbia rather than the ‘bush’, although the themes of national and personal identity articulated through a coming-of-age narrative remain no less present.38 Similarly, Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, questioned the relationship of the outback to the city, with a road movie structure of drag queens on tour in the country re-negotiating Australian male identity in many ways that would not have been possible in the 1980s.39

The Castle works in very different territory from the other Australian suburban films of the 90s. The landscape of the suburb depicted in the film bypasses the ‘city centre’ itself, as it is not only unnecessary to the story, but it also seems superfluous to the daily lives of the characters. The Castle locates itself in the home and the suburb by constructing a hybrid form of televisual and video-matic visual codes extended into a feature film plot structure. The film opens with a teenage boy speaking directly to camera, his narration beginning with “My name is Dale Kerrigan and this is my story”. His character continues by voice-over to narrate the family’s story and take the audience on a tour of his home, as if this was a home video that was sent to overseas relatives or a school project. Apart from the director’s explanation of this narrative technique as a purely economic one because the catering budget for the film shoot would only last ten days, so that the voice-over device was used to introduce the characters as quickly as possible, by beginning this way the film also echoes the docudrama structure of the infamous BBC ‘real life’ soap opera of the Australian grotesque, Sylvania Waters.40 Working a chronotopic genre between the urban cinemascapes and the suburban mass-mediascape,

38 Muriel’s Wedding and Strictly Ballroom are distributed internationally by Miramax.
the film uses actors not known for quality feature film acting or stage roles. The lead actor, Michael Caton, played 'Uncle Harry' in the long running 1970s historical soap The Sullivans and Anne Tenney cast as 'Sal Kerrigan' performed 'Molly' until her character died of cancer and caused national mourning in the 1980s' rural doctor soapie A Country Practice.

These divergences from the AFC genre are not to say that the film does not address the issues of identity championed by the national cultural project of the 1980s. The setting of the film in contemporary suburbia and its intertwined imaginary of the home and the televusional mediascape, do, however, suggest a refractory and subversive gesture that sets a contemporaneous minor cinema of the ordinary family backyard against an always already historic major cinema of the sublime and heroic outback.

As the story of the 'castle' develops in the film's narrative -- and as the family's right to property and their house is placed in question -- the notion of home as a transparent attachment to place is also unsettled and drawn from invisibility into a discourse on homelessness in a post-colonial world. While working towards an ending that sees the family re-united and re-located in their home, the film also offers a representation of the suburban landscape that could be described as an articulation of the suburb to its 'others'. An acknowledgement of the complexity of this relationship has far-reaching implications that The Castle only starts in train: that the suburb itself in settler society might be somehow contingent on displacing others; that colonial history might be mixed up with the present; and that the Australian dream is predicated on a set of social exclusions and inclusions. Such a vision of these spaces as socially related is only possible at this moment in Australian history, after the long and continued struggles for recognition of native title in the Australian legal system since the 1930s through to the 90s.

The Castle also circumvents any aestheticisation of the technological sublime in the spaces of the modernist city. In the other 'suburban camp' films, the main characters seek to transcend their past and cast aside the signs of suburban 'dagdom'. A peculiarly Australian word, the term 'dag' signifies an awkwardness, lack of sophistication, closeness and polish in contrast with an urban knowingness and self-possession. According to the Macquarie dictionary, a 'dag' is "a person who, while neat in appearance and conservative in manners, lacks style and panache". Typically in the

---

41 Macquarie dictionary, p. 460.
films mentioned above the main character, usually female, is transformed from ‘dag’ to ‘glamour’ by passage from the suburb to the city. This is represented by a shift in setting from the wide, silent and lonely spaces of the suburban or small town street, with their gauche inhabitants and kitsch houses, to the exciting, dynamic cosmopolitanism of the urban centre. The characters similarly shed their ugly duckling status with a change of clothes, and then the film ends with some kind of return or acknowledgement of the changed status of the main character by those who have been left behind.

we’ve got to stop taking other people’s land away

Stories about ‘home’ that imagine and represent the suburban house as decentralised in globalisation can develop some unusual relationships between suburban and urban desires for mobility. While the film takes a fairly broadly comic approach by enumerating and portraying the family’s quirks and everyday habits, it also employs a dramatic structure to motivate the story and address some ethical and moral themes. The drama begins when a faceless entity, ‘Airlink’ (a business consortium) and the Federal Airports Corporation, conspire to compulsorily acquire the Kerrigan’s house, ‘Number 3 Highview Crescent, Coolaroo’. The house is situated on an unfinished suburban street, so close to the airport that the runway is at the end of the street and they can walk home from the international terminal when they go to meet their daughter and her new husband returning from their honeymoon.

The comedy here works through a tension that is raised when parodying the middle Australian suburban dream, and a tension that reflects a deep ambivalence about the pleasures of suburbia. The Kerrigan family passionately participate in an ordinary Australianess that is performed by the everyday pursuits of greyhound racing, fishing, an enthusiasm for fast cars and boats, watching the re-runs of highlights of television variety shows and themselves appearing on game shows, home renovating and decorating. Their home also remains a ‘work-in-progress’ as it undergoes endless renovations until the final scenes of the film.

Their house, by its endless reworking, incompleteness and surfeit of campy details -- especially in shots that linger on scrupulously fake Victorian lacework and a brick
veneer chimney -- is an example of what Australian modernist architect Robin Boyd termed 'featurist' in his 1960s book *The Australian Ugliness*.\(^{42}\) Boyd's book, written in the decline of International Style in Australian architecture, advocated a return the modernist principles of function over form and perceived the Australian home and suburb as an important site of the reception and production of a modernised national character. In the 1950s he prefaced his book *Australia's Home*, with the assertion that "the small house, probably more than anything else man has done, has made the face of Australia and to an extent the faces of Australians".\(^{43}\) In both books he particularly railed against suburban 'jumbled up-ness' and the commercially driven and transitory streetscape of the suburban 'strip' developments. These 'ugly' spaces of transit and display were exactly the kinds of environments Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown would embrace in the 1970s in *Learning from Las Vegas*, their manifesto of post-modernist architecture and the new cultural form of the 'decorated shed'.\(^{44}\)

Like Boyd's critique of the design of the form of the suburban house, the film's focus on the surfaces of an excessive and exaggerated suburbia work to address an audience who will be familiar with, but separate from the characters and setting portrayed. This conflictual and negotiated relationship to suburbia as a home from which to escape can be summed up in a quote from Stephen Curry who plays the character of Dale, the film's narrator: "Australians are all going to 'get' The Castle because they know or have met every single one of the characters in the film".\(^{45}\) So although the intended audience is expected to 'recognise' the characters and their setting, they are not expected to 'be' the characters, nor live in such an excessive state of suburbia. This exactly the kind of exaggerated and camped suburban setting that has appeared in other Australian films such as *Muriel's Wedding*. Because the space of action in *The Castle* is an articulation between the times and spaces of the suburban family home, the 'high' court as the final power of the national and the transportation complex of transnational corporation, the 'ordinariness' of the interiorised nuclear family is demonstrated to be profoundly extraordinary.

When a crisis of authority over the legal rights of national citizens to national space is triggered by a threat to their home, the commonsense notion of the Anglo family as


centred, ordinary national subjects is challenged. The right to property that underlies Western notions of political subjectivity is exposed as fragile and mythic, creating a turning point for the taken-for-granted constructions of race, ethnicity, gender and class. As this overlap between the house and the home starts to slide apart, the uncanny erupts into the home, intersubjectively constructing the family’s experiences of loss and displacement as resonant with the dislocation of other migrants and eccentric suburbanites. However, I wish to argue here that the film -- like other airport tales that approach the super-object of the airport through a questioning of the global/local relationship -- in this uncanny moment of domestic interruption neither displaces the family’s own abjection onto a racialised or ethnicised body, nor sublimes desire for the other into a fetishised display of cosmopolitan nomads, but actually introduces dislocation into the Australian body politic.46 Throughout the story, Darryl Kerrigan’s inability to defend the family’s home signals a crisis of ‘ordinary’ patriarchy constituted in the structure of the nuclear family. Darryl has previously been an enthusiastic modernist, admiring the high voltage electrical pylons at the end of his street in sublime contemplation: ‘a sign of man’s ability to produce electricity’. Illuminating the difference between a suburban second-order consumption of mobility in contrast to the cosmopolitan’s access to a global dimension, even though the family has never travelled outside their city, Darryl considers his house’s proximity to the airport an asset, as public transport lies just at the end of the road. Generally participating in and finding pleasure in narratives of progress, the Kerrigans exhibit an ordinary passion for domestic and suburban technologies: walkmans, cars, boats, lawnmowers, television. They are far from nostalgic for any original organic community reconciling man and nature, reflected in the synopsis’ description of the house as having “more driveway than lawn”47 -- but the limits of their participation in a technologised urbanism is exposed by the intrusion of the global economy into their lives in shape of the ever-expanding airport freight facility. The family’s exclusion from suburbia that follows this ‘tragic’ development delineates a heterogeneity of modernist space.

The family’s world as a ‘world apart’ from the benefits of the world-scale ‘public’ space of cosmopolitanism stands alongside their participation in a culture of privatised mobility in speedboats, cars and trucks. Their case could be read as an example of the urban problematics of the 1990s, which continue to be bound within this stretch between

the magical promises of technological solutions to technological problems and the problems of uneven development and urban dislocation. The scenes in which the family members express feelings of loss and betrayal at the idea of losing their home are plainly not just expressions of loss of the house itself. The sense of tragedy here is also linked to the negation of a humanist vision of relation with machines. This suburban home-world is so thoroughly mixed with technology on an ontological level that the idea that the airport, for the family a local marker of place and a connection to the global beyond, could itself be a threat to their sense of place creates a critical turning point in their sense of location.

While this juxtaposition between the 'extraordinary' and 'ordinary' in the family's story is centred on the struggle of an 'average' suburban family to remain in their home, the contact between 'above' and 'below' expands from the family's own struggle for location to examine other historically and geographically specific dislocations. When its very place is questioned in a narrative of dislocation, the suburban backyard becomes a site for different times and spaces to meet. The film really begins when the family's quarter-acre block, and in fact their whole street, is resumed to expand their city's airport facilities. The tragi-comedic adventure to save the family house continues as they try, un成功fully, to use the civic spaces of a modern democracy (courts, local councils, neighbourhood meetings) to defend the 'castle' of the film's title. This process creates the suburban house as a locale through which to assess and explore the personalised processes of home-making and location within the political frame of the effects of spatial change and dislocation in late twentieth century Australia.

In the face of this displacement of the domestic, the paranoid solution of defending the house in a 'shoot-em-up' last stand is offered by the eldest son when he aims a second-hand air rifle at the police who come to the house. Darryl in his position as father of the household, refuses this option and instead asks his son how much the gun cost. Rather than defending their very own private houses, the films' characters choose a collective action to defend their whole neighbourhood. The other homes on the Highview Crescent represent a range of socially and economically marginal suburbanites: a divorced woman, a recently migrated Lebanese family and a pensioner. The film's co-writer explains how this shift from the house as 'castle' to the street as an arena for visualising the collective came about "It's an accidental byproduct... we didn't set out to make a comment about the fabric of Australian society. We set out to tell the story of a
family and their house... as simple as that. You hear stories and you create a bit of a neighbourhood in your own mind...”  

In an anecdote about neighbourliness, the film's director expresses a notion of cultural difference that comes down to eating or not eating a certain food:

It's really looking at the landscape of Australia, and really Australians get on pretty well no matter who is the next door neighbour, and Australia is dysfunctional, but I don't think it's a nasty form of dysfunction. Different ethnicities will look over the back fence and say 'I don't know how you can eat that radicchio or whatever it is', and someone else will look over: 'I don't know how you can eat a meat pie', you know I think it's pretty harmless.  

This notion of a backyard multiculturalism turns the Anglo family from ground to figure, but it also makes invisible a set of differences that cannot be reduced to what kind of food one or the other eats. The reduction of difference to a purely aesthetic or culinary level is an appealing but problematic move that points out a more global blurring of identities that occurs within the film. The potential threat to a friendly banter over a meat pie that brings the street together, rather than causing social frictions in Highview Crescent, is founded on a sense of belonging that forms a continuum between dislocations caused by migration during war, colonisation and urban development: posing them as all equal, on a level field. On one level this could be seen in Meaghan Morris's terms as "a refusal to make difference 'nuclear', claustrophobic".  

In the film, as in real-life neighbourly differences can be cohesive, they create a dialogues over the back fence.

But the distinctions between and limits of different kinds of alterities in this mythical space of cohesion must still be closely examined. In particular, the family's loss of authority over domestic space in the film creates an intersection between a myth of suburban locality and other struggles over rights to define place. Most strikingly, The Castle places the Kerrigan's fight to save their house on the same plane as aboriginal struggles for land rights. The film explicitly creates a relationship between their claim to the suburban house as a kind of sacred site (invested with memories, stories and connections to place) and the High Court of Australia's 1992 'Mabo' judgement rejecting


339
the colonial notion of terra nullius. The parallel between the suburban family’s claim on their house and aboriginal rights to land is underpinned by an architectonics of democracy and justice which -- in the words of suburban solicitor Dennis Denuto as he bumblingly tries to defend the Kerrigan’s case in the Federal Court -- can be summed up as the all around ‘vibe’ of the Australian constitution.

Thus the film poses the process of globalisation as metonymic for the process of colonisation. The seeming ordinariness of this move risks covering over many of the complexities of home as a ‘lived’ time/space within in the film (and outside it). Certainly the film’s structuring of the home as founded on colonial invasion critically locates any Australian ‘home’ as indeterminately public and private, constructed somewhere between local, national and global, and temporally between past and present. The dialogue between Darryl and Sal Kerrigan as they pack up their house and look for a new place to live is telling: “we’ve got to stop taking people’s land away”, Darryl says to his wife. The Kerrigan’s ‘castle’ is imaged and imagined in such a post-colonial Australian cinema as a site that is contingent and relational, rather than essential and authentic. Doreen Massey has argued that only a relativist, extroverted, ‘global sense of place’ can adequately describe these social and spatial trans-locations of modernity. Home as spatial practice, rather than essence, in this airport tale creates the site of such a globalised, extroverted, relational and eccentric sense of belonging. The simultaneously hyperlocal and hyperglobal chronotope of the suburban house next door to the runway displaces is so extreme as to displace national claims to identity in favour of a positive dislocation. The unfolding narrative of the Kerrigan’s quest for homeliness in the face of globalisation explains the social relations of this place. The failure of a narrative of authentic belonging and the alternative strategies adopted by the characters in this film explain some of the ethical limits that a sense of place might meet. How far does this global sense of place stretch to? Is it possible that such a sense of place might ensure survival for some and annihilation for others? The slippages between global and local senses of place that occur in The Castle are critically important and cannot be glossed over as a national tendency to ‘take people’s land’ away. The different kinds of dispossession represented in the film cannot be resolved within a structure of equality through national citizenship and economic compensation. The answer to these questions lies in maintaining a sense of the unequal measures of belonging that operate among citizens in a globalising world. Both the suburban home and its filmic representations are sites of the cultural production of belonging-ness but it is crucial to understand how

these are themselves formed. Any home is a place of belonging and not-belonging; and equally suburbia as the homeland of ordinariness rests on an ambivalent identity, already and “always a boundary phenomenon [whose] order is always constructed around the figures on its territorial edge”.

This edginess of spatial identity can be summed up by Suvendrini Perera’s affirmation that it is discourses on displacement rather than placement that constitute objects of ‘place’-longing: “For many of us ‘homeland’ is also a product of migration: it is recreated and reclaimed in loss; its cultures and people are not invariably lost and dead, but live in difference.” Thus the family’s discovery of their community is only possible because of the tragic structure of feeling that the narrative contains and describes as it works to its happy conclusion. When suddenly this structure shifts in the last stages of the film, and the family triumphs over the threat from outside, home and community are finalised and again separated. This finalisation takes place literally in the home when the Carpenter’s song ‘We’ve only just begun’ is played over a sequence demonstrating that the seemingly interminable extensions and patio are finally finished and the family is reunited. The family is only able to be ‘at home’ and the film finished when their ‘castle’ is reclaimed successfully from a threatening situation.

One of the co-writers, Santo Cilauro, has used the metaphor of the film’s narrative as a home-cooked meal in an interview to describe how the filmmakers wanted to leave the audience: “you went to someone’s house and left saying to yourself ‘Geez, I feel good, really good, the chicken was good, I had some good dessert’. I hope they come out satisfied as if they’ve had a really good meal.” The sweetness of the ending remains somewhat at odds with the stabilised urban dysfunction in existence at the end of the film.

The appeal and resolution of tension of the film’s ending of lies in its sublimation of the local into the national: the democratic right to representation in the legal system and justice is upheld when the High Court overturns the acquisition order. Although I have argued that complex questions of identity and place cannot be resolved so neatly into a nationalist politics, in achieving all this satisfying closure, ‘something else’ takes hold of place itself. During the film the preconditions of citizenship that constitute the ‘place’ of the suburban home as a homogeneous and unified entity against the ‘space’ of the global

are ultimately destabilised. The film's coalition between suburban homeowners and indigenous peoples is practically impossible given the concerns I outline above, but it is imaginatively possible that such a cinema could perform a *magical role*. The film simultaneously perceives and fixes up a 'tear' in the fabric of the urban caused by massive global change. This happens in such a gentle and good humoured way that the film's narrative allows collective struggles over place to resonate within everyday life. Certainly as such hard-edged processes of globalisation fragment the local, the tenuous claims to territory that a colonialist Australia still maintains in the 1990s and beyond are exposed as dubious at best. This shifting of the very ground upon which the suburb is constructed creates the potential for a new politics of home which the film articulates.

By the end of the film, because the dis-location or rupture of the identity of the family as 'homeowners' has been temporarily resolved, the liminal moment is over and the ethical analogies between globalisation versus suburbanity and colonisation versus aboriginality remains hanging in the balance. The film stops short of an ending that would see the Kerrigans welcome a native title claim on their backyard or their holiday house next to a hydroelectric dam. This kind of narrative would be a step slightly too far, unthinkable given the intense disputes over aboriginal reconciliation and self-determination that have taken place in a post-Mabo Australia. Ultimately, a sharp lack of equivalence exists between enforced removal of aboriginal peoples from their land since 1788 and the kinds of displacements of 'ordinary' Australians that have felt in the expansion of global economic space into the urban environment. Perhaps once this story has been told, a very small but productive fracture remains in the imaginary of the suburban home as self-contained and grounded on a natural right to land that white Australians enjoy. Still a place most intrinsic to Australian 'ordinariness', the domestic now might exist as a site of the production of that ordinariness, rather than mere expression of it.

In such a moment, it is the undoings of identity that come about from undermining of a national project of 'serious' cinematic grandeur in favour of the *risks* of humour, rather than the solution of a final pronouncement on 'ownership' that might be more long-lasting. Longing for narrative cohesion and happy endings are arguably attempts to understand rather than overcome the radical heterogeneity of a global sense of place. This is not to reduce this sense of identity in difference to an easily digestible 'otherness', but to make clear its limits and potentialities.
The effects of mobility are evidenced in the contestations over sites at the local / national / global interface: the debates over the location of Sydney's airport, on which the story of The Castle is clearly based, are just one symptom of the problem. After its release in 1997, the film has often been referred to in news stories, as a short-hand way of denoting debates about the location of the airport and its meaning for people living near it. The mention of the fictional character of Darryl Kerrigan in a 'hard' news story on the front page of a national newspaper that discussed the effect of airport noise issues the 1998 federal election demonstrates how close to 'real' political events the story of the film actually was. A series of two articles about the impact of aircraft noise issues on the election result uses the example of Anthony Fias-Ayon, a Phillipino emigrant who chose to remain within the 'buy-out' zone in Sydenham, within a kilometre of Sydney airport:

The deafening drone of jets is unbearable and they sometimes dip so low you can read the writing on their underbellies as they fly over Anthony Fias-Ayon's backyard...

Just like his celluloid counterpart, Darryl Kerrigan... Mr Fias-Ayon has turned down government offers of nearly $200,000 to buy his home... He says he was proud to be paying off his home and embracing the great Australian dream after emigrating from the Philippines 11 years ago.58

The only way to 'see' this place, so close to the airport that it is zoned unfit for housing, was to use a photographic technique adopted from film: photo-montage. In order to picture Fias-Ayon's house and backyard a staff photographer from the newspaper made a series of photographs over three hours that recorded 64 planes passing over the house. A digital imaging artist then overlaid each exposure so that there appears to be a continual stream of planes above the house (see Fig 9.5). This fantastic and very real sense of place reflects the increasing difficulty of distinguishing between the 'reality effect' of local mediascapes (such as the digitally altered photograph of Sydenham) and the 'fiction effect' of the cityscape in globalising cities. These places are unable to be captured by naturalistic, realistic modes of representation. The house under the runway seems only visible in the intertwined televsional and material world of narratives such as The Castle and the multiple exposures of digital montage.

58 Stephanie Balogh, 'On a clear day he can see the planes forever', The Australian, 27 June 1998, p. 1. Emphasis mine.
On a clear day he can see planes forever

Fig 9.5 ‘On a clear day he can see planes forever’, *The Australian*, 27 June 1998, p.1.
Photographer Brett Faulkner. Digital manipulation by Peter Muhlbock.
If ‘home’, as discussed above, is a dialectical container for managing pluralities, negotiating inside and outside, body and technology, private and public, this notion could be extended to other urban spaces. The city itself is fundamentally a contact zone between transnational capital, national jurisdictions, commodities, ethnicities and classes. Cities provide collective architectures (train stations, stock exchanges, shopping malls) in which there are articulations of these socio-political forms. The airport continues to manage the border between ‘airspace’ and ‘national space’, although it has fallen far short of a modernist desire for smoothly functioning, silent technologies that easily distribute citizens within the city of circulation. The conflicts and continuities between the cityscape and the technoscape that are the concern of this analysis can be seen in the outlines of the imagined geographies of airport tales.

In the preceding chapters, I have traced the history of the airport in order to outline its implication in a circuit of mobilisations, which develops with the twentieth century imagination of intensely ‘international’ cities, but now I focus on a fragmentary airport story, that emerged in response to the loss of a Sydney suburb in the 1990s.

Since 1995, architect John Skennar and artist Phillipa Playford, in collaboration with local community groups, have designed -- with a large amount of tragi-comedy -- a community park for the area of Sydenham that was previously occupied by houses demolished by the FAC. The houses fell within the 40 ANEF (Australian Noise Exposure Forecast) zone, that is above the levels determined by Australian standards to be unsuitable for residential use, even though this system has been determined to be inaccurate and unhelpful in assessing impact on people living in such environments.

---

56 See Chapter Two ‘The Engineer and The Architect’
57 There was much discussion of this in the Senate Inquiry into Aircraft Noise in Sydney, outlined in the report, Falling on Deaf Ears, November 1995, pp. E.11-17, i.e. that the ANEF system is completely outdated and insensitive to current aircraft types and frequencies, being based on 280 flights a day in 1982, when current levels are something like 810 a day (1990), p. E.11. See also Judith Whelan, ‘The great runway flawcast’, SMH, 28 January 1995, p. 27.
Fig 9.6

Map of acquisition area. Source: 'Sydenham Community Study', vol. 1, Tropman & Tropman Architects for Department of Transport, Canberra, May 1996.
While not part of the residential area newly affected by the third runway, the demolitions represented part of a package put forward by the Federal Labor government to sweeten the deal between the NSW State and Federal governments to build a third runway at Mascot. The package was approved by the Australian Labour Party National Conference in September 1994 “to guarantee acceptable standards of environmental quality”.\textsuperscript{58} Marrickville local council’s interest in the project at Sydenham was driven by the knowledge that the site, if undeveloped, would further detract from the land values of the area, and that the already unprofitable local businesses (at last count two fruit shops, two take-aways and a garage) would close completely. Nearby residents, those who still suffered the planes but not enough to be bought out by the FAC, to use parklands currently have to drive to nearby parks (in the next council area) to use green space facilities, for activities such as bike-riding and football games. Previously the area had been a working community, a mix of townscape, workscape and streetscape, with a high proportion of recent immigrants who opened businesses in the area. The council also supported development as a counter measure to the rumoured plans of the State Government and the Federal Airports Commission to use the newly freed-up space to build a freeway bypass linking the southern part of the city and the Great Western Highway with the airport.\textsuperscript{59}

A handful of houses remain in the demolition area. Antony Fias-Anyon’s in Railway Road is one. Harry and Del Stone also remain in their house at 88 George Street, and have been interviewed and photographed many times during media coverage of the airport development (see Fig 9.7).

Since the buyout scheme began in 1995, I have been visiting the site and talking with residents in the demolition zone. The overwhelming sense of change at the site, especially to those who have remained has been a dissolution of boundaries: with the removal of the houses, different types of boundaries (walls, doors, gates, fences), the borders marking the domestic from the outside have also been removed.

\textsuperscript{58} ALP National Conference, ‘Resolution – Sydney Third Runway’, in Michael Refshauge, Notes on the third runway at Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport, Marrickville Council, Marrickville, September 1995, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{59} Fitzgerald, The Sydney Airport Fiasco, p. 141-142.

347
Harry was here first, and he's staying put

By RICHARD MACTEY

Mr and Mrs Stone say their house has been almost 'hall and ashes' since their grandfather built it in Sydenham 120 years ago. "They were as proud to leave the house as we are to leave the house now," said Mr Stone, who has lived in the house for all but nine of his 15 years.

He and his wife, who are moving to a new home in the same suburb, have decided to leave the house to their children.

While the Howard Government has regulated the sale of empty houses, the Stone family has decided to sell the house.

It is likely the next owner will return the house to its former glory, with the addition of a new wing.

The house, which is on the market for $1.5 million, is located in the heart of the suburb.

Fig 9.7

'Harry was here first, and he's staying put', Sydney Morning Herald, 4 June 1996, p. 6.
The trees and plants and paths that were once part of gardens, ordered to make suburban blocks, were all that was left and floated absurdly unanchored in the flattened ‘paddocks’. The structures once bounded by streets had gone, and all that was left was the ‘inbetween’ spaces of the streets themselves. The laneways once used to link the front and backs of houses now linked nothing with nothing. The entire suburb was exposed as if it was purely a representation, a sketch of streets and laneways on an aerial map that had razed the horizontal dimension. It was the ground zero of aeriality.

For the people were still living around this space, it was a blank, unable to be reused for a park, recreational space, too large and too uncanny to be a ‘vacant lot’ as it did not signify the potential for some thing to be built; but un-building, demolition, loss, the end of community. The community meetings that took place to figure out what to do with this place posed a huge array of uses: some people wanted it transformed back to its original pre-colonial state as a swampy marshland, others didn’t really want to build anything, but to claim the space back from its governmental use as a persistently ‘local’ place. The imagination of the site as an ‘open space’ for nature was mirrored in the Federal Airports Corporation’s pseudo-therapeutic move after demolition to graft blocks of grass onto the site after the rubble had been cleared. Putting aside the ironies of the high-tech world of the aviation industry causing an eruption of parkland in the city, the movement of un-bounding needs to be seen in context of other dislocations that have taken place in the connection of the global and the local, in the disjunctures between the modernist dreams of the ‘global city’ and national containments of globalisation.

The emptiness of the space posed a challenge to order of the city and created speculation about what would eventually fill it. The ‘Stay in Touch’ section of the Sydney Morning Herald asked readers to submit ideas for projects to fill in what they called the ‘Sydenham wedge’.60 ‘Stay in Touch’ expressed the irony of demolishing large areas of housing in a highly competitive and overheated rental market: “Of course there must be thousands of homeless people and over-charged rental tenants who would be quite happy with a nice little terrace and a pair of ear plugs, but we know the Government is too humane to contemplate this option”.61 They listed their ideas for the space:

---

A school for the deaf. Only the teachers would mind... A casino. No noise penetrates the concentration of a gambler... A parliament. Politicians would finish their speeches sooner if they had to raise their voices... A car park. When does Sydney not need more parking?... M4 and M5 [controversial freeway projects] toll booths. Did the State Government have to guarantee their location... An Olympic village, later converted to a hotel development. On the user-pays principle, inbound athletes and tourists would be forced to stay here for one week after arrival at the airport. A police centre. Just wait for the plane to pass over before you speak, and you'll never have trouble with those tape recorders.62

These ideas were all impossible, but the did record the needs and desires of suburban residents faced with a tear in the fabric of the city. Working humorously to fill the site with exactly what had created it, the 'Stay in Touch' list demonstrates the limits and contradictions of a city and country that is highly dependent on tourism for its economic survival. Of course Olympic tourists and athletes do not want to experience aircraft noise and pollution when they are visiting a city. The infrastructure of a global economy and world-scale event such as the Olympics is meant to be hidden, invisible and inaudible. The apparatus of global tourism works constantly to cover up and ameliorate any side effects of its development. Such dislocations should be conducted 'backstage' and without interrupting the flows and speeds of travel and communication.

While it does not literally interrupt the workings of the airport, the project now completed in Sydenham presents this disruption and inscribes it in full view of international tourists arriving by the plane-load at Mascot. The space was approved by Marrickville Council in early 1996 to be used for a park, and an architect, John Skennar was commissioned to draw up plans after consulting residents about what they wanted. As he set out in his 'Draft Work Plan', the design process was intended to "propose ways of repairing the damage that has occurred" and to give "expression through the arts of the experience that the community has been through since the demolitions began".63 Skennar did not imagine this community as a homogenous entity, but was concerned to manage and create discussion between specific groups and individuals that made up the neighbourhood. Young people especially were mentioned in the plan as expressing a need for some kind of public space, while older residents expressed fears of youth 'gangs' loitering in the park.64 Skennar's plan did not try and accommodate all

64 Skennar, 'Draft Work Plan -- Youth Issues', np.
of these conflicting groups into a higher scheme of community-belonging in public space, but noted the need for places within the larger park for each of these groups. His initial discussions with residents also recorded criticism of the demolitions and the project itself "in the light of the [re]opening of the East-West runway" as this reopening redirected planes away from Sydenham.65

While the plan for the park looks like an ordinary, suburban recreation area, as it includes netball and basketball courts, a touch football field, a youth centre, and other facilities, the site has not been calmly returned to nature. At the centre of the park is a town square, otherwise referred to as 'the departure lounge': "a large lounge room for the community", "a reminder of all the lounge rooms that have been lost in Sydenham".66 The departure lounge also functions as a performance space for music and public meetings. It accommodates "performance, recreation, dining, a playground, the telling of history in its walls".67 The square is also intersected by a diagonal cycle/walking path that traces the flight path of the planes coming to land or taking off every minute less than 500 metres above the park, and strewn with giant luggage, as if suitcases and parcels had just dropped out of the sky into the park (see Appendix 1).

It is no accident that the lounge room is gigantic, with a huge lounge, kidney shaped coffee table, enormous fireplace and tv set. The icons of Australian suburbia are recreated in gargantuan form, replaying a sense of diminished embodiment and the reduction of the collective that I described in Angelicas' photography of Marrickville. The 'larger than life' spectacle of a domestic scene in the most public zone — the agora — crystallises the public and private at their moment of ruination. This is further demonstrated by the (ironic) intention of the designers of the lounge for it to be read from the air, to be part of the cityscape — as tourists, travellers and other frequent flyers apprehend Sydney — and ultimately to refuse miniaturisation by any aerial view.

The naming of the park as the 'departure lounge' invites and plays with the growing tensions between the global tourist and the citizen of the world city, and design of the lounge room displays the blurred boundaries between international tourism and urban dwelling. For many residents of cities that are part of the world-wide promotion of Australia as tourist venue, the imagination of location outside the circuit of tourist

65 Skennar, 'Draft Work Plan -- Land Use', np.
66 'Sydenham Community Design Project', pamphlet by Marrickville Council
representations is extremely difficult. The encouragement to see one's own city as a theme park or tourist destination complicates the position of the home subject. When one's place in the urban is mediated through tourist promotions, official and unofficial representations both participate in essentialising processes. But through the excessive images of domestic space in the public the departure lounge redistributes the local within the apparatus of globalisation and ultimately spectacularises the home subject's displacement. The aerial view available to the airline passengers who look down on the city as they approach the airport is now complicated by the presence of the huge loungeroom under the flight path.

The spectacular scene of the gigantic lounge room inverts the logic described by Stewart, in which the public is miniaturised to be made private. Instead the 'departure lounge' makes the private gigantic and in so doing re-writes the sublime aeriality of making space for the aviation industry. This switching of dimensions points to a transgression of existing hierarchies of 'high' and 'low'. Susan Stewart posits the dolls-house as the endpoint of this process of miniaturisation of the private world and the sky as its other:

It is significant that the most typical miniature world is the domestic model of the dollhouse, while the most typical gigantic world is the sky -- a vast undifferentiated space marked only by the constant movement of clouds with their amorphous forms.

In the making visible of the threshold of aeriality in the city -- which has escaped its boundaries as the borders between the technological and the urban need to be constantly redrawn -- the park grotesquely dresses up a space, that has been vacated of its public, as a lounge room. By confronting public memory and problematising its absences, the park reverses the logic of the dollhouse. The domestic is turned inside out, and the panoptic view is confused by such exaggerated dimensions. By reproducing such a strange lounge room, the project disproves the domestic as truly private space. The nostalgia for a closed and individual home erupts to be forestalled by its lack of seriousness. The excessive nature of the domestic in the 'lounge' sculptures, rather than expressing longing for individual houses, expresses the loss of the communal. This collective is embodied through camp and kitsch fantasy rather than by the essential qualities of 'ordinariness' and national identity.

---

68 Meaghan Morris, 'Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower', *New Formations*, 11, Summer 1990, pp. 5-17.
Home is thus recalled and is pulled apart mimetically in a gesture of homesickness that is violated by the incompleteness of the lounge -- it has no roof, no shelter from the flight paths overhead. The dialectical word image of the ‘departure’ ‘lounge’, a place to leave as soon as you arrive, signifies the complicity of the state in a world that is always already in movement. The potential of the departure lounge does not signal the possibility for an ‘other-wise’ or an ‘other-place of modernity’, but it does form a new and useful space, through its address of a peculiarly absent public. If the airport is a monument to transitoriness, the gigantic lounge is a ‘tripping up’ of the vectors that this transitoriness requires. The ambiguous modern spaces that Benjamin found in the arcades are made visible in a location that is both street and house. Displaced home subjects, like the flaneur, have to use the street as their living room, but this is not to argue that this is desirable -- the object of this discussion has been to highlight the parallels of cycles of local(is)ation and annihilation of locality.

A great day for Sydney & a great day for Australia

At the same time as Marrickville Council was preparing plans for the Departure Lounge, in early 1996, Marrickville-based performance group, Sidetrack, was in development of a play called The Plane Truth. The Plane Truth’s script intertwined personal narratives of airport development with a linear narration of the airport’s history. The performance embodied in its dramatic structure the split between the public history that was being made in between the federal cabinet office and the tourism and airline company boardrooms and the effects that were felt by ‘everybody else’. The play gave voice to people unable to find any other way to convey their sense of betrayal after the decision.

The play was narrated by a ‘presenter’ clothed in a suit and tie, who started the performance as if he was telling a fairytale: “Once upon a time there was a little aerodrome at Mascot…” The presenter continued a chronological narrative while other characters, based on interviews with residents of Sydenham who had moved away spoke of the losses and inequities that they had suffered. A woman called ‘Maria’ described the day she found out that she had to leave her house:

---

70 There has been some debate over the appropriateness of the title ‘departure lounge’, as the local heritage group prefers the more nineteenth century nostalgic ‘Sydenham Green’. The Council has taken this on board and refers the project as ‘Sydenham Green’ in official records.
One day these two came and knocked on my door. I opened it... You have to leave: too much noise. My mouth fell on the floor like this. What are you saying? I have to leave? And you call this a democracy?... Enzo came home. He was taken aback. His mother, god bless her, died in this house and then he got angry. If you want our house you pay for everything. The oven for the bread, the wine room. One of them... laughed. *Not good for anyone but you wogs. They no care. This is the life.*

For those that hadn’t moved but still lived in insulated houses under the flight path, the situation was framed within contrasts between the regulation of ‘unofficial’ and ‘official’ noise:

They had a party down the road a few months back. And it was a bit noisy, so the neighbours called the police and the police came and told them to turn the stereo down. Now the same neighbours rang up to complain about the noise from the airport and they came around and knocked their fucking house down. That’s the government for you.

The characters in the play describe their dreams, as they reflect the fantastic and unbelievable environment they experience in their waking life. The character Josie’s dream tellingly describes the erosion between house, body and city that the constant traversal of planes back and forth across the flight paths has created:

The air hostess is floating towards me smiling gracefully. I become fixated by her lips, so glossy and smooth... like a pair of beautiful long parallel runways from which many planes have departed and arrived in perfect time...

She offers me a drink. I take the glass tinkling the icecubes as I tilt my head against the seat. I delicately take one of the icecubes between my teeth. I feel that I’m being filmed for an episode of Magnum PI, as the temporary love interest...

I roll my tongue against the cube’s smooth texture. There’s something wrong. The ice is all gritty. I try to bite through the ice. I can’t. It’s as hard as... I try to swallow. I can’t it’s not ice, it’s rubble. I’m choking on rubble and the plane’s about to crash...

Josie’s dream collapses the space between the glamour-world of international travel and the ruined homes under demolition in Sydenham, by condensing both into the dream-image of rubble in her mouth while flying aboard the plane. The play ends with the words

---

When the noise of the planes and the obscene clamour of those who would justify it subsides, as it does from time to time, if only for a brief moment you might catch on the breeze a fragment of a lament which will break your heart.\(^4\)

This lament is for the kind of world promised in the twin promises of the discourse of post-war reconstruction: the home as a stable entity embodying national values of economic progress and individual development and the consumer’s access to the glamour and cosmopolitan world-scale space in tourism. The stable location of the suburban house, now under demolition at Sydenham not because of war or natural disaster, but precisely because of national progress and economic development was to be entirely different when reconstituted after the ‘obscene clamour’ subsided.

* * *

In this chapter I have identified the characteristics of airport tales that constitute the domestic outside itself, on its own edge. Each of these stories about the airport imagines the domestic in very different terms from the ‘home material, spiritual and human’ described by Robert Menzies in 1942. Rather than ‘man’s home being his castle’, each of these stories illuminates the contingency of the domestic in relation to its ‘othered spaces’, and most importantly, as formed at the intersection of the flawed distinction between private and public.

The imaginary ‘homes’ described in these airport tales operate as a meeting place from which to question the rhetorics of globalisation, while avoiding either a retreat to a reactionary and closed sense of self and place, or an all-out embracing of the heady potentialities of transnational capitalism. This thesis has argued that, following Arjun Appadurai, cultural forms such as cinema, television and public art projects in urban space, can offer an ‘elsewhere’ that the materiality of the local as ‘dead space’ in globalisation is reconstituted in critical formations. This ‘otherness’ of representations of the urban is always perhaps an extraordinary and ordinary place. A cultural politics that places representation in dialogue with the built environment will be better placed to figure alternatives to the demolition and development hypermarket that has developed in most Australian cities and boomtowns since the 1980s.

Each time an annihilation of the local occurs because of shifts in international and national economics these discussions will emerge. I wish to suggest that rather than framing the relationship between the domestic and the sublime within the modernist paradigm of ‘making one’s self at home within the flow’ that alternative expression of modern belongings are possible. ‘Home-making within the flow’ seems to suggest that the dislocations of modernity are inevitable and total, rather specifically historical and political.⁷⁵

An alternative understanding of modernity that perceives the production of locality as itself a fragile process, is better equipped to negotiate the speeded-up space-times of globalisation.⁷⁶ What all these airport tales offer, to rework the title of Adrienne Rich’s essay, is a politics of dis-location, a method of ‘making one’s self strange within the flow’. The exploration of the parallels between colonialism and globalisation in The Castle invites a reorganisation of everyday life itself as ‘strange’ and produced by displacement. The ‘departure lounge’ in the erased suburb of Sydenham refuses to domesticate the communal within the technological, and through excess and parody makes both the sublime and the domestic impossible and distinctly odd. And finally, The Plane Truth deconstructs the homogeneity of the national narrative of progress and economic rationalism into many uneven parts, all ‘fragments of a lament which will break your heart’.

In this selection of sites that tell stories about the airport, I have sought to unravel some of the tensions that these images of a ‘home on the outside’ point to. As exposés of the limits of engagement in collective ownership and management of public space, these airport tales are only points of departure. As we occupy such critical spaces for negotiating contradictory and multiple uses of urban environments, we can do much more to uncouple the failure of modernity from specific instances of covering over its problems. In the case of the airport, such imaginary spaces need to be extended and strengthened to destabilise some of the distinctions between ‘objects’ of planning and ‘subjects’ of the city. By making one’s self and environment strange a more modest version of modernism can be realised, without recourse to ‘modernolatry’, that is finding a sublimity in modernisation. Such a project has its origins in Benjamin’s surrealist poetics and focus on the myths, dreams and hallucinations present in the

---

modern city; I would hope though, that these tales may point to a move beyond boundary disputes over what is ‘real’ and ‘imagined’, what is public and private in representations of the urban to acknowledge the possibility of the domestic as a place for telling stories about history.
bibliography:

monographs


Bachelard, Gaston, Air and Dreams: An essay on the imagination of movement, Dallas Institute, Dallas, 1983.


Barthes, Roland, Mythologies, Jonathon Cape, Londons, 1972.


Baudrillard, Jean, For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, Telos Press, St. Louis, 1981.


Bradfield, Dr K.N.E., ‘Airport Design in Relation to Town Planning’, address to The Town and Country Planning Association, Victoria, 27 March 1946.


Cumberland County Council, *The Planning Scheme for the County of Cumberland, NSW, CCC*, Sydney, July 1948.


Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City: Elements of a doctrine of urbanism to be used as the basis of our machine-age civilisation*, Faber and Faber, London, [1933] 1964.


Sert, Jose Luis, *Can Our Cities Survive?: an ABC of urban problems, their analysis, their solutions*, CLAM, Cambridge, 1942.


Sidettrack Performance Group, *Plane Truth, a spectacle about an airport and other low-flying acts*, unpublished script for a performance work by SPG with the Sidereal Project and program, Marrickville, April 1996.


Williams, Raymond, *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*, Flamingo, London, 1983.


Best, Sue, ‘Foundations of femininity: Berlei corsets and the (un)making of the


Hewitt, Kenneth, ‘“When the great planes came and made ashes of our city…”: Towards and oral geography of the disasters of war.’ *Antipode*, 26, 1, 1994, pp. 1-34.


Hunter, Ian, ‘Setting Limits to Culture’, *New Formations*, 4, 1988, pp. 103-123.


Katz, Cindi, ‘Reflections while reading ‘City of Quartz’ by Mike Davis’, *Antipode*, 25, 2, 1993, pp. 159-163.


Pratt, Geraldine, ‘Commentary (Spatial metaphors and speaking positions)’, Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 10, 1992, pp. 241-244.


Rosler, Martha. ‘In the Place of the Public: Observations of a Frequent Flyer’, Assemblage, 25, 1995, pp. 61-79.

Ross, Kristin, ‘Rimbaud and spatial history’, New Formations, 5, Summer 1988, pp. 53-68.


Tahirik, Kidlat, ‘Why is yellow the middle of the rainbow?’, Cantrill’s Filmnotes, 73 & 74, May 1994, pp. 44-64.


386
Thompson, Kerstin, ‘Spaces In-between’, unpublished paper, presented at Postmodern Cities Conference, University of Sydney, April 1993.


Appendix 1:

The Departure Lounge
Appendix 1a  The Departure Lounge looking towards Unwins Bridge Road

Appendix 1b  Detail of street lighting in Departure Lounge
Appendix 1c  Harry and Del Stone's house on George Street looking towards the Departure Lounge

Appendix 1d  Mosaic of the former neighbourhood plan inside the Departure Lounge
Appendix 1e

Fireplace inside the Departure Lounge
Appendix 1f

Detail of the tiles around the fireplace: montage of aircraft noise headlines from local newspapers
Appendix 1g  Big teapot and cup inside the Departure Lounge

Appendix 1h  Children's playground looking towards the airport
Appendix 1i  Big lounge with mosaic inlay inside the Departure Lounge

Appendix 1j  Detail of mosaic on the big lounge: everyday life with aeroplanes
Appendix 1k  
Detail of mosaic on the big lounge recording the numbers and location of demolished houses: “Home Sweet Home/Lar Doce Lar”

Appendix 1l  
Detail of mosaic on the big lounge by Year 8 class Tempe High School: "The noise is driving me crazy!"
Appendix 2:

Aircraft movements at Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport
## MOVEMENTS at AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS
(derived from AVCHARGES data)

### Financial Year 1999-2000 Totals
As at January 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Location Code</th>
<th>Over 136,000Kg</th>
<th>Between 7,000Kg and 136,000Kg</th>
<th>Under 7,000Kg</th>
<th>Helicopter</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>Military</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADELAIDE</td>
<td>YPAD</td>
<td>1,276</td>
<td>34,968</td>
<td>26,974</td>
<td>2,718</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>66,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALBURY</td>
<td>YMAI</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5,664</td>
<td>14,610</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>20,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALICE SPRINGS</td>
<td>YBAS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7,334</td>
<td>9,620</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>17,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHERFIELD</td>
<td>YBAF</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>90,586</td>
<td>2,296</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>93,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANKSTOWN</td>
<td>YSBK</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>149,952</td>
<td>16,148</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>167,504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRISBANE</td>
<td>YBBN</td>
<td>14,144</td>
<td>66,524</td>
<td>13,448</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>94,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAIRNS</td>
<td>YBCS</td>
<td>4,542</td>
<td>17,512</td>
<td>37,200</td>
<td>5,092</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>64,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMBRIDGE</td>
<td>YBCG</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13,886</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14,414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMDEN</td>
<td>YSCN</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>52,856</td>
<td>1,994</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>55,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANBERRA</td>
<td>YSCB</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22,956</td>
<td>32,416</td>
<td>3,220</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>16,882</td>
<td>75,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COFFS HARBOUR</td>
<td>YSCH</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7,482</td>
<td>18,198</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>26,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COOLANGATTA</td>
<td>YBCG</td>
<td>3,314</td>
<td>9,604</td>
<td>32,942</td>
<td>6,050</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>52,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARWIN</td>
<td>YPDN</td>
<td>1,426</td>
<td>11,404</td>
<td>32,948</td>
<td>2,718</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>9,360</td>
<td>58,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSENDON</td>
<td>YMEN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>31,298</td>
<td>4,712</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>36,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAMILTON ISLAND</td>
<td>YBHM</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>1,688</td>
<td>8,398</td>
<td>2,370</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12,868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOBART</td>
<td>YMBH</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4,810</td>
<td>1,966</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>7,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JANDAKOT</td>
<td>YPJ10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>147,114</td>
<td>6,376</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>153,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAUNCESTON</td>
<td>YMLT</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4,536</td>
<td>10,388</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>15,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACKAY</td>
<td>YBMK</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5,902</td>
<td>17,002</td>
<td>1,694</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>24,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAROOCHYDORE</td>
<td>YBCM</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,464</td>
<td>25,504</td>
<td>23,344</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>53,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MELBOURNE</td>
<td>YMML</td>
<td>27,720</td>
<td>63,098</td>
<td>3,790</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>95,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOORABBIN</td>
<td>YMMB</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>123,080</td>
<td>15,220</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>138,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAFIELD</td>
<td>YPPF</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>87,572</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>88,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERTH</td>
<td>YPPH</td>
<td>7,692</td>
<td>32,358</td>
<td>19,026</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>60,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROCKHAMPTON</td>
<td>YBRK</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>6,418</td>
<td>12,236</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1,930</td>
<td>21,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYDNEY</td>
<td>YSSY</td>
<td>48,460</td>
<td>93,468</td>
<td>19,272</td>
<td>6,418</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>165,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAMWORTH</td>
<td>YSTW</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6,150</td>
<td>51,482</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>58,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOWNSVILLE</td>
<td>YBTI</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13,350</td>
<td>21,860</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>4,688</td>
<td>40,984</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total            |                | 103,206         | 421,234                        | 1,105,424    | 105,554    | 3,948   | 38,242   | 1,783,608|

**NOTES:**
1. Movements are the sum of Arrivals and Circuits multiplied by 2, i.e. \((A + C) \times 2\)

Prepared by Commercial Services Information Systems Canberra
Figure 3  Forecasts of Total Passenger Movements for the Sydney Basin to the Year 2021-22

Figure 4  Forecasts of Total Aircraft Movements for the Sydney Basin to the Year 2021-22

Source: Summary of The Environmental Impact Statement For The Proposed Second Sydney Airport At Badgerys Creek, The Airports Division, Department of Transport and Regional Services, Sydney, 1998.
list of illustrations:

Chapter 1

Figure 1.1: ‘Person who would rather not be in Marrickville’, Marrickville, Australia, 1985. Photographer, Emmanuel Angelicas. Reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

Figure 1.2: Front cover of Sydney Photographed, Linda Michael (ed.), Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1994.

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1: Houdini flying at Rosehill, Sydney Mail, 20 April 1910.

Figure 2.2: ‘Sensational Flight over Harbour and City’ & ‘Across Botany in a fog: what the eye of the camera had to pierce...’, Sydney Mail, 10 May 1911, p. 29.

Figure 2.3: First international flight arriving Mascot, Sydney Morning Herald, 12 February 1920.

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1: ‘A plain fact...’ (advertisement for ‘Heame’s Bronchitis Cure’), Sydney Morning Herald, 18 September 1919, p. 5.

Figure 3.2: Sant’Elia, ‘Stations for trains and airplanes’, in Kwinter, ‘La Citta Nuova: Modernity and Continuity’ in Zone 1/2, Zone Books, Toronto, p. 105.

Figure 3.3: ‘Who Owns the Air’, Evening News, 27 October 1930.

Figure 3.4: Front cover ‘Sea, Land and Air’, 1 September 1921, vol. IV, no. 42.

Figure 3.5: Photograph of ‘The aeroplane stunt on Manly Beach’, (Evening) News, 3 December 1923.

Figure 3.6: ‘In the air, too’, Evening News, 4 December 1923.

Figure 3.7: ‘MALTHOID: A Forecast of the Future’, Sea, Land and Air, June 1919, p. 175.
Chapter 4

Figure 4.1: Ad for ‘Going up’ play at Criterion Theatre, ‘Sea, Land and Air’, September 1919, p. 404.

Figure 4.2: Ad for Berlei Ltd ‘On the Wings of the Wind’, Johnnie, You’re a bird, Sydney Sport’s Girl’s Association, Sydney, 1930, p. 32.

Figure 4.3: Various illustrators, ‘These Wimmin… Some reasons why sportsgirls…’, Johnnie, You’re a bird, Sydney Sport’s Girl’s Association, Sydney, 1930, p. 12.

Figure 4.4: Noel Cook, ‘Some Flights of Fancy’, Johnnie, You’re a bird, Sydney Sport’s Girl’s Association, Sydney, 1930, p. 8.

Figure 4.5: Hal Quinlan, ‘We Dips our Lid – Young Australia is at your feet’ from Johnnie, You’re a bird, Sydney Sport’s Girl’s Association, Sydney, 1930, p. 19.


Figure 4.7: Harry Campbell, ‘Travelling Light – A shortage of shorts’, Johnnie, You’re a bird, Sydney Sport’s Girl’s Association, Sydney, 1930, p. 21.

Figure 4.8: Front cover of Smith’s Weekly, 22 November 1935.

Chapter 5

Figure 5.1: ‘We made this instead…’ Brian McKinley, Australia 1942: The end of innocence, Collins, Sydney, 1985, p. 171.

Figure 5.2: ‘DARWIN, WYNDHAM, BROOME…’, McKinlay, Australia 1942: end of innocence, p. 90.


Chapter 6

Figure 6.1: Betty Wilson, ‘Plastic Hats are Really Stuck Together’, Sydney Morning Herald, 8 August 1945, p. 6.

Figure 6.2: ‘Germans Turn V2s Into Saucepans’, Sydney Morning Herald, 19 August 1945, p. 1.

Figure 6.3: ‘The man in the glass tower’, South-West Pacific, p. 31.

400
Chapter 7

Figure 7.1: ‘Mascot keeps pace with the jet age’, Australian Women’s Weekly, August 22, 1951, pp. 12-13.

Figure 7.2: ‘It’s all new... ANSETT-ANA’, ‘Golden Jet booklet’, Reader’s Digest, May 1959, p. 84 F.

Figure 7.3: ‘Jet age quietness... luxury... speed’, ‘Golden Jet booklet’, Reader’s Digest, May 1959, p. 84K.

Figure 7.4: ‘Berlei Bras -- Hordern Brothers - Step into “jet-age” comfort’, The Sun-Herald, 5 July 1959, p. 100.

Figure 7.5: ‘Sydney sees jet airliner’, Daily Telegraph, 3 July 1959, front page.

Figure 7.6 ‘Boeing’s Mascot Take-off’, Daily Telegraph, 7 July 1959, p. 1.

Figure 7.7: ‘Black trail behind second boeing’, Sydney Morning Herald, 11 July 1959, p. 3.

Figure 7.8: Cartoon by Tanner, ‘Botany council – Down with the boeing jet’, Daily Telegraph, 7 July 1959, p. 2.

Figure 7.9: Cartoon by Molnar, ‘If I may coin a phrase, sir we are under a cloud’, Sydney Morning Herald, 7 July 1959, p. 2.

Chapter 8

Figure 8.1: John Behr, ‘Jumbo-size problems for airport terminal planners’, Sunday Telegraph, 4 May 1969, p. 94.
Chapter 9

Figure 9.1: Flyer for The Castle, 1997. Roadshow Film Distributors & Working Dog.

Figure 9.2: ‘It’s the runway we had to have’, The Glebe and Inner City News, 9 November 1994, front page.

Figure 9.3: ‘Airport Legal Challenge Rejected’, Sydney Morning Herald, 5 November 1994, p. 7.

Figure 9.4: Cartoon by Ward O’Neill ‘You can’t hang up on Sydney, Laurie’–‘Sydney morning flugelhorn – thunderous protest’, Sydney Morning Herald, 3 December 1994.

Figure 9.5: ‘On a clear day he can see planes forever’, The Australian, June 27 1998, p.1. Photographer Brett Faulkner. Digital manipulation by Peter Muhlbock.

Figure 9.6: Map of acquisition area. Source: ‘Sydenham Community Study’, vol. 1, Tropman & Tropman Architects for Department of Transport, Canberra, May 1996.

Figure 9.7: ‘Harry was here first, and he’s staying put’, Sydney Morning Herald, 4 June 1996, p. 6.
Conclusion:

B桨sage检索

Aviation, as this thesis has demonstrated, is a technology that has often been described in hyperbolic terms. Aviation has either been described as representing the highest achievement of modern technology, or its lowest ebb. It has been described both as sublime, wondrous and exciting for its proximity to future urban worlds, or has slipped down the register of cultural heirarchies to be seen as polluting, destructive, and fundamentally inimical to the experience of dwelling in the modern city. This ambivalent reaction to the aeroplane as object has been argued to reflect tensions in modernist discourse about technological progress. Situated within larger debates on modernity as social and cultural improvement, this study has sought to engage and draw out the implications of these contradictory impulses in modernity through the notion of the dialectical image.

Each chapter of this thesis has read from representations of the airport at a particular time certain stories that demonstrate the variable configurations of local, national and global space in twentieth century Australia. Because the airport is not just a space that forms social relationships, but embodies social relationships in a material and spatial form, these representations, like sedimentary layers, provide evidence of the orientation, formation and direction of social and spatial relationships at a given time. The statements about urban change that I have read in detail across this study show how the space, symbol and site of the airport has been encoded within powerful discourses that seek to cohere and narrate the purpose of urban space as facilitating national economic progress above all other uses. Because of this key connection between aviation and national desires, Sydney airport has been, and will continue to be, a site of contestation at a local level. Its location and continued operation represents the shifting and dynamic tensions between locality, nation, and global space within contemporary urban environments. As Chapter Two showed, the displacement of locality that the airport has been seen to generate in the late twentieth century was present from the first official flights in Sydney. What the final section of the thesis suggests is that the notion of locality itself has changed as the horizons of everyday mobility have radically shifted. This was shown to take place through an official discourse on everyday mobility that worked to interiorise aeriality.

in familiar and homely terms such as the motif of the shoe and pedestrian movements. This official territorialisaiton of the everyday was returned to public space and refigured through a profoundly exteriorised domestic imaginary inscribed in the 'airport tales' discussed in the previous chapter.

This shift in dimensions and scale of the domestic was argued throughout the thesis to produce a homologous shift in the possibility of the modern sublime. As a site of the production of national identity, the airport has needed to be continually reinscribed as a thoroughly 'modern' place. A parallel between the mobilisation and the territorialisation of the modern nation merges in the signification of the airport as a symbolic 'gateway to the nation'. This profoundly modernist appetite for sites of traffic has been argued to project temporal progress through spatial movement. As its most highly spectacularised modern chronotope, or time-space, the technological space of the airport has been constructed by modernist rhetoric as the border between the past and the future, nationality and internationality. In modernist discourse such sites equate the speeds of travel and exchange with historical change. This modernist focus on faster, greater, more powerful technologies of travel has been shown in this study to work through a discourse on sublimity. Because the sublime collapses experiences of terror and pleasure it shifts power into the realm of pure spectacle above and beyond human agency. As a rhetoric of excess that narrates industrial culture it potentially overwhelms everyday and ordinary decisions about the uses and aims of technology.

In order to deconstruct and defuse the deterministic charge of such representations of sublimity it is crucial for cultural politics to demonstrate the sublime as a historical category of experience, rather than an essential quality of modernity. This study has argued that there is no general concept or aesthetic essence of the sublime, but rather a complex and shifting politics of human agency that articulates sublimity within and against the uses of technology in everyday life. In my focus on the politics of representation of modern experience, I have betrayed the gendered, and economic, particularity of such sublime moments. The junction between the sublime and the domestic in modernity and, in particular, the role of gender in the domestication of the sublime has been shown to express the complex imbrications of fear and desire that genre and gender social spaces. I have suggested that the impossibility of the sublime for feminist politics of technology must be closely examined to understand women's historical construction as bodies analogous to technological objects, and especially gender's specularisation in the field of aeriality.
This study has found that that the colonisation of the ‘air’ has also worked in reverse, necessarily re-colonising the terrestrial materiality upon which the aerial is grounded. The endless expansion of Sydney airport into the homes and streets of Sydney’s inner suburbs, as well as the ongoing debates about aircraft noise is an example of the increasingly compressed and fuzzy boundaries between home and aeriality. Looking beyond aerial travel as inherently dystopic or utopic, I have argued that whether one perceives the airport as ‘something we have to have’ or something ‘somebody else has to have’ depends on one’s relationship to the space that the airport represents. That is, this relationship rests on whether one is mobile and thus ‘inside’ modernity, thus authorised to act and direct the transformations of space and time that modern travel choreographs; or whether one is immobile, thus ‘outside’ and positioned as an object of urban planning. In a series of microhistorical case studies I have investigated the politics of these differences. Figures such as the planner and the engineer have been shown to be inside modernity as they shape and direct its spatial development. Others, such as the suburbanites who had to move from their homes to make way for the airport, have been positioned outside modernity. And, most importantly, border creatures such as the aviatrix and the (absent) residents of the Sydenham Departure Lounge unsettle these boundaries as they are ambiguously positioned as both inside and outside modernity.

The grand narrative of modernity as progress necessitates its own constant ‘measuring’ and monitoring against ‘underdeveloped’ sites and subjects. Narratives of progress take place through totalisations that order events, rank importance and distribute local meanings at a global level. Signs of constant change are presented in this story of progress -- which is the story of the sublime -- in order to demonstrate that history is improvement. These narratives continue apace, but as Jean-Francois Lyotard has argued, the collapse of such meta-narrative, or grand narratives, “as a legitimising or unifying force marks the end of the modern era.”2 Lyotard’s Report on the Postmodern Condition explains that this is not the end of narrative altogether, but a dispersal of overarching narratives in to localised truths, or little narratives (petit recits).3 My study has focused on the relationship between local struggles and global change in Sydney figured at the site of the airport and in the object of the aeroplane. One strand of this thesis has focused on the grand narrative of internationality and globalisation in the production of modernist space. The other, parallel, strand of this study has relocated such modernist discourses on spatial progress as petit recits in a series of micrological analyses of representations of the airport. These analyses have endeavoured to demonstrate the complex and negotiated relationships between the

3 Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, p. 60.
dimensions of the grand and the little in urban space, for example as figured in Angelica’s photo of ‘Person who would rather not be in Marrickville.’ The troubled logic of these little narratives demonstrates the difficulty of firm correspondences between ‘real’ spaces and any desired legitimations and transformations in representation. Arjun Appadurai’s concept of the mediascape was thus argued to offer a method by which cultural analysis could better attend to plurality, complexity and difference in representation within urbanised society. Because Appadurai’s method focuses on the disjunctures and contestations of spatial transformation in representation, or the mediascape, it does not draw a distinction between the ‘real’ and the ‘imagined’ in contemporary urban space. The notion of the mediascape offers a way of tracking the shape and dimensions of the urban through representation. The articulation of such ‘real’ fictions in fantasies of unreal domestic spaces -- especially in the explosion and inversion of the relationship between small and large -- has been shown in this study to explore alternative ways of organising relationships between the domestic and the sublime.

The foregoing case studies also argue for a more divergent and dialogic understanding of the relationships between urban space, technological change and national development. Each event and site examined reveals a set of cultural anxieties about such processes. Certain figures gather up these anxieties around and through their spatial sphere of operation: the modernist planner’s imaginary of an urban machine of flows; the aviator/aviatrix’s spectacularly heroic (and ultimately impossible) sublime journey; the air-traffic controller’s calmly controlled flight path; and the technocrat’s ordered and actualised future. Finally, the transformation from resident to tourist, especially in the temporal excess of the passenger’s ennui and displacement in waiting and travelling rather than arriving, is crystallised in the site of the ‘departure lounge’. The focus on representation, however, operates from the assumption that there is something beyond individual agency in the assembling and accretions of these everyday narratives. While conscious and willed actions take place at the level of individual authors, speakers, builders and technicians of spaces and structures, their statements do not cohere into a discourse. These dialogues are only readable from the small-scale and local level, and cannot be subsumed into grand narratives of progress and final causes. The dominant imagination of modernity has attempted to sideline the local and the domestic through its insistence on the national and the public. In contrast to this insistence on modernity in public spaces, alternative representations of modernist space in the airport tales discussed in the previous chapter demonstrate that these distinctions cannot be firmly held: despite their spatial separation, the local and the personal inflect and disrupt the monologism of nation and public.
This study has traced the modernist appetite for the sublime through a particular site and practice of air traffic. The enduring attractions of this traffic have produced assemblages of institutions, technologies, and communities that have defined themselves in relation to modern sublimity. Official discourse has sought to produce a modernist, ‘technophilic’ sublimity constructed through an elevation of technology to a beyond of human agency. Local residents, activists and artists in projects like the ‘Departure Lounge’ and the ‘Plane Truth’ have constructed alternatives to the sublime, through grotesque and camp representations of official aviation. To undo the sublime, whether in film or in urban space, is to deconstruct modernist narratives and fragment the unifying aims of official discourse. In Chapter Three, the privileging of sites of transit and traffic in modernity was demonstrated through an analysis of the modernist and Internationalist architectural style of Le Corbusier, as his urban designs sought to purify urban space and time by exclusion of detail, ornament and decoration. However, from my position that seeks to demonstrate the modern as process and practice rather than essence, what was excluded from such modern spaces is just as important as what was authorised. In Le Corbusier’s writings, the ‘engineer’s aesthetic’ posits technology as an autonomous force of design that ‘naturally’ excludes organic and somatic forms as extraneous and superfluous. Such modern architecture of purity and rationality denies its own stylisation, and thus its historical contingency as a fashion. Susan Buck-Morss has argued, after Walter Benjamin, that modern form and function are not self-identical and without fantasy, but instead display fantasies of endless innovation and tireless novelty. This tiny chink of possibility in the surplus style of modernism leaves it open to parody, manipulation, and re-contextualisation out of its ‘proper’ place in camped versions of the sublime.

This refigured sublime has been explored through analysis of unusual events and eccentric subjects. The ‘stunt’ flights of Houdini in 1910 performed modernity outside the everyday, but within the liminal spaces of the city. His own fetishisation of flight illustrated that he perceived aviation as an exploration of the limits of human embodiment, rather than proof of human technological achievement. The case of the aviatrix delineated the transgressions and transformations of the sublime that representations of gender in travel stories could effect. And the displaced home subjects discussed in Chapter Nine translated their own dislocation in sites of impossible dimensions that pictured the excesses of urban change. These excessively ordinary stories were shown to unsettle the aesthetics of both the domestic and the public and inhibit the production of the sublime.

If modernity can be understood as an on-going and incomplete process of social and political transformation, of shared meanings and collective goals, the ‘crisis’ of modernity is arguably a failure to organise and give meaning to people’s lives. Modernity as ‘modernism’ had a clear goal, as it found a content behind the parade of signs of ‘progress’ and promised its subjects an end point to change. Modernity as ‘modernisation’ is simply the constant repetition of novelty and modification without the transformation of structures of domination and subordination. By examining the deployment of discourses of modernity across time as one particular site I have argued for a re-examination of the notion of modernity as a coherent and singular category of experience. The case study of the aviatrix, as a woman ‘out of place’, defined the limits of women’s modernity. The mobile and gendered subjectivity that she represented described both the possibilities that modernity offered women for liberation through technology and the circumscription of their participation within traditional discourses on women’s roles. However, she also constructed women’s liberation within a politico-geographic discourse on the Imperial uses of technology, thereby reinscribing women’s immobility onto Imperialised ‘others’ rather than achieving a transcendence of her ‘pre-modern’ spatio-temporal fixity.

These narratives are stories about world-scale space, and the nation’s place with in it. This study contends that the airport stands betwixt and between the categories that have oriented the Australian nation throughout the twentieth century; that it is an interface between global spaces and local places, Imperial pasts and post-colonial futures. Even more importantly, the representations of such spaces via the mediascape and the cityscape work to mobilise and persistently construct these categories. Chapter Three, ‘Cities of Circulation’, argued that far from working as an independent force ‘behind’ these narratives, the nation is produced as a consequence of these spatial inscriptions. Chapter Four argued that official discourses on the home as defensible space during the second world war both constructed the domestic as a closed space, and radically refigured the relationship of everyday life to international space. Chapter Eight, ‘The New Internation’, demonstrated that the nation takes place as an ‘effect’ of desires for mobility, as much as desires for locality and territory: there is no national space without local and inter-national spaces, as the nation is constantly territorialised through its own internal and external boundary-riding. This chapter also argued that this mobility is deployed to benefit national subjects as a coherent group or class of agents, rather than those deemed insufficiently nationalised and therefore understood legitimately ‘displaced’ during such process.
As the architect Vito Acconci has noted, contemporary consumption practices miniaturise and privatise foreignness and make distant places intimate to their purchasers. Nations do not disappear in globalisation, but are reconnected through commodities and economic exchange. When we wear a watch produced in the globalised economy, “We... don’t have to go to South Korea anymore; we can have South Korea come to ‘us’. South Korea comes cheap... we have it up our sleeve...”.

The highly abstract space of ‘globalisation’ has been shown in this study to be predicated on specific and localised interpretations of modernity. I have been concerned to show that globalisation is not to be a universal and ‘suprалocal’ process. It has on the contrary been argued to be a mediated, concretely embodied, highly contested and unevenly received politics that simultaneously synthesises and strategises difference. The excessive spatial dimensions of the global domestic reveal the dependence of the exotic upon the familiar, the distant on the near, home on travel. Such ‘little’ narratives, however, because of their location in the everyday do not approximate the extremist aesthetics of the sublime. Rather than a study of resistance and disruption to the grand narratives, this project has been a study of how, even in alternative visions of modernity, reordering takes place. In each of the sites and figures examined in the proceeding chapters fantasies of power have been demonstrated to congeal into tangible and felt effects. Politics is legitimated through the most familiar, everyday practices and acts. I have examined how what was previously unthinkable has been made ‘commonsense’, in the everydayness of aviation. No longer able to narrate an aerial ‘beyond’, the grandeur and pomposity of the sublime is inverted into camp and parody when it is viewed from the location of the global everyday.

When planners and technocrats implement projects of modernisation they take apart the local and put it back together. This reconfiguring of locality produces an ‘unofficial conscious’, constituted of the displaced matter of modernity, of excluded and marginalised subjects. I have investigated construction of the airport in parallel with its waste spaces and junkyards of modernity. If the official conscious of modernist grand narratives is the sublime, its constantly deferred unofficial conscious (or conscience) is the domestic. Marginalised subjects re-strategise and re-localise the sublime at the site of the domestic, but as argued in Chapter Nine, this domestic is not constructed through modernist narratives of homesickness. Home,

---

retrieved from its ‘official’ construction as private space, in these airport tales is not a place of nostalgia as it has no essential identity. Homely space retrieved from the category of ‘waste’ is rather a relational, dialogic site and dialectical image. As dialectical images, these homes on the outside illustrate those excessive moments that emerge from our lived, everyday realities within the frame of the global. Because they mix up and shake up mutually exclusive signs and symbols, such images critically redistribute matter in public space deemed out of place in the modernist topology. This interplay and mutual construction of the official and unofficial conscious has been mapped outside and around the airport, most significantly in the ‘Departure Lounge’ project described in Chapter Nine. Signifying the multiplicity and possibility of domestic space, the homelessness imagined through these ‘airport tales’ is figured in domestic spaces so close to the global that they defy recognition as ‘home’ and unsettle any belonging. Such projects strategise the exclusions of modernity and put back ‘on-stage’ spaces that have been classed ‘off stage’ by nationalist, globalist discourses. The recent Australian film, The Castle, was understood to disclose the impossibility of ‘home’ as a technophobic and nostalgic refuge from modernity. In The Castle, the suburban home, as a notion and location, instead was acknowledged to be predicated on both globality and coloniality. In its title and its diegesis, the film played with the notion of the home as defensible space expounded by Robert Menzies described in Chapter Five, of a ‘man’s home as his castle’. Instead of reinscribing essentialist categories of race, gender and class, the film’s chronotope of a suburban house threatened by globalisation elaborated the exclusions and dispossessions that enable suburban homelessness to exist. Equally, the chronotopic site of the ‘Departure Lounge’ was argued to return the ruined and gigantic form of domestic space as the abjected voice of the local. The use of fantasy and dreams within a linear storytelling structure in The Plane Truth was argued to trouble both the upwards mobility of aeriality in its sublime forms and the downwards mobility of the abject.

All of these ‘airport tales’ represented the disruption of home as a realisation of ‘being’, thus ontologised and finalised. The site of the home in such stories instead offers domesticity as a place that concretises dialogic processes. They construct globalised homes as places of becoming. Through fabulation and storytelling these miscellaneous, minor narratives ‘outwit’ the seemingly natural order of events and governmental power over spaces. They achieve this through particular narrative strategies: by engaging fantasy rather than ‘reality’, exaggerating dimensions and ending with magical solutions. Such texts illuminate modernity’s blind spots through a minor, localised mode of storytelling.
Such self-displacement, eccentric subjectivity, partial perspectives and local knowledges are bound to produce vertigo when set against the massive urban change as a result of Sydney and Australia’s global aspirations. The global sense of place that such stories construct is a fractured and split ground suspended in the ‘now-time’ before vertigo is conquered and resolved into the sublime. In that moment of dizziness in the face of urban disorder, is the possibility of change and transformation. As Kathleen Kirby has suggested in an essay on the psychic and bodily contradictions that produce vertiginous subjectivity, vertigo is “an attempt to resolve, in imagination, an uncooperative environment.” Kirby associates this modern vertigo with marginal subjects, who, because they lean “over the brink of the self, are unable to ‘indifferently co-operate in culture’s logic’.” Sublimity and abjection have been argued in this study to be crucially inter-related, and mutually constituted. The power of the alternative representational practices of camp and the grotesque is that, by engaging fragmentation and heterogeneity against totality, they undercut both abjection and sublimity. If the spatial structure of domination that characterises the ‘cultural logic’ of nationalism is composed in the chronotope of adventure-time and heroic acts of history, engaging complexity and difference in minor acts of storytelling will produce a different chronotope: ordinary-time at the site of the domestic.

Both Benjamin and Bakhtin questioned the stable relationship between sign and signifier itself through their exploration of the political uses of carnival, fantasy and dream analysis. Their critical modernism and alternative cultural politics offer an important method for interpreting and redistributing power at the level of signification, to rework culture from within. As Bakhtin’s study of carnival ritual and Benjamin’s work on the ruined forms and discarded contents of industrial culture demonstrate, signs can always be reproduced, manipulated, recontextualised, re-made for uses other than their ‘original’ authors intended. Tensions between local conditions and national desires structure the kinds of recontextualisations that are possible within the frame of the local. Disruptions to such orders can work both temporally and spatially. Loopholes in narrative order can be exploited through anachronistic representations of ‘times out-of-place’, as well as through intentional mixing of hierarchies and domains in ‘matter out-of-place’. The dialectical images explored throughout this thesis interpolate representation with the built environment, and disrupt the flow of time inexorably towards the future. These images freeze time and fix movement, but they neither

---

cohere nor resolve urban dislocation. As Roland Barthes explained in his essay on ‘Semiology and the Urban’, urban space is open-ended: “we should understand the play of signs, to understand that any city is a structure, but that we must never try to and must never want to fill in this structure”. This perpetual work of signification and symbolic exchange describes the vertigo at the heart of modernist attitudes to the everyday.

The dialogic space that authors like Benjamin and Bakhtin describe in the cultural archive of the city might be more useful than the notion of a counterspace which is founded in a politics of opposition, contradiction, reversal, resistance, overcoming and the finality of arrival. Henri Lefebvre named this ‘counterspace’ after the ‘counter-culture’ of the 1960s and 70s. Lefebvre held out high hopes for the spatial dimension’s ability to transcend the merely ‘ideological’ because counter-politics forced relationships between groups on a global scale.

Typically the first group -- the ‘reactors’ -- oppose a particular project in order to protect their own privileged space, their gardens and parks, their nature their greenery, sometimes their comfortable old homes... The second group -- the ‘liberals’ or ‘radicals’ -- will meanwhile oppose the same project on the grounds that it represents a seizure of the space concerned by capitalism in a general sense, or by specific financial interests, or by a particular developer. The ambiguity of such concepts as that of ecology, for example, which is a mixture of science and ideology, facilitates the formation of the most unlikely alliances.

Yet a counter-space as it works from outside the modernist system of signification risks imposing more synchrony and monologism against totalising narratives. In the case of the airport, any counter-spatial project that tries to impose silence, pure and authentic locality, and any home as finalised and static is doomed to failure. Such counter-spatial strategies repeat what they seek to transcend because of the totalising political and aesthetic strategies required to impose another ‘unreal’ space in reaction to the sublime. In Sydney this counter-spatial project is encapsulated in the widely used ‘No aircraft noise’ slogan. Such a project requires a universal policing and total elimination, through the application of forces of equal power to the massive and abstracted space of the global economy. ‘No aircraft noise’ is hardly a useful slogan given the assimilation of aircraft technologies into the very fabric of the ‘world’ city. As I have shown in the airport tales discussed in this study, such traffic has produced the space of the modern city. Without technologies of travel,

---

9 Henri Lefebvre, ‘Contradictions of space to differential space’ in The Production of Space, pp. 380-381.
cities as they are defined would not exist. In this space, no-one is totally saved and no-one is totally lost.

Counter-spatial strategies are especially compromised because the scale of the airport has now expanded beyond the realm of the engineer, the technocrat or the politician. Sydney’s international air traffic movements are now nearly double those of the next largest international airport in Melbourne (see Appendix 2). Sydney (KSA) airport indeed now constitutes a miniature city within a larger city. Like the arcades analysed by Benjamin, it distributes sites of consumption alongside sites of circulation. In the financial year 1995-95, Sydney airport contributed more than half of the profit made by the national Federal Airports Corporation, but two thirds of that profit came from “its function as a shopping centre, car park and landlord”.10 The airport is scheduled for ‘privatisation’ through a $4 billion float to shareholders during the Liberal government’s term of office. As announced by the Federal Minister for Finance, and former NSW State Premier, John Fahey in December 1999, people under the flight path will have the “opportunity” to become the beneficiaries of globalisation by buying shares in Sydney airport under a “noise-affected resident’s share ownership plan (NARSOP)”.11 Perhaps the people who buy into ‘NARSOP’ will make so much money from the airport’s continual expansion (and rumoured 24-hour operation during the Olympics) that they will be able to afford to move somewhere else.

One can be opposed to these modernisations, possibly, but any totalised forms of resistance guarantee one’s own failure and one’s opponents successes. The local as an analytic category and site should not correspond to any absolute essence of location, but point to the complex intersection of forces that construct locality. The Federal government plan for selling the airport to modernity’s ‘others’ radically reconfigures the relationship between subjects and objects of modernisation, but it leaves painfully intact the question of self-determination of all citizens in modernity. The plan for privatisation collapses complex decision-making processes about the shape of urban environments into a simple financial transaction. As shareholders, rather than a community, or locals, or even individuals, the nation domesticates itself. It is high time to re-introduce vertigo into this sublimity of global progress. The challenge here is to hold onto the notion of the local while embracing the risks of the global. The local must be retained as an analytical category not because it

corresponds with any essence of location, but because it represents the place at which identity in community is produced.

Thus the re-negotiated happy home still standing alongside the airport serves as an after-image with which to grasp some ethical questions posed to communities in the global world: how can we relate the here and now to the there and future? This is a most pressing question if the nation state is giving up its role as a mediating force between local and global and now sees its function instead as a highly successful travel agent for national culture.