Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Jet Age Aesthetic: The Glamour of Media in Motion*

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, two-hundred travel-hungry Taiwanese went on the "pretend to go abroad" tour through Taipei's newly renovated Songshan airport. For a day, they could "check in and never leave"[1]: relive the experience of flying, including customs, security, and boarding, and during a looped flight around the island and over the Philippines, eat Michelin star airplane food, and shop duty-free.[2] The idea that anyone, much less two hundred people, would willingly endure the stress, anxiety, discomfort, and tedium of airplane travel without ever reaching a destination sparked derision in the media.[3] Now, air travel is more often associated with quotidian business trips, air sickness, terrorism, and environmental threat (Budd 2014). Yet, those two-hundred wannabe-globetrotters would find good company in the millions of tourists that flocked to Orly Airport when it first opened, more than fifty years ago, excited to experience—even vicariously—the thrill of international jet plane travel. Vanessa Schwartz's *Jet Age Aesthetic: The Glamour of Media in Motion* (2020) traces the excitement around and response to early jet travel's "sensory regime" of "fluid motion and communication on a planetary scale," and how that has become the contemporary, mundane, globalized "condition of the digital age" (14).[4]

Jet Age Aesthetic is an interdisciplinary study of the visual experience of the early years of global jet air travel through transportation and architectural design, communication media, and photography. Evidenced by its title, Schwartz's analysis is concerned less with the political, commercial, or technological history of jet travel, but rather with the "deprivation of experience" (6) during flying (see Schivelbusch 1986, also Colomina 2007, 1994). Flying—high above the clouds and weather, insulated from the feeling of moving at all, time and space collapsed—was much like contemporary globalized virtual flows of information and capital "which dematerialized experience into a system of circulating spaces, people, and images" (14), Schwartz argues. In other words, transportation and media infrastructure "served the same end in one network by facilitating circulation" and were in fact "virtually identical" (11). Schwartz traces this development toward a jet-propelled network of people, information, and media through four case studies. The first two—airport architecture and Disneyland—focus on design that emphasized buildings and spaces as conduits for moving between airports or between themed areas. The next two chapters—the third on the "jet set"

and photojournalism, and the fourth on Ernst Haas's photography—move further away from transportation and human movement, and instead examine international travel's influence on artistic expression and cultural norms. In her pivot away from actual air travel air travel, she argues that photography, especially news and magazine photography, "are the linchpin in discussions of modern experiences of motion, of experiences of speeding up time and collapsing physical space" (13). Her analysis is fascinating, very readable, and interdisciplinary—encompassing design, art, and cultural studies. It expands beyond depictions and images of jet travel to examine interconnected epistemologies of visuality and lived experience, much like her earlier work did (Schwartz 1998).

The first chapter explores the development and design of sprawling suburban airports built in the 1960s to accommodate the size and increased use of jet planes, namely Los Angeles International Airport, Kennedy Airport's TWA Terminal, Dulles Airport in Chantilly, Virginia, and Orly Airport in Paris. The architects of these airports, which were far outside city centres, designed them to be built for their own obsolescence. Unlike previous transportation hubs, they were "antimonumental," or "in a constant state of becoming" (46), modifiable for changing technologies of travel. The airports emphasized "the people flying rather than the machines flying" (22), the spectacle of the airplane sidelined. Architects valued the circulation of passengers—escalators, new elevators, and people movers that glided from one floor to the next—that would expand "the experience of flight" (19-20), "deadening passenger sensation in favor of circulation" (23). In the seamless transition between highway, train, airport, airplane, and back to highway, travel was not so much through space as through time—more of a displacement than a voyage (27). Yet, in discussing the expansion of airports, Schwartz overlooks the politics of moving them farther outside the city centre, which had as much to do with jet planes and architectural philosophy as it did with contracts, capital, and regional development subsidies (see Adey 2006, 76, also Graham and Marvin 2001). The streamlined network moved data, people, and packages smoothly through space, as if between rides at an amusement park.

Instead of transporting people by airplane, the second chapter—on Disneyland, the Ford Pavilion, and the "it's a small world" attraction at the 1964 World's Fair—examines Disney's and Ford's corporate imaginary of future transportation of people. Most scholarship on Disney concerns the ideology, corporate history, or the culture of nostalgia creation Disney capitalizes on through detailed "theming" of various environments. Schwartz looks instead at the interstices between the themed environments at the park and the World's Fair attractions, examining holistically how attendees circulated through the park via monorail, sidewalk, roller coasters, and rides (60–1). Attendees coursing through Disneyland animated the spectacle and narrative of an interconnected, technological world defined by smooth, invisible transportation (97). For Schwartz, Disneyland's novelty was not in reimagining a nonexistent past, but in depicting a society and cul-

ture organized by global movement.

Chapter three traces the cultural consequences of global air travel through media portrayal of the "jet set"—the postwar nomadic elite[5]—whose movements, lifestyle, and appearance were recorded and followed by photo magazines like *Life*. These "jet setters" privileged mobility over colonial land ownership (112), yet retrenched colonialism through travel along routes "where certain infrastructural preconditions existed" (113). While Schwartz references the colonial and postcolonial nature of air travel, aggravated by western photographers seeking more and more "exotic" and obscure places, her European and American focus causes her to ignore the unequal and highly unsmooth nature of global travel (see Budd 2014), which has exacerbated unequal flows of humans and migration (see Adey, Budd and Hubbard 2007). The second part of the chapter situates photojournalism within its exploitation of and reliance on transportation infrastructure. Air mail was critical to getting photos to magazines for publication at faster speeds (Schwartz 2020, 124), and "hot news" was reliant on the same transportation and communication infrastructure that allowed for the "jet set." Photography was evidence of fast communication, and magazines worked closely with airlines to transport both journalists and materials to distant locations and quickly back again (124), because photographs "testified to embodied experience elsewhere" (137)—particularly colour photographs, which "became the visual language for translating experience of motion" (137).

The fourth chapter moves farther away from Schwartz's central argument, focusing entirely on the work of photojournalist Ernst Haas during the 1960s and 1970s. His experiments in colour photography "conveyed the… experience of fluid motion that characterized the world remade by the jet" (141). Colour, unlike black and white photography, had been relegated largely to journalism for its "realism" and due to the bulky and slow cameras needed (148). Haas's photography demonstrated artistic value and paved its entrance into museums, due to his use of motion and colour, which expressed "motion through color" (140). His blurred photographs expressed a "subjective vision" that, Schwartz argues, went beyond Futurist experiments with the aesthetics of motion (169). While it is a fascinating chapter on the history of colour photography, especially considering Haas's influential role in establishing the art form, her central thesis on the changing experience of movement and aesthetics of space feels inordinately stretched to encompass the topic, and the chapter speaks more to her earlier histories of journalistic media than to transportation.

The book's direction and final subject of focus is not jet travel at all, but photography and visual culture. In part, this is intentional, as Schwartz traces the sidelining of actual airplanes in culture. Near the end of the introduction, she describes a late 1940s advertisement *Time* displayed in an airport, which replaced the image of the "Man of the Year" on a blown-up *Time* magazine cover with a curved mirror. That "air age" ad transformed the airport crowds into the subject of world news, and thereby "collapsed

transport and magazines and passengers into one system of circulation" (16). Yet, that loop, much like the book, conspicuously misses the actual airplane and the larger historical context of air travel, and by doing so exaggerates the radical change that jet engines produced. Globalism and smooth travel were "anticipated before the advent of jet travel what the jet would later accomplish," she writes, admitting the cultural, technological, and social changes that were already taking place, but without elaborating on their influence (16). Smooth travel was touted as revolutionary when airplanes first developed pressurized cabins and could fly above the weather—a decade before the jet (Solberg 1979; also see Davies 2011; Heppenheimer 1995; Budd 2011). So, while jets definitely made airline travel more commonplace, smoother, easier, more affordable, and invisible, they were not alone responsible for the shift, and were ushered in by the decades of "air age." Moreover, in the postwar period car tourism expanded radically (Sheller 2005; Urry 2013), and travel itself became easier on many fronts, not just through air. Schwartz touches on this when talking about airports and transportation infrastructure and mentions how automobiles reflected the sleek aerodynamic aesthetics of airplanes, with their rear fins, or "wings." The jet age imagined air travel as a form of mass transportation, rather than personal transportation, which thanks to the 1956 Highway Act, was fulfilled by ever-larger, comfortable automobiles. Changing imaginaries of air travel were closely linked to the simultaneous popularization of automobiles, evidenced in Ford's World Fair pavilion (Schwartz 2020, 87), a link that feels underbaked. By dodging the technological and corporate historical context of commercial airlines and airplanes, and overlooking the "air age," she grants the jet age's visual and experiential revolution more of a mystique than it actually had.

While the changes in the late 1950s and 1960s might not have been as sudden and exceptional as Schwartz claims, widely available global jet travel has certainly reshaped geopolitics.[6] She claims that the jet travellers' view of earth was too obscured by clouds to see the ground. Yet, while perhaps specific geography might become minute thirty thousand feet high, the view of the earth's curve from airplanes also encourages a different perspective, that of a "world cleansed" (Govil 2005, 247), muffled to political delineations and the complexities of sovereign power, in addition to the discomfort of motion. By focusing on the experience of a commercial jet passenger (particularly a well-heeled one), and not on the larger context of the transportation/technological/geopolitical history of the jet, Schwartz sidesteps the jet's military past, and the problematics of air mobility, both of which cast a shadow over the strength of her argument.

The political, and ideological experience of aviation remains underdeveloped through the book. Her approach and theoretical framework are fascinating, and the work is certainly a valuable contribution to visual arts scholarship, expanding on theories of the formation of mediated space. Yet, she shies away from the harsher geopolitics behind the aesthetic formation of space and movement. While Schwartz examines the imaginary

of smooth movement, depicted in blurred photographs and experienced on Disneyland's monorail, her analysis slips away from examining what is blurred, what is smoothed, and what still remains rough and difficult to access.

Notes

1. Reuters 2020.
2. See Wescott 2020; Sugiura et al. 2020; NewsRound 2020; Pallini 2020.
3. Sagal and Kurtis 2020.
4. And, to be fair, even now. While reading about the Songshan airport, I discovered a genre of YouTube videos of people giving tours of airports. It's crazy. I obviously don't travel enough.
5. Wealthy expatriates, actors, and dancers, who supplanted the old elites that had been the subject of society gossip columns in magazines and newspapers. Rather than obeying the strict rules and customs of the wealthy, lampooned by authors like Edith Wharton in *The Age of Innocence*, whose status was demonstrated in how far downtown they lived in Manhattan, the jet set moved continually, temporarily settling in exotic and "obscure" locations around the world, a "modern tribe" (110) identified by their "cultivated idiosyncrasy" (113).
6. Jets "changed the praxis of political economy and national security" writes Aaltola (Aaltola 2005, 262). Lucy Budd and Andrew R. Goetz's edited collection examined the lack of integration into "the global space of air traffic flows" (2014, 9), as have many geographers in the field of mobility (Adey 2006; Adey 2009; Cresswell 2006; Divall 2014; Sheller 2001; Urry 2000). Airports became crucial hubs in a globalized economy, and necessary for a nation's development and participation. Geographers have examined the hub-and-spoke shape of transportation networks that entrench center-periphery geopolitics (see O'Kelly 1998; Zook and Brunn 2006) and shape the "boundaries of the American led empire" (Aaltola 2005, 262), claimed by a militant, all-seeing aerial eye (see Merriman et. al 2017; Cosgrove 1994). Much of previous media scholarship on aviation has focused on that violent perspective "from above," shaped by military surveillance, (Virilio 1989; Cosgrove 1994; Amoore 2007; Packer and Reeves 2013; Parks 2013; Parks 2016; Der Derian 2009; Kaplan et. al 2013), which Schwartz speedily circumvents.

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