Lo-Comotion at Carriageworks: Reviving the Redfern Railway

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Carriageworks, the multi-function arts complex housed in the former Eveleigh Railway Workshops of the Redfern Waterloo precinct, encapsulates the oppositional, often contradictory, yet ultimately symbiotic interplay of modernity and postmodernity in the contemporary moment. Today, the site is regarded as a cosmopolitan hub for practitioners and audiences to facilitate community engagement with a typically localised and multidisciplinary contemporary art program. Whilst its current multitude of functions is a far-cry from the thriving focal point of mobilised urban industry it embodied during the early 20th century, its century old utilitarian façade provides a visual reminder of its modernist origins. Thus, the site manifests postmodernity's 'aesthetic introversion' and exploitation of nostalgia, conducive to 'a parodic project' (Hutcheon, 1989, p. 194) and a critical, often ironic recalling of the past. Such a recalling casts into sharp relief, the dogmatic tunnel vision characteristic of the modernity project and offers a means by which to reclaim what has been cast aside in its wake; a sense of individual identity and engagement within a community.

This chapter explores the impact of social process of industrialisation as both a driving force and reflection of modernity. This provides an appropriate framework to chart the rise of postmodernism in the contemporary moment, defined by Morley as a 'cultural sensibility' of a 'post-fordist, post-industrial economy and society' (1996, p.52). Through this lens, one can perceive postmodernity as a response to and rejection of the perceived social alienation borne of modernising processes and the construction of an industrial capitalist economy. Enlightenment ideals of progression, rationalism, functionalism and the bulldozer ethic of modern urban planning are critically re-examined and eschewed, replaced by 'the seemingly inexhaustible historical and social curiosity' and 'provisional and paradoxical stance' of postmodernity (Hutcheon, 1989, p.193). In the context of Carriageworks, as with the overarching contemporary moment, postmodernity is shown to offer a remedy to the dehumanising aspects of modernity in an attempt to revive a long dormant sense of community.

Modernity resists easy definition, as it traverses a line between a 'periodising concept' of time (Jameson, 1983, p.113) and intellectual ethos. Whilst theorists generally locate the ideological underpinnings of classical modernity in the Age of Enlightenment, marked by the rise of intellectual movements of rationalism, empiricism and secularisation, modernity as a distinct mode of social order correlates with the growth of 'industrial capitalist society' (Morley, 1996, p.52) in the 19th and 20th century. This movement from a 'relatively stagnant agrarian civilisation' (Morley, 1996, p.52) to a centralised industrial society acts as an economic driving force for a vast alteration in social relations, and in the sociocultural organisation of everyday life. In Morley's conception, the modern age, as it was experienced in the 19th and 20th century, rested heavily on Enlightenment values of 'modernisation, rationalisation and progress' (1996, p.52) This notion of continual progress and constant flux, achieved through rational social reform, was crucial to the modernity project. Warren suggests it rested on the

assumption of the gradual perfectability of man, and his fundamental rationality; that through the application of logical inquiry and reason, it was possible 'to discover systematically certain scientific laws about the ways the world operated' (1999, p.111). Such discoveries would conceivably lead to an utopian endpoint through the recognition of an absolute, universal and totalist reality, accessible to humanity once liberated from the shackles of 'self-imposed immaturity' (Kant, 1784, p.1) The scope of modernity's influence as both an intellectual culture and mode of economic, social and political organisation meant that the 'belief in the possibilities of progress' was transmitted into 'the fabric of everydav life, making it more than a speculative system of philosophy' and thus deserving of critical scholarly attention (Gascoigne, 2002, p.10).

Within a capitalist economy, this dogmatic belief in progress manifests itself in the modernising process of industrialisation. As Ritter alludes, industrialisation can be understood as a process of social change in which a society progresses from an agrarian economy to a large scale industrial economy, fuelled by technologically driven, factory based mass production of goods. (2001, p78) This process is epitomised in the functioning of the Eveleigh Railway Workshops, as a churning centre for industry and manufacturing. Industrialisation cements class relations of those who own the means of production, and exploit labour in the pursuit of capital, and those who produce the commodities that accumulate it. Marx viewed employer/employee relations of an industrial economy as a direct result of the capitalist motive for profit gain, and in this manner, essentially exploitative of the worker, who is overlooked in the 'grand narrative' of 'constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social relations, everlasting uncertainty and agitation'. (Marx, 1848, p.2)

Industrialisation can be conceived as the driving force, and reflection of this revolutionising process, of the 'solid institutional core of modernity' (Berman, p. 91) Such a core comprises the emergence of a world market in which 'production and consumption-and human needs-become increasingly international and cosmopolitan…enlarged far beyond the capacities of local industries which consequently collapse'. This is paralleled by the concentration of capital into an elite sphere of power, and the centralisation and rationalisation of production in 'highly automated factories' as well as via 'legal, fiscal and administrative' facets of societal organisation (Berman, p.91). Via such components, industrialisation embodies 'the desperate pace and frantic rhythm that capitalism imparts to every facet of modern life' (Berman, p.91) These transitions form the basis of Marx's materialist conception of cultural change, in which the economic mode of production catalyses broader changes in social and political relations; a process which is continually set in motion by 'series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange' (1848, p.2).

The invention of the locomotive was fundamental in pushing the 'possibilities of progress' (Gascoigne, 2002, p.10) and modernity to unprecedented new levels. As such, Carriageworks in its original form, the Eveleigh Railway Workshops, proves a pertinent example of the productivity of modernity and industrialisation in contemporary Australia over the late 19th, and first half of the 20th century. The Eveleigh Railway workshops were constructed between 1880 and 1889 and the 'arresting buildings are considered one of the best examples of railway workshop complexes' (History of Carriageworks, 2012). They were erected on a 40 hectare site, 'four kilometres south of Sydney's Central Business District where they operated continuously for just over a century' (Taska, 2007, p.7) The workshops employed over 3000 men and was vital in the erection of a substantial percentage of NSW's, and more broadly Australia's locomotives, the machinery necessary for their maintenance and the technology

which fuelled ever more expansive and efficient conquest over the vast distances of the Australian landscape. (Weir and Phillips, 2008)

As Tominaga asserts, 'throughout the entire process of industrialisation…the development of science and technology has consistently played the part of prime mover' (Rose, 1991, p.34). This revolutionary development in transport, evident in the Eveleigh Railway workshops, galvanised the industrialisation process, allowing for the efficient mobilisation of resources and aiding mass production and distribution processes. Marx offers the insight that 'such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour' (1848, p.3). Equally, it catalysed the centralisation of communications technology, and of political organisation, as the locomotive allowed governments to communicate quickly and effectively with each other. Facilitating this ease of exchange and trade was crucial to the growth of Australian community, as colonisers were not confined to short distances in their construction of urban communities. Morley asserts that the formation of 'macro government policies', aided by this centralising power of the locomotive, meant that government bodies could secure mass purchasing power, to sustain the demand for mass production (1996, p.55) The combination of centralised government power, facilitated through quick and effective communication via the railway, and the industrialised economies of scale being constructed within the city of Sydney, is a prime example of the multifaceted and expansive influence of industrialisation. Above all, the construction and operation of the Eveleigh Railway Workshops can be seen as a crucial enactment of the modern metanarrative of capitalist acquisition of profit, through mass production of commodities.

A prominent modernist himself, Habermas asserts that the overarching aim of the modernity project was to 'ultilise this accumulation of specialised culture' and industry 'for the rational organisation of everyday life' (Rose, 1991, p.9). However, whether these ambitious ideals were achieved in practice prompts a far more critical debate, one which has come into fruition in the later part of the 20th century. The gradual decline and eventual closure of the workshops during the latter half of the 20th century is emblematic of modernity's demise in the contemporary moment. With the rise of steel, rather than wood, as the primary material for carriage construction, the Eveleigh workshops' functionality and fundamentality to the modernist metanarrative of urban industrialisation was considerably weakened. With it, modernity's iron-hold on contemporary society was somewhat relinquished and replaced with a provocation of postmodern questions, destabilising he assumptions of innate rationality and tendency towards progression, upon which the modernist ethos rests. Postmodernist scholar Lyotard provokes this very question, casting doubt onto whether modernity achieved the 'constitution of sociocultural unity' which it set out to (Rose, 1991, p.61). Whilst one can fully acknowledge the substantial feats of social reform it did achieve, the vast disintegrative repercussions of modernity have now been cast into sharp relief. It is the preserve of postmodernity, and its scholars, to both incisively point out and propose a remedy to the failings of modernity, most specifically the alienation and devaluation of the individual worker from a status of visibility in society and from the means of production .

> Postmodernism does not entirely negate modernism. It cannot. What it does do is interpret it freely; it 'critically reviews it for its glories and its error'. Thus, modernism's dogmatic reductionism, its inability to deal with ambiguity and irony, and its denial of the validity of the past were all issues that were seriously examined and found wanting. (Hutcheon, 1989, p.193)

It is in this manner that we realise the oppositional, yet symbiotic interplay of modernity and postmodernity in the present moment, as the most far reaching and influential modes of cultural thought over the last several centuries. Whilst postmodernity poses an often critical response and rejection of many legacies of the modernity project, it does not, indeed cannot, entirely disentangle itself from the modernist philosophy itself. In Hutcheon's view, its burden of proof lies not in the negation of modernity, but in working stop us from accepting its 'discourse naively, and force us to look to the social ideologies of which we are the products and in which we live, perceive, and create' (1989, p.200). Exemplified in the adaptive reuse of the Eveleigh Railway Workshops, postmodernity questions the metanarrative of relentless progression. Marxist philosophy provides a useful lens to examine the potential extinction of a sense of community and individual worker identities 'at the hands of mechanical production' (Rose, 1991, p.22). Whilst postmodernity, and its theorists typically display what Lyotard calls an 'incredulity towards metanarratives' (Jenicks, 1997) inclusive of Marxism, Rose notes that much of the arguments against capitalist industrialisation and modernity are 'coloured by both the Marxist metanarrative of the reduction of labour to the production of exchange value rather tan use value and by the related concepts of alienation and reification' (1991, p.57)

Through a postmodernist lens, one can note the disintegrative impact of modernising processes such as industrialisation upon the status of the individual and the sense of community within a society. Within an economic mode of capitalist mass production and distribution, there is a certain devaluing of skilled workmanship of individuals evident, in a commodification process in which a product is elevated above the producer. As Marx asserts, 'the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine' (1848, p.4). In the rapid and relentless pursuit of capital, the worker becomes effectively invisible in a production line, catalysing their disenfranchisement. In a bid for constant progression, what has been forgone is the sense of community, indeed, the ultimate desire and communal need for connection within the urban context. One can certainly recognise an element of irony, that within a highly centralised, densely concentrated urbanised setting, a sense of community and urban cohesion may prove more elusive than in a pre modern agrarian community.

In the aftermath of modernity, postmodernity presents a remedy to the dehumanisation and urban alienation resulting from explosive industrial growth. The remedy it offers takes the form of a revival of a sense of community, located within the urban setting. Such a revival is rooted in the elevation of the individual worker and artisan to a status of visibility and privileges an alternative, though still resolutely capitalist mode of economic organisation. Carriageworks aptly encapsulates this revival, through the adaptive reuse of the Eveleigh workshops as a multi-functional contemporary arts and leisure centre.

Opened in January 2007, this development is touted as 'an exciting addition' to Sydney's cultural life', and from the Redfern Waterloo Authority's perspective, generative of 'significant new community and cultural activity on a currently dilapidated industrial site' (Taska, 2007, p.7). A multi-disciplinary arts program was designed for the site, drawing from a typically localised creative economy and facilitating the presentation of a diverse range of visual, performance and interactive art. It's multi-functional ethos is evident in its array of galleries, performance spaces, function rooms, the inclusion of a café and bar, and the weekly growers markets which occur on the premises.

But why does the postmodern remedy take this form, why now is a sense of community being sought 'against the backdrop of what is often referred to as the information revolution'? (Taska, 2007, p.7) Why, after a century of 'identification with the productive logic of the industrial system' (Portoghesi, 1884), have we become sharply wary of what such an identification has taken from us? Malpas posits that in the present moment, 'the threat of the obliteration of all existence, whether brought about by nuclear war or natural catastrophe, has weighed on ideas of what it is to be part of a community' (2005, p.34) If we are thus engaged in a contemporary reckoning of what is means to be an authentic, individual entity within a broader collective mass, then the dehumanising alienation of the industrial production line is entirely adversary to this process. Carriageworks, in its attempt to liberate the individual artisan and worker from bureaucratic anonymity through revaluation of handmade, authentic goods and the intellectual produce of artists and performers, is staging a postmodern 'reconceptualisation of some of the most basic categories of philosophical, social and political thought. (Malpas, 2005 p.34)

This reconceptualisation confronts the totalising forces of 'uniformisation and commodification of mass culture' by the parodic assertion of 'ironic difference instead of either homogeneous identity or alienated otherness' (Hutcheon, 1989, p.183). Rather than viewing everyone as a vehicle of economic progression, as a cog in a broader industrial machine, postmodernity in the present moment, embodied in Carriageworks, is at once a recognition of, and a remedy to the alienation of the individual from their means of production. This adheres to Lyotard's conviction that we should 'wage a war on totality, let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable, …activate the differences and save the honour of the name (Rose, 1991, p.62). In place of a monolithic social body, working towards the grand narrative of continual economic conquest, Carriageworks presents 'an environment which pulses with a unique spirit of creativity and innovation' (Taska, 2007, P.7), using the arts to give credence to the nuanced differences between individuals, and more broadly as a means of exploring sociocultural thought and postmodern reflections on the human condition.

Morley explains the new ethos in economic terms, as signifying 'the end of mass production, the end of mass markets and the corresponding emergence of 'flexible specialisation' in production for a differentiated set of segmented markets' (1996, p.54) This economic reversion to a cottage-scale economy, driven by 'small-batch flexible production systems, based on robotics and information technology', reflects a social 'shift in sensibilities' in how people consume goods (Morley, 1996, p.54). Continuing on from the notion that postmodernity aims to activate individual difference to prefigure a 'more pluralistic and innovative social order', this shift in consumption patterns towards segmented markets and small batch production systems to assert individual identity, indicates how economic and social changes are integrally linked (Morley, 1996, p. 54).

Whilst Carriageworks manifests all these social and economic evolutions characteristic of postmodernity, the adaptive reuse of the industrial workshops for new purpose also reveals the ultimate paradox of postmodernity and its relation with the past. If one is to view Carriagework's array of contemporary functions as a direct rejection to the functionalist rationalisation of modern industry, why keep the industrial façade? If its aim is to provide a postmodern remedy to urban alienation, why locate this remedy within a building which was emblematic of the disintegrative forces postmodernity confronts? In the contradictions inherent in such questions lies postmodernity's crucial difference to its modern counterpart; the view that the past is not something that is eschewed in a bid for continual renewal, but rather the subject of critical examination and reappropriation.

Carriageworks displays a 'recycling of historical forms what is both a homage and a kind of ironic thumbed nose to the past' (Hutcheon, 1989, p.194) and a rejection of the bulldozer ethic of modernity, characteristic of post-war urban planning. Through housing its new purpose within the old structure, the site recontextualises, rather than 'bulldozers' modernist forms to give them new meaning (Jencks, 1984). This is supported in Malpas's assertion that postmodernism shows a tendency towards 'critical engagement with already existing spaces and styles, acknowledgement of regional identities' (2005, p.15) and references the local and pluralistic, rather the national and monolithic.

In Hutcheon's view, this is characteristic of postmodern enterprise as positive aspects of the immediate past are acknowledged, critically reassessed and often integrated with 'more remote and repressed history' of the pre-modern period (1989, p.189). Carriageworks' adaptive reuse of the workshops does not constitute the glorification of an industrial past, nor signify a desire to return to the pre-modern, but playfully 'quotes' elements of both the immediate and remote past, in an acknowledgement of the 'traditions from which the contemporary springs' (Malpas, p.15). It may exploit nostalgia, but for an ultimately parodic purpose. Upon closer examination, this exploitation only serves to further critique the dogmatic incapacity of modernity to critically examine the past, to its detriment. In Portoghesi's words:

> It is the loss of memory, not the cult of memory, that will make us prisoners of the past. To disregard the collective memory of architecture is to risk making the mistakes of modernism and its ideology of the myth of social reform through purity of structure. (Hutcheon, 1989, p.192)

In conclusion, the interplay between postmodernity and modernity within Carriageworks, and in the present moment, is at once contradictory, oppositional and symbiotic. Within the site, the transfer of salience from modern to postmodern thought can be traced in its evolution from industrial flashpoint to artesian haven. Carriageworks is an apt example of how postmodernity offers a remedy to the disintegrative legacies of industrialisation, through nostalgic revival of a sense of community and individual ownership of production that predates modernity. It locates this remedy within the urban context, through adaptive reuse of modernist forms. In doing so, it instates 'a dialogue with the past and-inescapably- with the social and ideological context in which these forms were produced' (Hutcheon, 1989, p.180). Finally, this dialogue makes possible an ideological intervention which allows us to critically view the glories and failures of the past, not so we can endless pursue the elusive ideal of 'progress', but fulfill the communal void and need for community which characterises the present moment we live in.

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