Provenance – Emergence, Emulations and Disjunctions in Urban Melbourne

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Cities are premised on ideas. The built environment is a projection of formal and structural determinants such as trade, defence, changes in cultural, religious and ideological influences etc. Urban architecture is an appraisal of these values, and urban processes are the primary mechanism for transmission of patterns of plurality. Nineteenth century, and some twentieth century planners, assumed the large programmatic scope of these emulations could accommodate a range of urban needs, but initiated them primarily on general visual associations. These were often conceived in pictorial terms. The research argues that Australian cities rely extensively on applying imagery and collective histories from other, earlier cities in large instalments rather than breaking them up and applying smaller fragments in response to the specifics of urban analysis. The paper deploys Melbourne as a converging point described though some exemplary projects and critical agendas for the metropolis. The research emphasises the emergence, redolence and vitality of this architecture within its antipodean context. These precedents will be explored through the lenses of order, industry, arenas, social change, fragmentation, division, endlessness and multiples and tracked through a diversity of scales and chronologies. The paper attempts to describe and position the practice of architecture and urban design through the assimilation of collective histories, tracing its formal resonances and distortions as well as social and political agendas.

Keywords — Melbourne; architecture; urban design; history.

PART 1: UR BAN EMULATION

Australia’s urban form is generally discussed in terms of broad guiding principles in the development of formal planning: urban form was to be enacted without major reference to history or existing visual imagery: often in individual buildings or in street or planting patterns rather than through characteristics or distinctiveness of existing Australian urban form.1 These sources for action include the good and bad use of nineteenth century military survey grids, early twentieth century movements such as the Garden City, City Beautiful or Radburn, and the early modernist period by Neighbourhood and British New Town systems, Radiant City concepts of terraced housing towers, framing of cities around freeway networks or even escape from cities altogether, as with Australia’s 1980s architectural ruralism.2 These urbanist movements are all highly general: spanning different cities and settlements; not really confined to periods shorter than about 100 years or more; based in European ideas of compressed urban realms and pedestrian life. These various movements have little positive to say about the existing suburban realm that comprises so much of Australia’s urban identity. Historical departures from these systems are generally attributed to commercial greed or backsliding by designers and administrators, and seen as departures from clarity and order. There has been limited study of genuine collectivity or groupings in wholesale Australian urban shaping, other than the examples and legacies of Victoria’s SEC, the South Australian Housing Trust, and the National Capital Development Commission.3

There has been far less detailed study of how collective, cohesive visual imagery shapes Australian cities: that is, urban emulation. This became, arguably, a planning instrument in itself, and a strategy in generating urban form certainly in Australia, and often also overseas. But it was hard to legislate, hard to teach in any formal program. The emergence of specific urban emulation, and all the cues and nuances that introduced, was often unexpected and as frequently hard to predict or prescribe: think of the fate of the Multi-function polis proposed for northern Adelaide, an emulation of new Japanese designs suggested by developer flat and rejected on a whole series of grounds including politics, war memories and racism.4

Yet such collectivity is certainly there, in many agreements that still read strongly in existing, achieved urban form in Australia. Some we might see now as positive, some we might see as negative. The motives are in addition to those just mentioned but are overwhelmingly visual as well as collective. This visual collectivity carries within it different forms of urban planning, often mixed together; any number of client and some legislative agreements, and a whole marshaling of suitable architectural form and styles. What co-ordinates it is assemblage visual imagery, and in principle its core is urban emulation: the agreed conception of desirable urban forms as ruling pictures.

You know such forms in Melbourne. A signature, almost, is Collins Street’s Rialto precinct,5 both because it has been largely preserved and because its collective imagery is conspicuously from a single source named not only for a great many of its building details but for the agreement of architects and clients to build, literally, John Ruskin’s assertion of medieval and renaissance Venice as a moral and crafted shrine.6 This was not simple provincial admiration, though provincial identity has been a useful tool for critics to draw any number of broader characterizations of Australia. In Western Europe, which has always seemed Metropolitan and culturally assured to Australians, Hamburg rebuilt its Alsterarkaden precinct in its city centre as a reconfigured Venice, with canal and loggias, after its 1842 fire. In California, Venice in Los Angeles was conceived as a teetotal and semi-autonomous version of Venice Italy, where the Pacific became Venice’s Adriatic lagoon. In the largest recent emulation, Munich under Ludwig I recast itself as a new Florence after about 1830, its state, library and university buildings all reflecting the Pitti Palace, its Feldherrenhalle emulating the Loggia Vecchio in the great Piazza, its new churches reflecting Sta Croce, its new Post Office recalling Brunelleschi’s Florence Orphanage, the new grid of its streets recalling the grid of Florence’s original Roman stockade.

The growth, expansion and augmentation of cites unleash new trajectories for urban development accompanied by a sustained experimentation with the general form of the city. These domains of inquiry often surround themselves by a range of the reactionary forces as well as notions of assimilation to shifting social, political and economic paradigms. They each sustain pressures and compressions to internal boundaries and restrictions as well as responses that enforce conditions of the expanding edge and hinterland when confronted with prescribed growth limits. The constitution of the city is therefore a carefully titrated exercise - a measured aggregation and/or neutralisation of the existing in response to design movements and agendas on growth and capacity, that successively evolve over and across a range of scales and resolutions of intensity and timescales.

Melbourne, a city that exhibits such sequential characteristics of urban emulation and broad collectivity manifested in its architecture and urban plan, from the articulation of its building to the identity of the precinct and character of its suburbs. The somewhat fraught relationship between these loose scenarios embodies the pluralistic nature of its urban and architectural operations. The provenance and emergence of certain traits are resolute while other are a product of hybridity or an unravelling of disjunctions in urban form mapped over time.
With the east or Paris End of Collins Street, now half-gone, earlier developers literally agreed on a consistent scale, texture, light and shade resonance, coupled with plane trees, in direct emulation of Haussmann’s nineteenth-century boulevards. Within this frame the Collins Street buildings shifted in their detailed references: from Italian Renaissance revivalism (1830s-1920s) to neo-Georgian, neo-Regency (1920s); but at a collective level, the imagery was clear. Collins Street had agreed on Paris as a trope for sophistication, Metropolitan life, taste and tranquility.

Other, unnamed Melbourne precincts spring to mind. In the 1890s and 1900s Flinders Street buildings collectively strove to recall the contemporary Michigan Avenue in Chicago: again, this reference was built up in a single street. New York and Chicago continued in Melbourne after the Great War, but followed the retail shift north to to shape the general imagery of Collins, Bourke and Lonsdale Street’s rebuilding in the 1930s. Melbourne’s commercial office regions, rebuilt in the mid-1950s to the early 1970s, meant the west end of Hoddle’s grid and, increasingly, Collins Street’s Paris End, were now subsumed in a different Metropolitan imagery. In the 1950s these areas invoked the collective imagery of various but quite specific American cities: New York, Chicago, San Francisco, primarily, as formed by IM Pei, Ludwig Mies and Philip Johnson, Skidmore Owings and Merrill / SOM, Welton Beckett, Emery Roth. A later group of office precincts St Kilda Road and Southbank around 1982-7—primarily, drew on either the hyper-modernist or the classical renewal of the mirror-glass, corporate precincts of Philadelphia, Detroit, Atlanta, Dallas and Cincinnati, courtesy of American architect-stars of the day: Helmut Jahn, Michael Graves, Kohn Pedersen Fox, Philip Johnson and SOM (once more).

In Melbourne, think how in the 1880s the theatre precinct in Spring, Exhibition and Bourke Streets gathered in the form and imagery of contemporary theatre forms. Alexander Sutherland hailed the new Princess Theatre of 1887-8 as a worthy rival for Monsieur Garnier’s Paris Opéra.4 Even if it was only a tenth the Paris Opera’s overall volume, Sutherland was clearly persuaded. In Exhibition, Bourke and Collins Streets, William Pitt, Hyndman and Bates, Smith and Johnson, Harry White and Nahum Barnet invoked the music palace splendours of their London counterparts Frank Matcham, Thomas Verity, WG Sprague and Berrie Crewe. Where British theatres were often widely scattered, in Melbourne architects could now place them together or near each other. Melbourne’s gridded blocks adding to the compression and visual force these commanded as agreed precincts. Sydney’s newer theatres stretched in a striking procession from the Campbell Street front. These strands of Melbourne’s government buildings had agreed on Paris as a trope for sophistication, Metropolitan life, taste and tranquility.

But these image-precincts, and their Australian adoption, was not solely to impart ‘civilization’ and the manifest destiny of British industry and its accompanying Empire. Melbourne’s parliamentary precinct, had four major buildings shaped in two embodiments of municipal civics from the muck-and-brass end of England, a statement of breathtaking effrontery and ascendancy and its absolute assurance of a splendoured future. What is fascinating, in retrospect, is to see how these particular grace and scholarly bearing of North England’s renaissance revival and classical fusions of the 1840s and 50s: how Parliament house and its nearby office buildings, the Old Treasury, all embodied the imagery and ideas within the manner of northern England’s fused neoclassicism and Renaissance Revival.10 Melbourne’s government buildings have little trace of Whitehall or Westminster; nor should there have been. Melbourne was not challenging London with visual ensembles of buildings. Our local aim was parity with Britain’s great industrial cities, backed by Victoria’s extraordinary gold rush and the hammering of Melbourne’s innumerable boot and brittle factories. This applied in the way large regional centres began perceiving and depicting themselves. Paul Fox has observed Ballarat’s proclamation of itself as a city of steam;11 Newcastle, New South Wales, did much the same, naming four central streets Newcomen, Stevenson, Watt, and Telford. The Anglican Cathedral, high on its crag, evokes Durham and a dozen or more names round Newcastle derive from Durham county in England, a birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.

Part 2: Nodal Suburbs

The emulation of the compression and coherence that Australians saw in overseas city imagery often travelled well beyond Australia’s central urban precincts. This urban emulation often flowed into the dimensions and dictates of suburban shopping strips that is mostly ignored in other visualisations of desirable urban futures. Art Deco, for architects a hoped-for reconciliation and fusion of classical and gothic detail gained an instant and massive appeal as a way to draw closer to the urban form perceived here as both modern and stylish, and apparently universal overseas.12 For this reason, rather than the architects’ concerns, it spread into lines and clusters of related form and detailing, along suburban arterial roads, cinemas, and by the middle and later 1930s, into individual houses. Now, the object of emulation was the new suburban and urban centres appearing in the United States and Britain: Harry Weeden’s English Odeon chain and the refurbishment of British High Streets; the stylish Deco sets for Warners’ Goldiggers or RKO’s Fred and Ginger movies, or the by now monumental urban presence of deco buildings in Hollywood or Manhattan.13 Marcus Barlow, Harry Norris, Oakley and Parkes and Leslie Perrott’s reshaping of the Howey Estate in Collins and Swanston Streets asserts this new metropolis of the American 1930s exactly, in as many buildings as these architects could complete; and by 1929-38 Harry Tomkins, Harry Norris and Bates Smart were repeating the urban image in the expanding Bourke Street retail area.

Indeed, American modernity seemed to dance before Australian eyes, perceived as a resolved form: seen as gathered, collected in some enlightened overseas realm and ready for our use. Legislative and process changes, the means to provide reconciliation and fusion of classical and gothic detail gained an instant and massive appeal as a way to draw closer to the urban form perceived here as both modern and stylish, and apparently universal overseas.12 For this reason, rather than the architects’ concerns, it spread into lines and clusters of related form and detailing, along suburban arterial roads, cinemas, and by the middle and later 1930s, into individual houses. Now, the object of emulation was the new suburban and urban centres appearing in the United States and Britain: Harry Weeden’s English Odeon chain and the refurbishment of British High Streets; the stylish Deco sets for Warners’ Goldiggers or RKO’s Fred and Ginger movies, or the by now monumental urban presence of deco buildings in Hollywood or Manhattan.13 Marcus Barlow, Harry Norris, Oakley and Parkes and Leslie Perrott’s reshaping of the Howey Estate in Collins and Swanston Streets asserts this new metropolis of the American 1930s exactly, in as many buildings as these architects could complete; and by 1929-38 Harry Tomkins, Harry Norris and Bates Smart were repeating the urban image in the expanding Bourke Street retail area.

The axiality and detailing of Melbourne’s Parliamentary Precinct aspired, literally, to our encirclement by the particular grace and scholarly bearing of North England’s renaissance revival and classical fusions of the 1840s and 50s: how Parliament house and its nearby office buildings, the Old Treasury, all embodied the imagery and ideas within the Liverpool precincts of Harvey Elmes and CR Cockerell’s St George’s Hall and surroundings in Liverpool (1840), JJ Clark’s Old Treasury and its fusion of the rural Venetian Villa Garzoni, Cockerell’s Ashmolean Museum at Oxford and Cuthbert Brodrick’s Leeds Town Hall of 1853-8 and its three-block approach axis, speaking of Leeds’ industrial round Newcastle derive from Durham county in England, a birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.

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But these image-precincts, and their Australian adoption, was not solely to impart ‘civilization’ and the manifest destiny of British industry and its accompanying Empire. Melbourne’s parliamentary precinct, had four major buildings shaped so strongly by mid-nineteenth century north of England Renaissance, and planned more. But where these buildings meet the everyday city they are also eminently democratic, primarily in their architectural symbolism of Victoria’s then so rare universal male suffrage. You can see this when Peter Kerr and John Knight literally swept Bourke Street and all its rough trade up into the parliamentary chambers (1856-91), via a street-width flight of steps that frames demonstrations and political rallies to this day. This gesture fronts the Parliament precinct not once but twice: In his Old Treasury (1858-62) JJ Clark takes five wheeling entrance arches and fits their width to Collins street at its diagonal turn northeard, and includes the imprint of Collins Street’s two broad footpaths in the two columned bays he placed to each side of the arches. Collins Street, and Melbourne behind it, is cast as a line of force and agency, and it leaves its imprint in the Treasury façade and a matching ‘displaced’ bay at its rear. The close conjunction between the Old Treasury and Collins Street at a diagonal turn, also allowed it to work as a node building in Paris might as with Charles Garnier’s Paris Opera (1861-74), or JFA De Quen’s Gare de l’Est (1849 ff).

Clearly, this urban emulation used specific building forms and the associations these encouraged with collective precincts overseas. Once in place, the associative imagery was then repeated to generate quite cohesive urban precincts in the manner of northern England’s fused neoclassicism and Renaissance Revival.11 Melbourne’s government buildings have little trace of Whitehall or Westminster; nor should there have been. Melbourne was not challenging London with visual ensembles of buildings. Our local aim was parity with Britain’s great industrial cities, backed by Victoria’s extraordinary gold rush and the hammering of Melbourne’s innumerable boot and brittle factories. This applied in the way large regional centres began perceiving and depicting themselves. Paul Fox has observed Ballarat’s proclamation of itself as a city of steam;11 Newcastle, New South Wales, did much the same, naming four central streets Newcomen, Stevenson, Watt, and Telford. The Anglican Cathedral, high on its crag, evokes Durham and a dozen or more names round Newcastle derive from Durham county in England, a birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.
actually both Robin Boyd’s assumption and the major guide in his writing.

Beyond the details of individual shops and buildings, the shaping of Australian suburbs, especially in the early twentieth century, gravitated towards dividing urban regions into cities rendered miniature. In this way our traditional understanding of Australian cities dense city centres and artery-dominated suburbs was directly challenged and in many instances replaced. By 1920 Melbourne and Sydney each gained a dozen or more suburban nodes, Brisbane one, Adelaide, six, Perth, three.

Suburban spread, generally discussed in Australia as an undifferentiated sprawl to either side of radial arteries and a binary ‘other’ to a visually separate ‘city’ or CBD, actually divided into distinct regions and precincts, each commanding identification and often strong loyalty, as cities in miniature. This reproduced the area, dimensions and concentrations of visual imagery that had been tried out so often in Australia’s central cities: in dimensions at least, many developing suburban centres took on the compression and density of messaging that might be found in central Melbourne’s Rialto precinct, Paris End or Theatre districts. This emulation was built up through dimensions and heightened visual imagery suburban centres took on the compression and density of messaging that might be found in central Melbourne’s Rialto precinct, Paris End or Theatre districts. This emulation was built up through dimensions and heightened visual imagery and resources. Since the earlier urban precincts had themselves rendered city forms miniature for coherence, so certain suburbs now assumed the status of ‘cities’, each surrounded by several suburbs. This was reflected in the growing movement to proclaim municipal areas cities, but most important was the way these suburbs now began assuming the broad formal proportions and collectivity of small city centres. 16

And there was no shortage of them. By 1920 such Melbourne nodes included Hawthorn, Prahran, Camberwell, Box Hill, Malvern-Caulfield, Oakleigh, Elsternwick, Brighton, St Kilda, Fairfield, Heidelberg, Preston-Bell, Coburg, Moonee Ponds, Footscray and Williamstown. Later, as part of an expanding suburban fabric, came Werribee, Sunshine and Dandenong. By 1930 Sydney carried a similar set: Burwood-Strathfield, Ashfield-Summer Hill, Lidcombe, Parramatta, Epping, Hornsby, Chatswood, North Sydney, Manly, Bondi Junction, Randwick-Kingsford, Kogarah-Hurstville, Bankstown. Brisbane had a clear second city in Fortitude Valley; Perth had Fremantle, Claremont, and Midland; Adelaide had Port Adelaide, North Adelaide (conceived by Colonel Light as a suburb but resolved as a semi-autonomous node), Glenelg, Marion-Brighton, Semaphore-Langs, North Adelaide and Blackwood.

Aside from their general concentration of mass and imagery, what links these miniature CBDs and their role as urban emulations?

1. All, with local approval, departed from the arterial pattern of strip shopping centres and major buildings along a single main road or two parallel main roads: often a major shopping arm opens up at right-angles to the prevailing artery, in contrast to the artery linking suburb to the central city. Witness Glenferrie Road Hawthorn, Chapel Street Prahran, Bourke Road Camberwell, Burwood Road and the Boulevarde in Burwood-Strathfield, Church Street Brighton-Melbourne; burgundy Street Heidelberg, and Puckle, Fletcher and Rose Streets in Moonee Ponds-Essendon.

2. Some assume a grid or diagonally clustered CBD form in miniature, with their own city grids, often set at an angle or an opposing direction to the nearest road artery: Fremantle, Port Adelaide, Parramatta; Caulfield; Box Hill, Footscray, when it left its original Maribyrnong River centre in the 1860s and moved up the hill to its new railway station; Oakleigh, Bankstown, Midland, Fortitude Valley.

3. Apart from North Adelaide and Fortitude Valley, all are placed well away from central city regions.

4. Most have a central park attached to one side of their clustered forms, and they are often stretched as linking tissue between a major road artery towards the central city, and their local railway station: Footscray, Coburg, Heidelberg, Box Hill, Camberwell; Elsternwick. Burwood/Sydney, Blackwood-Adelaide; Chatswood. Later came Mentone and Frankston in Melbourne.

5. All are significant foci of identification and loyalty, through things that often seem small in themselves: sports teams (Footscray, Essendon, Fremantle; through secondary school and church clusters important in people’s upbringing (Box Hill), or specific industries or occupations, as with the Port nodes or Sunshine.

6. Several Dandenong, Oakleigh, Box Hill, Frankston, Epping, Hornsby and Bankstown in Sydney, Midland were older rural settlements set off the main urban grids or arteries and then overrun by suburban development, which gain nodal status through the initial form they took as organized communities.

7. Some are neighbouring cities that linked with their capital city neighbours through a shared suburban fabric, which then began functioning as nodal suburbs (Fremantle, Parramatta, Port Adelaide, Dandenong, Sunshine, Werribee).

8. Almost all have a set of four or five ‘linking’ suburbs, usually totalling 5–7 sq km up to about 20 sq km (Dandenong). Oakleigh has Hughesdale, Chadstone, Huntingdale, Oakleigh South as its own ‘suburbs’. Heidelberg has Rosanna, Heidelberg West, Ivanhoe, Eaglesmont, East Ivanhoe and Banyule.

9. All the early suburban nodes had railways or major tram fabric and convergent routes. Often their consolidation as nodes stemmed from being termi or junctions for many trains, enlarging the nodal railway stations. In Melbourne this happened with Sunshine, Essendon, Coburg, Reservoir, Box Hill and later Ringwood, then Lilydale and Ferntree Gully postwar; Caulfield, Oakleigh and Dandenong; Moorabbin, Mentone, Mordialloc and Frankston; Brighton.

10. All were municipal government centres, though several (Camberwell-Hawthorn, Burwood-Strathfield) incorporated different municipal councils and have municipal boundaries running straight through them, and they surmount or subsume the municipal boundaries. Some municipal ‘cities’ certainly remained arterial and conventionally nineteenth-century in layout: Northcote, Brunswick, Fitzroy, Newtown, Leichhardt, Unley, Thebarton, Toowong, Annerley. Collingwood, Fitzroy and Richmond in Melbourne each have three parallel arteries dwarving transverse development. In nodal suburban centres, their urban form is marked out by modulated skylines, taken up a step from conventional shopping strips, that work as miniature versions of CBD skyline climaxes and visual accumulation. The town hall and one or more of the largest churches, later augmented by cinemas, usually provide the climaxes, much as they did in Australia’s central cities before World War Two. When office buildings and the great hospitals began challenging that order with their visual bulk, this was repeated in the nodal suburbs (generally around 40–50 years later), as in the enlargement of Box Hill’s two hospitals and the proliferation of cheap but visually emphatic tilt-slab office blocks.

These nodal suburbs have parallels overseas. Think of Los Angeles’ nodes, forming around the same time (Santa Monica, Beverly Hills, Hollywood, Long Beach, Huntington, Pasadena, Burbank, Glendale).17 Think of London’s new Metroland centres, developing around 1910, or Berlin’s Tempelhof, Charlottenburg, Neukoelln or Kreuzberg. All emerge in the heyday of tram and railway commuting, later adding car traffic. In Australia, when completely car or bus-dominated variants appear, as in Chadstone, Northland, Toombul or Top Ryde after about 1960, it is in the concentrated rationalized, stylized form of the largest shopping malls, a textbook system linked mainly to Victor Gruen in the 1950s.18

Again and again, these nodal suburbs arises from nineteenth-century urban emulation. Its concentrated and agreed clusters of urban imagery were the prototypes for its becoming a crucial component in the composite urbanism of Australian cities that is, of CBD, CBDs in miniature, in suburbanization and above all, coherent episodes of visual imagery. Urban emulation carries through here in what had, by the twentieth century and the arrival of commuter suburbs, become a recurring, almost reflex Australian action in the generation of larger scale urban form. Australia was doing, in essence, what Robert Venturi urged modern architects do in his massively influential Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (1966). He asked, ‘is not Main Street almost all right? Indeed, is not the commercial strip of a Route 66 almost all right? What slight twist of context will make them alright? Perhaps more signs more concentrated.19 Through urban emulation, the concentration of visual imagery and the nodal suburb, Australia had been working in just this direction for around eighty years.

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3 Either by Robin Boyd, as in his SEC discussion in Victorian Modern, RVIA Students’ Society, Melbourne, 1947, or the National Capitol Development Commission in his The New Architecture, Longmans, Melbourne, 1965; or Hugh Stretton in his accounts of work with the South Australian Housing Trust, the source for much in his Ideas for Australian Cities, Privately published, Adelaide, 1970.

4 Urban emulation was also, arguably, a source of shame or concern for Australian planners, architects and other observers, for it implied provincial dependence and lack of originality. The wide spectrum of planning options on the other hand, removed from specific places and any accretion of ‘copying’, could be read as a value-free source of new urban form. The Multi-Function Polis (1986-97), eventually evolving into Moosonee Lakes Technology Park in Adelaide, offered a new urban emulation of sorts: it would have broadly emulated Tsukuba Science City north of Tokyo (1961 ff.), and was a more comprehensive version of many industrial or technology ‘parks’ that later appeared around Australia. It was resented locally as a potential Japanese expatriate enclave, though it also coincided with a collapse in Japan’s economy.

5 The Rialto Precinct came into widespread use as a term around 1973, after demolition of the Hotel Federal on the next block and the planned demolition of most of Collins Street’s south frontage between King and William Streets. Heritage analyses of the Victorian period had been gathering strength and from this perspective the Venetian Gothic and related modes in this section were now seen as sophisticated application of the Venice beloved of John Ruskin. The Rialto was the name given one of the buildings; William Pitt’s warehouse and offices (1890) near the King Street corner. There was a Melbourne tradition for these precinct names, including The Block (Swartham to Elizabeth Streets) and The Paris End (see below).


7 See Judith Buckrich, ‘Collins Street’, in Andrew Brown-May and Shurlee Swain (eds., contrib.), The Encyclopedia of Melbourne, Cambridge, Melbourne, 2006. She dates the usage from the first pavement cafe’ opening there in 1955. Of the Collins Street precincts, one, The Block, is social and flaneur in its associations. The other two, The Rialto and the Paris End, are much more architectural in their reference.

8 Alexander Sutherland, Victoria and Its Metropolis, McCarron Bird, Melbourne, 1888.

9 A valuable and detailed source for Sydney’s theatre history is Ross Thorne, in his Theatres in Australia: an Historical Perspective of Significant Buildings, University of Sydney, 1977. His Cinemas of Australia: via USA, University of Sydney, 1981, also covers the careers of many theatres converted into cinemas. His account endows these with a strong sense of precinct.

10 Conrad Hamann traced this in Melbourne: the Architectural Context’ Apollo, September 1982.


14 The imagery and sourcing of Art Deco and its new English-speaking Metropolis have been considered by Ross Thorne in Cinemas of Australia (see n. 9, above), and Conrad Hamann examined the stylistic transfer in ‘Heralds of Free Enterprise; Architecture of Australian Cinemas’, in James Sabine (ed), A Century of Australian Cinema, Heinemann-AFI, 1996.


16 The following discussion is based largely on personal observation than on any forays into this phenomenon by other researchers: there has actually been few, if any, outside of local histories where a natural emphasis tends to be on local identification and consciousness, as with John Lack’s A History of Footscray, Hargreen and City of Footscray, 1991. Conrad Hamann noticed the phenomenon when, as an undergraduate at Monash University, he observed that the majority of students did not see the Melbourne CBD as an effective city centre. Rather, the ‘city’, for them, was Chadstone shopping mall, completed in its first version in 1960. Hamann wrote these observations up in a long essay for Ian Turner in the department of History at Monash University, 1971, based on a map reconstruction of Melbourne suburban street patterns to 1939, and has elaborated on the theme in lectures since, at both Monash University and at RMIT. Hamann then extended his research by examining similar suburbs in cities outside of Melbourne, and visiting each if in turn. The development of these regions has been discussed in some detail, though not as part of a node pattern, in David Gebhard and Robert Winter’s Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California, Peregrine Smith, Salt Lake City, 1977.
