

## **Morphings and *Ur-Forms*: From *Flâneur* to *Driveur***

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Urban design theory (Newman and Kenworthy, 1999) traces the historical stages of the city from the walking city in which feet were the dominant mode of transport through to the transit city, which used mass transit systems to cope with longer distances and greater populations. The current dominant urban mode is the automobile city, which allows and excuses an ever larger scale of urban development. Mirroring these changes are cultural attitudes in which the city can be read as a determining factor. A key trope in understanding the city has been the *flâneur*, the “hero of modernity” (Tester, 1994:6) whose meanderings through Paris “served to focus critical theory on the many different kinds of relationships within the city and within modern society...” (Parkhurst-Ferguson, 1994:22). However, much has changed since Baudelaire and Benjamin’s meditations—the *flâneur*’s relationship to the city has been loosened as the metropolis and its media representations have evolved. What is perhaps more useful than trying to locate the *flâneur* in contemporary Sydney is to explore its possible becomings. Susan Buck-Morss in her examination of Walter Benjamin’s Arcades Project suggests:

The *flâneur* thus becomes extinct only by exploding into a myriad of forms, the phenomenological characteristics of which, no matter how new they may appear, continue to bear his traces, as *ur-form*. This is the ‘truth’ of the *flâneur*, more visible in his afterlife than in his flourishing (Buck-Morss, 1989:346)

In the instance of Sydney, the romantic figure of the *flâneur* is arguably impossible, and has instead morphed into variously the bohemian or tourist-*flâneur*. However, this paper suggests that the most appropriate becoming is the more focussed approach of the *driveur*, whereby Sydney represents and is represented by a directed *flan* *Erie*, located in the driver’s seat of the automobile, in which the urban environment is largely aesthetic distraction. Just as the *flâneur*’s natural environment was 19th Century Paris, contemporary Sydney epitomises the *driveur*’s city as a tableau upon which information flows, mostly oblivious to its environment. Nowhere is this shift more apparent than in new media representations, which having glanced towards ideas of *flanerie*, now appear to exist primarily for the *driveur*.

### **The *Flâneur***

Great cities, so the mythology goes, are more than grand monuments and challenging architecture, more than grand avenues and stunning natural attributes. They must invite exploration, be capable of surprise and allow the demands of the unfamiliar to co-exist with the comfortably familiar. Great cities are distinguished by strangeness. They are “... not like towns, only larger. They are not like suburbs, only denser. They differ from towns and suburbs in basic ways, and one of these is that cities are, by definition, full of strangers.” (Jacobs, 1961:104)

The *flâneur* embodies this myth; s/he seeks strangeness and watches strangers. S/He is, of course, the dandy who wanders the streets, observing the activities of merchants, entering and exiting shops and businesses, sitting at cafes and sipping on lattes. S/He is “that aimless stroller who loses himself in the crowd, who has no destination and goes wherever caprice or curiosity directs his or her steps...” (White, 2001:16)

The *flâneur*’s heritage is commonly traced to the French poet Baudelaire, particularly to the descriptions of the artist Constantin Guys in “The Painter of Modern Life”, “In one sweeping passage, Baudelaire extols the modern artist who immerses himself in the bath of the crowd, gathers impressions and jots them down only when he returns to his studio. For him a foray into the cityscape is always undirected, even purposeless - a passive surrender to the aleatory flux of the innumerable and surprising streets.” (White, 2001:36)

So the defining characteristics of the *flâneur* are evident not in the expression, but the desire. The *flâneur* is undirected. S/He is motiveless; she is not motivated by anything other than wandering. The *flâneur* represents both decadence and impoverishment. In a century where time and space are collapsed, the *flâneur* ignores the crush of time and constantly prods at the boundaries of his spaces. White's *flâneur*:

is by definition endowed with enormous leisure, someone who can take off a morning or afternoon for undirected ambling, since a specific goal or a close rationing of time is antithetical to the true spirit of the *flâneur*. An excess of the work ethic (or a driving desire to see everything and meet everyone of recognised value) inhibits the browsing, cruising ambition to "wed the crowd". (39-40)

The mythology of the great city is as a place where the *flâneur* can exist, where he can ignore billable hours and destinations and deadlines and meander - and experience - the metropolis as he would life. Romantically, the *flâneur* is tied inextricably to nineteenth century Paris. To White, other modern cities fail the test. For example, "In New York the stroller can amble along from the Wall Street area up through SoHo, the East and West Village and Chelsea, but then must hop a cab up to Amsterdam and Columbus on the Upper West Side; the rest of the city is a desert." (16)

And whilst Baudelaire's Paris was destroyed in the mid nineteenth century in a program of massive urban renewal, it is still Paris, more than any other town that is associated with *flanerie*. Indeed, for Edmund White, it is still possible to be a *flâneur* in contemporary Paris:

Even rebuilt and outfitted with all those identical trees... benches and kiosks, more than any other city Paris is still constructed to tempt someone out for an aimless saunter, to walk on just another hundred yards - and then another... The visitor finds himself lured on by the steeple looking over the next block of houses, by the toy shop on the next corner, the row of antique stores, the shady little square. (38)

### **The Bohemian-flâneur**

One of the *flâneur*'s afterlives is bohemian. Physical wandering has parallels in the intellectual explorations and, arguably, the spirit of the *flâneur* is present in bohemian curiosity; the bohemian-*flâneur* takes advantage of comparative affluence to explore their intellectual lives. In contrast, those less enlightened use their relative affluence for nothing more than the striving for more affluence. The bohemian-*flâneur* explores strange spaces and expands his horizons. The *driveur* trades futures on flickering screens and exists in the narrow corridors that delineate her/his life's boundaries. In twentieth century Paris, the bars and cafes were the haunts of bohemians, the intellectual *flâneurs*, St Germain being the domain of intellectuals and artists:

Sartre was introduced to Jean Genet for the first time on the terrace of Les Deux Magots. Le Corbusier, Giacometti, Picasso and... Man Ray all hung out in St Germain... Above all, pale young women in black and their gaunt boyfriends in turtlenecks were presenting themselves to the passing tourists as Existentialists... (White, 2001:22)

Sydney also has delusions of such a history, but attempts at drawing the city as the domain of the bohemian-*flâneur* are not totally convincing. Sydney has never been Paris. Despite its best efforts, the town's bohemian past consists of patchy recollections of post-war Kings Cross, a singular area of excitement in an otherwise bland urban sprawl - "the city cafes sold more than coffee - they sold a touch of the exotic in which to play the *flâneur*." (Moore, 1997)

And Sydney's romanticised present is merely a figment of imagination. Its coffee shops dismissed as less than bohemian:

Penny Arcade, the New York performance artist who steered me there, described the Piccolo as "the last Bohemia." The Piccolo is no intellectual Left Bank haunt. Nor did it remind me of Greenwich Village's

more formal coffee houses, which, alas, are rapidly disappearing. Devotees flock to the Piccolo because of one major attraction: its manager, Vittorio Bianchi, the master of the cappuccino machine. (Foster, 2003)

Sydney's *raison d'être* is not the exploration of physical or intellectual space in the off chance of serendipitous occurrences, accidental interruptions of life. Like London, Tokyo and other global cities, Sydney is built on different desires, ones in which cities are not experiences to be savoured, but impediments to be traversed; where financial pressures, motivations of capital and the reconfiguration of time as a commodity to be quantised and precisely allocated. The reallocation of space for efficiency and the movement of information products has seen the marginalisation of the bohemian-*flâneur*.

### The Tourist-*flâneur*

Sydney might still be able to trace the romantic *flâneur* in the form of the tourist-*flâneur*. A stroll from The Opera House to the Rocks is an undeniably aesthetic activity, but the crowds carry cameras, discharge themselves from tourist buses or unload shopping bags into big city hotels run by multinational chains.

Of course, the original *flâneur* "is not a foreign tourist eagerly tracing down the Major Sights and ticking them off a list of standard wonders. He (or she) is a Parisian in search of a private moment, not a lesson..." (White, 2001:46) The tourist-*flâneur*'s Sydney centres on the harbour, the streets around Circular Quay, the shops and promenades of Darling Harbour. Sydney's heart is a waterlogged one focussed on the beautiful vista of the harbour. In Peter Carey's "30 days in Sydney", one of his protagonists, Jack Ledoux stakes his claim: "Anybody who doesn't have a boat is not a citizen of Sydney" (2001:235). It is the Sydney we see in overseas advertisements, brochures from the NSW Tourist office, out-takes from *Independence Day*, *Finding Nemo* and *Water Rats*. The *flâneur* of old Paris has exploded into Sydney's tourist-*flâneur*. The *flâneur*'s aimless, undirected wandering walk has morphed into the harbour ferry ride to Manly, a sparkling theme park ride, distinguished by thirty minutes of standing still whilst being moved through a waterscape that even Disney couldn't emulate.

Moreover, our digital-camera toting tourist-*flâneurs* seldom meet the inhabitants of the city; seldom interact with anyone beyond the hotel concierge or waitstaff at the local Starbucks. Sydney, like London, New York, Beijing, is becoming more and more a destination shopping experience, where prices on globalised consumer goods from Starbucks to Chanel are compared. The Westfieldisation of the Pitt Street Mall is a pointer towards corporate global ambitions. In commodifying experience, capital dehumanises. Sydney becomes another global "tourist city" (Judd & Fainstein), another global destination distinguishable from others in insignificant ways; by the quality of its coffee, the abundance of its seafood, the distant glimmer of backyard swimming pools in the vista from the ubiquitous eponymous tower. These tourist cities share the same attractions: Chinatown, Little Italy, the ubiquitous large waterside development managed by Wharton MBA graduates and staffed by local kids straight out of high school saving money to go to New York, and a jet boat fun ride. Pick a tourist activity and plonk it down in the natural environment of your choice.

### New Media

Early cyberspatial discourse also embraced ideas of the city and attempted to draw parallels between the virtual realms of the new media and the actuality of the metropolis. In *City of Bits*, Bill Mitchell (1997) uses such an analogy in a fairly technical manner, exploring the way in which the networks might be imagined as a working city for business, education and social life. Whilst 'highway' metaphors were also common in the 1990s (Reinhardt, 1994), attempts to "liquidate the sprawling web of the internet in favor of the smooth telematic vision of the digital superhighway..." (Kroker, 1994:120) largely gave way to a common usage that emphasised exploration over direction. Indeed, some adapted the *flâneur*, suggesting that the new technologies could be conceived of as digital cities for exploration. Just as innocent forays into the city to expand his or her horizons, cyberspace might provide a similar collection of strangers with whom to interact, a parallel strange place for the "cyber*flâneur*" (Goldate, 1997). So, cyberspace became "... an alternate geography that needs to be seen, witnessed, and experienced in order to exist. The *flâneur* is a suitable metaphoric vehicle for the 'witnessing' of this space because 'the *flâneur* moves through space and among the people with a viscosity that both enables and privileges vision.'" (Barnes, 1997)

More recently, new media discourses moved towards what Terry Flew calls “the new empirics” (Flew, 2001) which emphasise actual new media usage at the expense of the more speculative suggestions that dominated some earlier discussions. In that context, the *flâneur* has given way to the *driveur*. The rambling possibilities of the virtual realm have been largely forsaken for purposeful uses. The great strange space has morphed into the space of flows (Castells, 1996:410), where capital seeks directed outcomes and the privileged pursue the rewards of the information society. To Castells, the digital network has diminished the importance of place: “While organizations are located in places, and their components are place-dependent, the organizational logic is placeless, being fundamentally dependent on the space of flows that characterizes information networks” (1989:169). The new global cities (Sassen, 1991) are the physical manifestations of the human/dataflow interface. And that interaction or intersection is the place of the *driveur*. Cyberspace now seeks a purpose—perhaps the dotcom crash has diminished the possibilities for *flanerie*. Instead, e-business, e-banking, e-mail and efficiencies dominate and the musings of the early cybertheorists have been marginalised towards the realms of artistes and the academy.

Far from being confined to the virtual realm, this discursive shift is apparent in the city itself, reflecting the evolving conditions of (post) modern life. The aimless meandering that the *flâneur* represented is no longer a romantic ideal of urban planners and architects. Instead, rigid zoning delineations, gentrification, the privileging of motorised transport, and the demands of the labour market have marginalised the idea itself. Even the act of walking in urban centres is given less institutional priority. Sydney’s Deputy Lord Mayor recently criticised the lack of importance given to pedestrians in areas of urban traffic planning and suggested that “...pedestrians are really the last people on the list and I think we should elevate the pedestrian to the first person on the list” (Dick, 2004). Of course, this importance is mirrored in the number of people actually walking. For example, in Sydney, only 6% of people walk to work each day (Dick, 2004).

As suggested previously, instead of being limited to the metropolitan promenade, *flanerie* has been displaced to other locations. Beyond the bohemian-*flâneur* or the tourist-*flâneur*, television channel surfing and the department store. (Buck-Morss, 1989:345) are the sites of the contemporary *flâneur*. The city, even Paris, no longer invites *flanerie*:

The perceived decline of the *flâneur* can be traced back to the reconstruction of Paris in the 1850s and 1860s under the guidance of Haussman’s plan to cut boulevards through the old city, along with the development of department stores and railways. It meant not only that the city became harder to read, but also that a different type of person was brought into the city. (Featherstone, 1998: 914)

When people do walk in the city, *flanerie* has been displaced by the precise itinerary of the three day tourist, the three minute dash from train platform to bus stop, the insistent battle between jaywalker and bicycle courier. Instead, the *driveur*, encouraged to incessant labour by the insistent demands of email and cellular phone; directed towards happiness by wealth acquisition and rewarded by the promise of early retirement, is the dominant actor in the twenty first century metropolis. And the image of the city reflects this dominance; its commodified, labelled spaces; a homogenised, international urban architecture imposed on the natural environment, like bland Hollywood acting over a blue screen scenery shoot. And in a roughly circular movement, the new media displays these images on global digital networks, flickering representations of the city on computer screens the world over. In this connected imagery, as nineteenth century Paris embraced the *flâneur*, so Sydney can lay claim to the *driveur*.

## The Driveur

Contemporary Sydney reflects a different type of metropolis to nineteenth century Paris. It embraces a different mode of existence; one which on the whole discourages meandering, and relies on an overtly directed focus. It lives a mechanised existence where spaces are not so much traversed as bypassed. The aimless wandering of the *flâneur* with his serendipitous discoveries is not the domain of those who actually work and live there. It is a prime example of a city that is motivated by a task, a goal or an endpoint that the *flâneur* would never have considered.

Indeed, Sydney represents the perfect *driveur*’s metropolis. Its image, centred on the sparkling waters of Port Jackson is all but invisible to most of its inhabitants. Its brilliant geography, enthused over by busloads of tourists, is overlaid twice. Firstly

by the corporatised, commodified, global world with which we are so familiar; a universal amalgam of CNN, Nike, Starbucks, Intercontinental and a thousand other brands designed to help tourists feel at home (and helpless) at any number of global 'world-class' destinations. A dehumanised, homogenised layer of actors shot in front of that blue screen and pasted over unbelievable natural beauty. And secondly, Sydney is overlaid by a criss-crossing network of transport and communications infrastructure, all designed to move goods and information as efficiently as possible across the metropolis. In this layer, geography, for all its beauty, is an impediment to the space of flows.

The dominant *becoming* of the *flâneur* is via the motorcar— Sydney is a city for *driveurs*. White calls Los Angeles a "collection of villages" (2001:1) and Sydney is the same. The distances are too great, the population densities too small for walking beyond each village. Sydney, like LA is a metropolis of drivers, of *driveurs*. Carey's "30 Days in Sydney" reflects this reality. It begins with the author's journey from the airport in a Jaguar, romanticising Moore Park Road (2001:20). Later, in an old Mercedes on the way to the Blue Mountains ("Jesus Peter, the mountains are the jail walls of Sydney (2001:140)), his friend Sheridan states the obvious: "You can't write about Sydney and leave out Parramatta Road" (2001:142). Other tales of Sydney reflect this. For example, in Peter Corris' Cliff Hardy novels, his hero has a battered Falcon, which features in every tale, weaving through the mindless, artless strip centres and streets that make up Sydney:

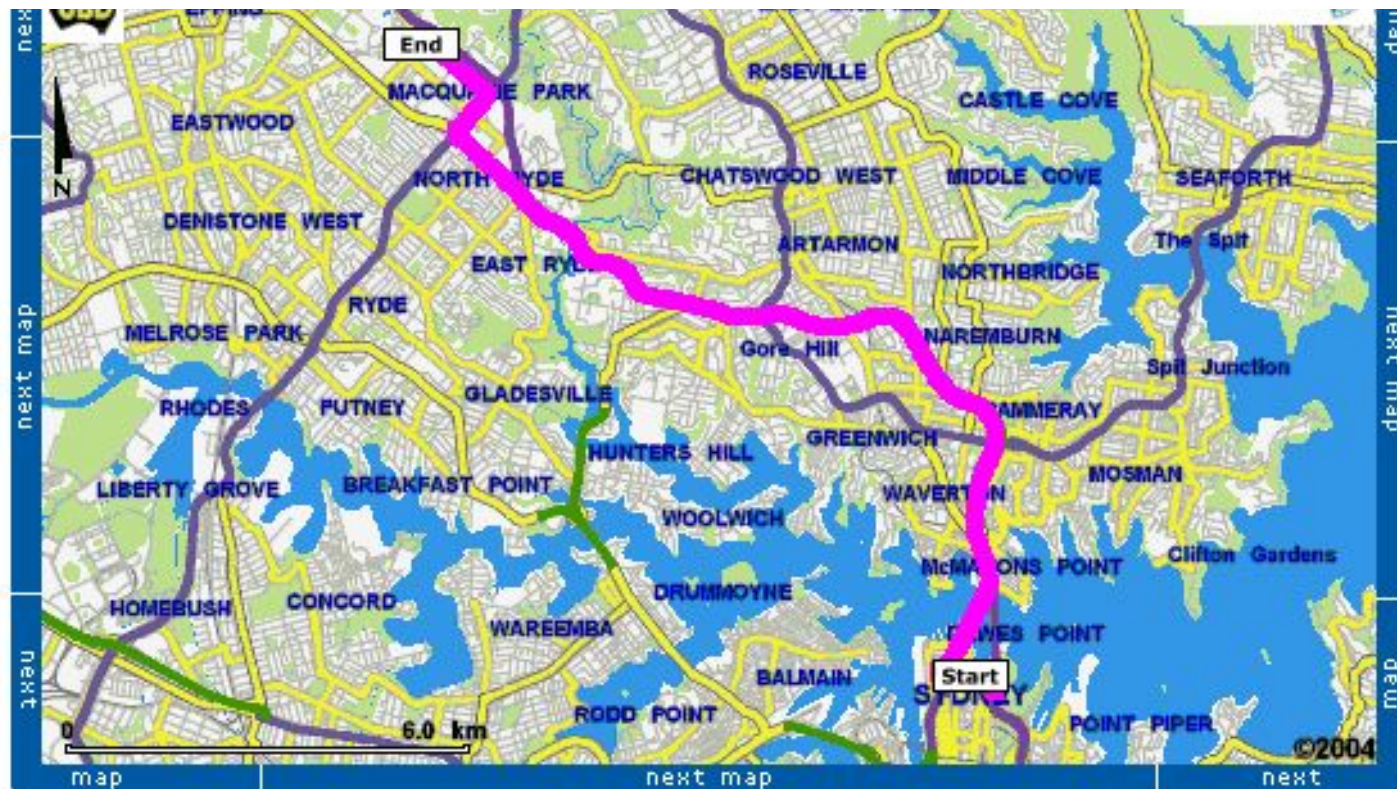
I relaxed when I got clear of Darling Harbour and that was a mistake because I opted for the wrong lane and got caught in a traffic snarl on Victoria Road. A bus had hit a car and the traffic was banked up to the Rozelle turn off. (Corris, 2004:146)

Thus, the reality for many of the city's inhabitants is the *driveur*. For most of its four million people, even the Sydney of the tourist-*flâneur* is seldom experienced. Those that work in the CBD (those lucky few who have harbour views from their offices perhaps) traipse from station to office and back again, stopping perhaps at the coffee cart, all the while immersed in their newspapers, or lost in the isolation of their ipods. The vast majority of Sydneysiders experience their city remotely. They live in suburbia, watching the rich and famous attending glittering premieres with a harbour bridge backdrop and work in other suburbias (industrias?) in business parks across the city. Their Sydney is experienced as a cacophony of road rage, billboards advertising escape, talkback radio and traffic reports. The Sydney of the *driveur* is represented by traffic jams, bus lanes and fellow drivers in the wrong toll lane.

New media representations of Sydney reflect this. The virtuality confirms the reality. Alongside the tourist destinations, with their glittering jpegs of Sydney Harbour, the no-longer functioning webcam at the top of the (since renamed) ANA hotel, are architectural walking maps, gossipy comments from backpackers on the Thorntree and personal photographic tributes that indulge the *flâneur's* fantasy in quicktime virtual reality tours. But in the new media, this pseudo-*flanerie* has been displaced by the *driveur*. Reflecting a desire for control, virtual representations of the city privilege the known over the unknown and diminish the attraction of strangeness and strangers. Motivated by the need to arrive somewhere else, the new media prefers the destination over the journey, the result over the process.

This shift from *flâneur* to *driveur* reflects two realities. Firstly, speed and destination have transplanted the importance of the journey. The *driveur* uses the new media to determine the quickest route, or avoid the worst tailback. It is a mapping tool that stresses the importance of time management and accuracy. For example, *whereis* provides maps and driving instructions for destinations nationwide. You enter a starting address and a destination address and the technology spits out a list of distances and directions all designed to guide you via the shortest possible route (with or without tolls) to your intended destination. You can either print out the instructions or use the same data in your car's GPS navigation system, allowing instead a disembodied voice to lead you through the streets. No longer is spatial awareness a necessary part of the city experience. Instead, technology rescues you from any possibility of danger. If Sherman McCoy had the technology, then his *Bonfire of the Vanities* (Wolfe, 1987) may never have occurred; his wrong turn would have been instantly corrected by the computer synthesised voice of his navigation system.





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**FROM:** CIRCULAR QUAY ALFRED STREET SYDNEY New South Wales  
**TO:** MACQUARIE CENTRE CITY CENTER MACQUARIE PARK New South Wales

WRITTEN DIRECTIONS		DISTANCE	EST. TIME
<b>Start</b> at CAHILL EXP, SYDNEY		396 m	1 Min
Continue along MACQUARIE STREET EXIT, SYDNEY		138 m	1 Min
Continue along CONSERVATORIUM RD, SYDNEY		85 m	1 Min
Turn right at CAHILL EXP, SYDNEY		1.49 km	1 Min
Continue along BRADFIELD HWY, MILLERS POINT		2.07 km	1 Min
Continue along WARRINGAH FWY, NORTH SYDNEY		3.31 km	2 Mins
Continue along GORE HILL FWY, NAREMBURN		2.84 km	2 Mins
Continue along EPPING RD, LANE COVE		5.58 km	7 Mins
Turn right at LANE COVE RD, NORTH RYDE		784 m	1 Min
Turn left at TALAVERA RD, MACQUARIE PARK		1.25 km	1 Min
Turn left at HERRING RD, MACQUARIE PARK		38 m	1 Min
Continue along xxxx, MACQUARIE PARK		69 m	1 Min
<b>Finish</b> xxxx, MACQUARIE PARK		18.04 km	20 Mins

Of course, Sydney is not unique in having access to satellite navigation data linked to mapping software. What it does represent is a particular example of the overlay of information over landscape. Whilst few would call Paris a city of natural beauty (its attraction lies in its architecture and urban design), Sydney's claim to fame is its natural beauty. Sydney's *whereis* data exemplifies the blindness of the new media technologies; the same data forms are overlaid irrespective of context; for the *driveur* the city itself is irrelevant - what matters are the driving instructions.

Similarly, other cities have online traffic cameras that provide a metropolitan panopticon for *driveurs*; allowing them to assess appropriate routes or voyeuristically view traffic incidents across the city. In Sydney, the RTA provides this service. A dozen cameras capture frozen moments in the *driveur's* existence, still-lives on asphalt that demonstrate one dominant actuality of the metropolis. There are no people in these photographs; just streams of cars, trucks and buses, spewing fumes announcing the blockage that confronts you between the here and the there. The *driveur* sees, not the beautiful bustling harbour of Jack Ledoux's Sydney; not the massive engineering feat that is the Sydney Harbour Bridge, nor the architectural delight of Utzon's Opera House. The *driveur's* gaze is held by lanes 1 to 8 of that self same bridge and whatever horrors or delights may be waiting in the flow of traffic or otherwise.

The *driveur* does not see the intimacy of the laneways off Harrington Street in the Rocks, or the old ladies in the alleys of the Chinese part of Surry Hills. The scale of Sydney isn't a petite canvas populated by buskers in the Devonshire Street tunnel or the neon sign over Sharpies Golf Shop. Instead the *driveur* must survey the sweep of digital cameras surveying the freeways of Sydney; the F3 to the north, the M4 to the west. The strangeness of the *flâneur's* city, the intimate secrets revealed by a directionless stroll past hidden doorways is replaced by the strange familiarity of tollways and tailbacks, traffic lights and street signs. The *flâneur* engages the environment with his eyes; the *driveur* cruises past at 20 metres a second, missing more in a single blink than a *flâneur* might see in an hour. And the *driveur's* Sydney is no different from the *driveur's* San Francisco or Singapore. It is a metropolis of exit signs and on ramps, a panoptic vision defined by armco barriers and bus lanes, interrupted by the occasional glimpse of tourist images of the city.





The *driveur*'s vision merely reflects a wider reality. On the traffic cameras, cities are dehumanised and dislocated. Sydney could be Baltimore or Boston, Shanghai or Capetown. It is merely the backdrop for movement, the soundstage for the happening.

There is a rich heritage of road movies from which the *driveur* emerges. *Duel* (Stephen Spielberg, 1971) and *Vanishing Point* (Richard C. Sarafian, 1971) position (semi-anonymous) drivers in combat; *Bullit* (Peter Yates, 1968) and *The French Connection* (William Friedkin, 1971) locate that combat in the urban car chase. But it is Claude LeLouch's underground *C'était un Rendez-vous* (1976), an eight-minute, real-time, one-shot dash through Paris from the Champs-Élysée to Sacré-Coeur, that encapsulates the *driveur*. In *Rendezvous* we see 1976 Paris from the car's point of view and the driver is irrelevant until the film's rather twee conclusion. As in modern computer generated racing-sims, *the viewer* becomes the *driveur*, manhandling a very fast car past recognisable Parisian landmarks. The city is mere geography; curves and hills for cars to speed around. Where nineteenth century Paris was the *flâneur*'s domain, *Rendezvous* demonstrates one of his mutations. It marks the intrusion of Margaret Morse's "nonspace" (Morse, 1990:196) of the freeway into Baudelaire's Paris; the viewer is *distracted from* the streets and buildings of the City by his re-location within the mobile, homogeneous space created by the film's point of view. The *flâneur* morphs into the *driveur*.

In many ways, *Rendezvous* prototypes the ultimate new media experience. When Microsoft's XBox was released in 2001 as a rival to Sony's Playstation 2, one of the key launch titles was *Project Gotham Racing*, a driving simulator designed to take on the incredibly popular PS2 *Gran Turismo* series. Like *Gran Turismo*, *Project Gotham* centred around the ability to race simulations of expensive sports cars. Indeed, *Gran Turismo* is credited with having introduced a generation of young males to cars that they otherwise would not have recognised. More precisely, the popularity of small high performance Japanese cars like the Lancer EVO, Nissan GTR and Subaru WRX (which are deeply embedded in the car cultures of young Japanese and South East Asian men) has crossed the cultural divide. Those products and their surrounding cultures are now firm icons in western pop culture. For example, the Vin Diesel film *The Fast and the Furious* (Rob Cohen, 2001) depicts San Francisco street racing, but stars a range of jet-black Honda CRX whose natural environment can be traced to *Gran Turismo 3 (GT3)*. *Project Gotham's* competitive claim over *GT3* was ultra-realistic depictions of cityscapes through which gamers could race their cars. The chosen cities were Tokyo, New York, San Francisco and London and users were allowed to select a range of road circuits within those locations. For the sequel, *PGR2*, Bizarre Creations (the game's designers) expanded the choice of cities to include Barcelona, Chicago, Illinois; Edinburgh, Scotland, Florence, Hong Kong, China; Moscow, Stockholm, Washington, D.C., Yokohama and Sydney for "with its stunning harbour" (McGurren).

Each chosen city was recreated digitally as nothing more than a spectacular backdrop for a racing car simulator. *PGR2* took Sydney and digitised it, using its appearance as animated wallpaper. Julie McGurren, Lead City Artist for Bizarre Creations describes the process:

In the first stage of the project, a team of three people head to a city and spend time photographing and taking video footage of everything on the chosen circuit. We photograph the buildings, roads, street furniture, trees, and plants: anything that you'll see in the circuit. We often get some very strange looks! By the end of a trip, we might have more than 10,000 images to help us create a city. Back in the office, we



collate the information and start creating the city using 3-D modelling... we block in the buildings, a process that takes about a month and gives us a quick impression of how the city will look and feel. Then we create a detailed building model in each of the building blocks. (McGurren, undated)

The emphasis was on creating a virtual facsimile of the reality; of building a city in miniature. Indeed, such is the realism depicted in the game that NSW Parliamentarians attempted to ban its sale:

State Labor MP Paul Gibson, chairman of the Staysafe Committee, intends to take the matter up with the Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC), which approves such games for sale in Australia, and which issued a G rating to Project Gotham Racing 2. "This game sends the wrong message to young people. It is actually glorifying speed and power," Mr Gibson said. "It is clearly an inappropriate depiction of speed behaviour. If I had my way I would ban it." (Dowling, 2003)

Given its continued presence on the shelves, we can assume that the OFLC did not have any problems with its original game classification. X Box marketing manager Nick Segger defended the game and emphasised this company's approach to the city: "It is not about driving on the streets, it is purely a racing game. The streets are blocked from other traffic and there are no pedestrians. All we are doing is taking the geography of Sydney and turning it into a race track." (Dowling, 2003)

The end result is a realistic simulation of Sydney—albeit the tourist Sydney of Circular Quay and the Rocks, which was then (in the spirit of the *driveur*) dehumanised by "remov(ing) things like people, plants, and trees"(McGurren, undated). This removal of humanity was complemented by the insertion of desire and its extension within an information network. The motivation for *PGR2* is not living, nor strolling. It is not even sightseeing, nor shopping. The motivation is the *driveur's* wet dream, the ability to drive very fast between recognised buildings and scenery. Moreover, the X Box fantasy allows global X-Boxers to network their races, to compete against each other in their chosen space; racing their Porsches, their Ferraris in their own cyberspaces; that common space they share between their game consoles. Sydney is, of course, irrelevant. The city exists as nothing more than aesthetic background scenery for the rapid flow of bits across the network.

*Project Gotham Racing 2* is perhaps the endpoint in Sydney's trajectory. It marks the final shift from aspirations of the Parisian *flâneur*. The aimless wandering of the dandy; engaging with strangeness, encountering strangers is replaced by the steely eyed focus of the X-Box *driveur*, all sweating palms and eyes reddened by lack of blinking. Our hero has metamorphosed from the solitary observer, competing with no-one, content in his imaginings and his accidental discoveries into the solitary *gameur* represented on a flickering screen, tethered by a Cat 5 cable to the net and some other solitary soul, pushing hard against analog sticks against an impressively detailed, yet somehow desolate rendition of George Street. Drunk with a sense of purpose; raging against a global opponent, yet divorced from any humanity that might somehow still exist in the globalised metropolis.





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