EMPIRE IN THE AIR: SPEED, PERCEPTION, AND AIRLINE TRAVEL IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD

by

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To J and N Alexander, and for the HMB

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

BAAM	British Airways Archive and Museum
BNA	Barbados National Archive
JNA	Jamaica National Archive
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives
NASM	National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution
PAA	Pan American World Airways, Inc. Records
PRO	Public Records Office
UWICH	University of the West Indies, Cave Hill

Abstract

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Chair: Sonya O. Rose

The dissertation is an historical ethnography of air. Specifically, it concerns the relationship between airspace, airline travel, and empire. By examining how airline travel transformed motion and movement, it argues that empire and imperial encounters became three-dimensional in the twentieth century. It analyzes airspace as imperial space and suggests that empire, as an idea and a practice, is in the air. Simultaneously, it makes a case for thinking about air as a domain, airspace as a place, and airborne technologies and habits as textures of the Atlantic world.

The dissertation focuses on Imperial Airways. Founded in 1924, the airline was the chosen instrument of the British state. The so-called national carrier of the country, the company underwent two major name changes. In 1939, Imperial Airways became the British Overseas Airways Corporation. In 1971, the British Overseas Airways Corporation became British Airways.

The dissertation attempts to integrate national and colonial histories. It concentrates on the pivotal role Imperial Airways played in shaping how people perceived empire and experienced colonies between the First and Second World Wars. It also thinks about how colonized people and places shaped Imperial Airways.

Chapter One advocates for a history of speed. Questioning how ideas about speed lost their sense of slowness but retained fastness, it explores the transformation of speed into speed up. In Britain, this transformation was linked to ideas about order and the geography of empire. Chapter Two is about perception. It examines how the opening-up of the third dimension and the transition from horizontal to vertical travel changed perspective. Consideration of aboveness reveals the first generation of airline passengers experiencing flights over colonized grounds as remarkable and extraordinary; flights over water as mundane and ordinary. Chapter Three concerns an air route. It sheds light on the West Indian origins of the first transatlantic airline route between Britain and the United States. Chapter Four shows how those origins made metropolitan officials question the meaning of British prestige. Together, navigations through speed, perception, a route, and prestige make visible profound and prevailing relations between airline travel and empire.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: AIR, AIRLINE, AND EMPIRE

How did airspace transform empires? This question frames the dissertation. My intention is to reveal the intimate relationship between airline travel and colonial empires, as well as to show how that relationship started and changed. As the dissertation considers the central role of airline travel in the reshaping of colonial empires, its primary focus is on Britain and the British West Indies during the decades between the First and Second World Wars. At times, the project centers on the colonial world, and illuminates colonized people and places helping make a national, British airline. In doing so, it raises questions about who and what could be 'British.' At other times, it sheds light on why and when Britain found itself struggling to define whether 'its' airline was national, imperial, or colonial.

The project also makes a case for the importance of analyzing airspace as imperial space. It does not argue that empire is air.[1] Rather, it suggests that empire is in the air. That is, imperial movements, as well as their corresponding forms of empire and imperial relations, became three-dimensional in the twentieth century.[2] While the project makes a

[1] That is, it does not argue that empire is diffused and decentered to the point that 'it' cannot be held accountable. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), esp. xii-xv.

[2] My thinking here has been inspired by Edwin A. Abbott's efforts to wonder about and work through the relationship between dimensionality and power. As Abbott said, "Dimension implies direction, implies measurement, implies the more and the less [magnitude]." Before artificial flight, movement was two-

case for examining empire in airspace, it resists the temptation to claim that contemporary empires are deterritorialized.[3] It takes a lot of ground work, as well as work on the ground, to turn air into airspace; airspace into imperial space.

Empire is an idea and a practice. As Frederick Cooper has stated succinctly, "[I]mperial polities—'old' and 'new'—constituted a system in which any serious competitor for geo-political influence *had* to think and act like an empire" [emphasis in original].[4]

Motion and movement are ingrained in definitions of empire. They are also embedded in how actual empires are constituted and transformed. They are necessary for the acquisition, expansion, extension, and rupture of geo-political influence.[5] Often, discussions about the relationship among motion, movement, and empire are imagined and expressed through references to land and sea.[6] By focusing on aviation and colonialism, this project attempts to turn attention to the domain of air shaping that relationship.

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dimensional; it had length and breadth along a surface; it had two degrees of freedom. Artificial flight (and possibly submarine travel) helped make movement three-dimensional; in space, it had length, breadth, and thickness (depth); it had three degrees of freedom. Edwin A. Abbott, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (1884; repr., New York: Signet Classic, 1984), 26. Also, see A. K. Dewdney, introduction to *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions,* by Edwin A. Abbott (New York: Signet Classic 1984), 7-23.

[3] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, xii.

[4] Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 154.

[5] That is, can empires exist without movement? Are acts and processes of displacement, moving, and changing position or location necessary conditions for empire? Can empires *be* static? One can ask a similar set of questions about the physical, legal, and political senses of motion.

[6] For example, see chapters such as "Empire by Land," "Empire by Sea," "Death of the Seaborne Empires," and "Death of the Land Empires" in Stephen Howe, *Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

There are two types of aviation: military and civil. As I argue later in this chapter, their histories shadow one another. Mostly, this project focuses on commercial aviation, which is a type of civil aviation.

There are two types of aircraft: lighter-than-air and heavier-than-air. For the most part, this project focuses on heavier-than-air devices. In general, lighter-than-air crafts are buoyant. They include instruments such as aerostats, balloons, and dirigibles. Typically, heavier-than-air crafts gain their thrust and lift from engines. They include machines such as helicopters, airplanes, and space shuttles.

Airline travel revolutionized movement and mobility. It transformed transportation and communication. For the most part, the industry began in the opening years of the twentieth century.[7] Few people flew as airline passengers. Costly ticket prices and limited seat capacity ensured it. Mainly, airlines carried cargo such as mail. The space of air and the accelerated speed of the airplane allowed airlines to reduce transit times.

The development of commercial aviation altered relations among people and places. Decreasing the amount of time it took to circulate goods decreased the amount of time capital remained in the commodity form, and accelerated the production process.[8]

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[7] It is important to note that some of the first airlines used lighter-than-air ships. For example, the German company Deutsche Luftschiffahrts-Aktiengesellschaft (hereinafter, DELAG), which was founded in 1909, transported passengers by airships made by Zeppelin.

[8] As Marx said, "[T]he important thing is not the market's distance in space, but the speed—the amount of time—with which it can be reached . . . . Thus, while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time, i.e. to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another." Karl Marx, "The Chapter on Capital," in *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (1858; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 538.

Increased pace and efficient schedules also moved information faster. Letters, newspapers, and other documents reached readers sooner.

Scholarship on commercial aviation has tended to focus on how airplanes transformed societies and altered lives. Some historians have examined the role of aviation in nation building, while others have explored how airplanes have shaped national identity.[9] Others have followed and contributed to paths carved out by science and technology studies. In doing so, they have illuminated the social factors that influenced how airplanes were designed.[10] They have also explored how airplanes became agents and icons of modernity.[11] Historians have also paid close attention to airline owners, aircraft manufacturers, and pioneering pilots.[12] They have delved into who and what flies. They have reflected on how access to airline travel has changed over time.[13] Increasingly, historians and anthropologists have turned towards a critical

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[9] For examples, see Peter Fritzsche, *A Nation of Fliers: German Aviation and the Popular Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); William M. Leary, Jr., *The Dragon's Wings: The China National Aviation Corporation and the Development of Commercial Aviation in China* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976); Scott W. Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air: Aviation Culture and the Fate of Modern Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Edward M. Young, *Aerial Nationalism: A History of Aviation in Thailand* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

[10] For example, see Eric Schatzberg, *Wings of Wood, Wings of Metal: Culture and Technical Choice in American Airplane Materials, 1914-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). Although it deals with military aircraft, see John Law, *Aircraft Stories: Decentering the Object in Technoscience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

[11] For example, see Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[12] For examples, see Marc Dierikx, *Fokker: A Transatlantic Biography* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); Robert Wohl, *The Spectacle of Flight: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1920-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

[13] For examples, see Roger E. Bilstein, "Air Travel and the Traveling Public: The American Experience, 1920-1970," in *From Airships to Airbus: The History of Civil and Commercial Aviation*, vol. 2, ed. William F. Trimble (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 91-111. Les Black, "Falling from the Sky," *Patterns of Prejudice* vol. 37, no. 3 (2003): 341-353; Kenneth Hudson, *Air Travel: A Social History* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972); David P. Philips, "Airplane Accidents, Murder, and the Mass Media: Towards a Theory of Imitation and Suggestion," *Social Forces* vol. 58, no. 4 (June 1980): 1001-

examination of the politics of race, gender, class, and work.[14] Other anthropologists have focused on how aerial photography and the panoptic gaze transformed scientific fieldwork practices, while scholars critical of that work have considered how the advent of the aerial perspective fundamentally changed power relations between anthropologists and their informants.[15] Meanwhile, in fields such as semiotics, cultural studies, and art history, scholars have examined how the act of flying and the image of the airplane have modified language systems, behavior patterns, and tactile aesthetics.[16] Across disciplines, few have examined how airlines reshaped colonial practices, landscapes, and lives.[17]

References to airline travel turn up frequently, and often they turn up in radically different places. Flight has appeared in ethnographies about organ traffic, transplant, and

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1024; F. Robert Van Der Linden, *Airlines and Air Mail: The Post Office and the Birth of Commercial Aviation* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2002).

[14] For examples, see Catherine A. Barnes, *Journey from Jim Crow: The Desegregation of Southern Transportation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); George Gmelch, *Behind the Smile: The Working Lives of Caribbean Tourism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); Lee Kolm, "Stewardesses' 'Psychological Punch': Gender and Commercial Aviation in the United States, 1930-1978," in *From Airships to Airbus: The History of Civil and Commercial Aviation*, vol. 2, ed. William F. Trimble (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 112-127; Gordon H. Pirie, "Southern African Air Transport After Apartheid," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* vol. 30, no. 2 (June 1992): 341-348.

[15] For examples, see James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Marcel Griaule, "L'emploi de la Photographie Aerienne et la Recherche Scientifique," *L'anthropologie* vol. 47 (1937): 469-471; Marcel Griaule, *Les Saô Légendaires* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943).

[16] For examples, see Umberto Eco, "How to Eat in Flight" in *How to Travel With a Salmon and Other Essays*, trans. William Weaver (1987; repr., New York: Harvest Books, 1994), 19-22; Anne Collins Goodyear, "The Effect of Flight on Art in the Twentieth Century," in *Reconsidering a Century of Flight*, eds. Roger D. Launius and Janet R. Daly Bednarek (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 223-241; David Pascoe, *Aircraft* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003); Robert Wohl, *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1908-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Julie H. Wosk, "The Aeroplane in Art," *Art and Artists* no. 219 (December 1984): 23-28.

[17] A notable exception is Wolfram Hartmann, Jeremy Silvester, and Patricia Hayes, eds., *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998).

trade.[18] The discovery of dead stowaways in aircraft wheel bays has opened an academic forum about claim making and colonial nostalgia.[19] The airline transit lounge has turned up in works about borders, crossings, and the art of waiting.[20] Jets have started tales about tourism, and ended chapters on deportation.[21] A Super Constellation has carried James Bond from Britain, across the Atlantic Ocean, above Cuba, and down to Jamaica.[22] Frank Zappa has insisted that airlines make countries "real," and Jackson Pollack declared airplanes emblems of a new age.[23]

Works have told intricate stories around and about themes central to this project. However, few have examined the role of empire in the making of airline travel. Fewer have explored the role of airline travel in the making of empire.

There are notable exceptions. Scholars interested in military aviation have illuminated the explicit and violent links between air power and imperialism. David

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[18] For examples, see Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Kidney Kin: Inside the Transatlantic Kidney Trade," *Harvard International Review* (Winter 2006): 62-65; Lesley A. Sharp, *Strange Harvest: Organ Transplants, Denatured Bodies, and the Transformed Self* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[19] For examples, see Johannes Fabian, "Comments on 'Of Mimicry and Membership'," *Cultural Anthropology* vol. 17, no. 4 (November 2002): 570-571; James G. Ferguson, "Of Mimicry and Membership: Africans and the 'New World Society'," *Cultural Anthropology* vol. 17, no. 4 (November 2002): 551-569.

[20] For examples, see James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Ursula K. Le Guin, *Changing Planes* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2003).

[21] For examples, see Alain de Botton, *The Art of Travel* (London: Penguin Books, 2002); Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1988); Caryl Phillips, *The Atlantic Sound* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000).

[22] Ian Fleming, *Doctor No* (1958; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 2002).

[23] Frank Zappa said, "You can't be a real country unless you have a beer and an airline. It helps if you have some kind of a football team, or some nuclear weapons, but at the very least you need a beer"; in 1950, during an interview with William Wright, Jackson Pollack said, "New needs need new techniques. And the modern artists have found new ways and new means to making their statements. It seems to me that the modern painter cannot express this age, the airplane, the atom bomb, the radio, in the old forms of the Renaissance or of any other past culture. Each age finds its own technique." Jackson Pollack quoted in Ellen Johnson, *American Artists on Art from 1940 to 1980* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 5.

Omissi's work on the history of the British Royal Air Force (hereinafter, RAF) exposed the military using airplanes to repress, suppress, and control so-called dissidents in Iraq, Palestine, and southern Sudan during the 1920s and 1930s.[24] Trying to find a cheap and efficient way to police the newly mandated territories, the RAF carried out systematic machinegun and delayed-action bomb runs. Priya Satia's study of British air control in Iraq during the same period, bared ties between aerial bombardment and orientalism. Attentive to topography, she illustrated how the vantage point of the gun-ready airplane made it possible for the British state to find and swiftly execute otherwise unreachable nomadic tribes.[25] Eric Paul Roorda's work on the United States and the Dominican Republic revealed airplanes as complex symbols of supremacy, sovereignty, and surveillance in the Caribbean.[26] He reminded readers that the United States military first tested dive-bombing techniques in 1927, in Haiti. He showed military and commercial aviation working together to secure United States hegemony in the Americas, and uncovered Rafael Trujillo using airplanes to symbolize the progress and power of his regime.

In 1997, W. G. Sebald argued that part of the perverse violence of aerial warfare is its power to avert memory and make historical events. Through a series of suggestions and metaphors, he pointed out that when a fleet drops tons of bombs and causes a single

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[24] David E. Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

[25] Priya Satia, "The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia," *The American Historical Review* vol. 111, no. 1 (February 2006): 16-51.

[26] Eric Paul Roorda, "The Cult of the Airplane among U.S. Military Men and Dominicans during the U.S. Occupation and the Trujillo Regime," in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, eds. Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 269-310. Also, see Lauren Derby, "The Dictator's Seduction: Gender and State Spectacle during the Trujillo Regime," *Callaloo* vol. 23, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 1112-1146.

catastrophe, the single catastrophe is immediately forgotten; the next destructive fleet has already arrived and caused another catastrophe. Thinking about Dresden and the Second World War, Sebald warned,

> The destruction, on a scale without historical precedent, entered the annals of the nation, as it set about rebuilding itself, only in the form of vague generalizations. It seems to have left scarcely a trace of pain behind in the collective consciousness, it has already been largely obliterated from the retrospective understanding of those affected, and it never played any appreciable part in the discussion of the internal constitution of our country.[27]

In scholarship and the popular imagination, a romance of the air and the individual has tended to dominate discourses about civil aviation.[28] Often, narratives about airplanes include accounts about singular men and women battling against and triumphing over nature.[29] If they died while flying, they died for progress.[30] If they disappeared while flying, they disappeared courageously.[31] If commemorated, they turned up national heroes.[32] These types of tales have rendered certain histories other,

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[27] W. G. Sebald, "Air War and Literature: Zürich Lectures," in *On the Natural History of Destruction*, trans., Anthea Bell (New York: Random House, 2003), 4.

[28] In the opening pages of *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, Marcus Rediker argued, "Indeed, the life-and-death drama of seafaring has given rise to a 'romance of the sea' that has long, and in many ways rightly, dominated maritime history. . . . The romantic image has distorted the reality of life at sea . . . ." The same argument applies to aviation history, especially civil aviation history. Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 3.

[29] For examples, see F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" in *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz and Other Short Stories* (1922; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 7-50; Beryl Markham, *West with the Night* (1942; repr., Berkeley: North Point Press, 1983); Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Airman's Odyssey* (1939; repr., Orlando: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1984).

[30] For a compelling examination of why accidents allure, see Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany*, esp. 51-85.

[31] For example, see James Hilton, *Lost Horizon* (1933; repr., New York: Pocket Books, 1969).

[32] For example, see Robert Sidney Brown, *The Flew to Fame* (Racine: Whitman Publishing Company, 1963). Also, see "First Powered Flight Commemorative Panel" issued by the United States Postal Service, May 2003; Media Relations to the United States Postal Service, "Postal News: Wright Brothers' First Flight Honored on New U.S. Postage Stamp," May 22, 2003, http://www1.jsc.nasa.gov/er/seh/wright_stamp.pdf.

and they have eclipsed those seemingly other histories. As Satia's critique of James Scott has proposed, "imperialism is a political relationship more than a perspective; intimacy does not make it go away."[33]

Some historical narratives have foregrounded the connection between commercial air power and empire. The work of Robert McCormack has opened our understanding of the dynamic relationship between air transportation and colonialism in the 1920s and 1930s. He analyzed air policy and revealed that European governments were eager to develop commercial aviation networks throughout Africa because they wanted to advance and consolidate their respective empires.[34] Marc Dierikx adopted a comparative approach and explored Anglo-Dutch political relations from the end of the First World War through to the middle of the Second World War. Dierikx argued that Britain and the Netherlands tried to achieve more "national and imperial prestige" by creating commercial air routes throughout their empires in Southeast Asia and Australia. Despite the differences among their approaches and areas, McCormack and Dierikx have helped to start a conversation on the importance of thinking historically about how seemingly civil movement through the sky is intimately related to systems of exploitation and control.

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[33] Satia, "The Defense of Inhumanity," 16.

[34] Robert McCormack, "Airlines and Empires: Great Britain and the 'Scramble for Africa,' 1919-1939," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* vol. 10, no. 1 (1976): 87-105.

Air, Airspace, and the Atlantic World

For decades, geographers have pushed us to take air seriously. They have turned our attention away from land and water. They have encouraged us to imagine and analyze air as an imperial frontier.

During the Second World War, several geographers argued that air was a sphere of influence, particularly for the United States. In 1943, George Renner proposed that the state supreme in the air age "will control the world."[35] He argued that the United States was the "Pax Brittania [*sic*]" of the skies.[36] A year later, the Brookings Institution published John Parker Van Zandt's *The Geography of World Air Transport*, which was the first volume in the *America Faces the Air Age* series. In it, Van Zandt developed one of the first air route nomographs.[37] He argued, "The airplane is the architect of a changing world. Global air transportation is redressing frontiers and shrinking nations to neighborhoods."[38] Through a combination of words and visuals, he said and showed, "The Primary Pattern of World Air Traffic."[39] That pattern was in the northern hemisphere, which he called, "The Principal Hemisphere."[40] A year later, Harold Stewart

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[35] George Renner was a geographer at Columbia University. George T. Renner, *Air-Age Education Series: Human Geography in the Air Age* (New York: Macmillan 1943), 26.

[36] Ibid., 18.

[37] According to Kenneth Sealy, Van Zandt and Richard Edes Harrison developed a nomograph that allowed distance to be measured on air route projections. Kenneth Sealy, *The Geography of Air Transport* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1957), 25. Also, see Richard Edes Harrison, "The Nomograph as an Instrument in Map Making," *Geographical Review* vol. 33, no. 4 (October 1943): 655-657; John Parker Van Zandt, *The Geography of World Air Transport*, vol. 1, *America Faces the Air Age* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1944).

[38] Van Zandt, *The Geography of World Air Transport*, 41.

[39] Ibid., 23.

[40] Ibid.

published a primer about the "great highways of the air."[41] Written for "good citizenship" and "the good citizen" in the United States, Stewart taught readers "the world today is a community of near neighbors, tied together by fast transportation and the magic of radio."[42] His table of contents included titles such as, "Japan, Sea Power of the East," "Britain and Her World Girdle," and "Argentina, A Producer of Foods." His text included information such as, "Each country has something that it can contribute to others. It is no more necessary that each nation own the land from which all of its needed resources may be obtained than that individual do so."[43]

In the late 1950s, the geographical literature shifted away from studies of air and towards a critical analysis of airspace.[44] In 1957, Kenneth Sealy published a groundbreaking work on the air transport industry. In *Geography and Air Transport*, he argued that commercial airspace was a theater of domination.[45] He made a case for looking at how air routes restructured time and space around the world. He then illuminated how they further fractured the globe by creating new lines of unequal

[41] Harold Stewart was a geographer at Wayne University in Detroit. Harold E. Stewart, *Air Age, Geography, and Society*, 3rd ed. (1945; repr., New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1952), 13.

[42] Ibid., 1.

[43] Ibid., vi. For additional examples of geography primers about the air age, see Grace Croyle Hankins, *Our Global World: A Brief Geography for the Air Age* (New York: Gregg Publishing Company, 1944); Thoburn C. Lyon, *Air Geography: A Global View* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1951).

[44] In this project, I use the term 'air' to refer to the atmosphere. I use the term 'airspace' to refer to those sections of the atmosphere that are bounded, controlled, and regulated.

[45] A few years before Sealy published *Geography and Air Transport*, Carl Schmitt made a similar point about military airspace. He argued that air was a "new spatial phenomenon . . . a new stage of human spatial consciousness and global order." For Schmitt, airspace was the new "theater of war." Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth: In the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (1950; repr., New York: Telos Press, 2003), 48; 283.

economic distribution and development. Differentiating the airplane from the automobile, the steamship, and the railroad, he observed and cautioned,

> The aeroplane bridges the gap and is, therefore, but a further extension of the older forms of transport—perhaps the final extension. We should remember, too, that we are so close to the birth of aviation that we cannot as yet see how it will affect the fortunes of nations which were built and continue to exist through the medium of surface movement. We have the means to fill the gap, but as yet the bridge is tenuous.[46]

In 1995, Brian Graham adopted and updated Sealy's argument. He paid close attention to the effects of airline deregulation, which began in the late 1970s. He noted the trend towards multinational carriers.[47] He observed the subsequent demise of national airlines, and he showed how this trend had exacerbated "regional and global inequalities in income and opportunity."[48]

Geographers have stimulated studies of air, airspace, power, and politics. They have been particularly sensitive to space. They have been keenly aware of the fact that empires existed. They have been particularly troubled by the relationship between airspace and domination. However, they have been less concerned with questions of access, colonial agency, and historical transformation. How did airline travel transform colonial empires? How did colonized people and places shape, as they were changed by,

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[46] Sealy, *Geography and Air Transport*, 20.

[47] Two of the largest multinational alliances are Star Alliance and Oneworld. Star Alliance, which boasts the slogan "The Way The Earth Connects," started in 1997. Its member airlines are Air Canada, Air New Zealand, ANA, Asiana Airlines, Austrian, bmi, LOT Polish Airlines, Lufthansa Scandinavian Airlines, Singapore Airlines, South African Airways, Spanair, SWISS, TAP Portugal, THAI, United, US Airways. The alliance also includes several regional members. Oneworld, which uses "Oneworld Revolves Around You" as its slogan, began in 1998. Its member airlines are British Airways, American Airlines, Cathay Pacific Airways, Qantas Airways, Finnair, Iberia, JAL, LAN, Malev, and Royal Jordanian.

[48] Brian Graham, *Geography and Air Transport* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1995), 5.

the development of metropolitan airlines? How did air become airspace? Why did airspace become an imperial frontier?[49]

Scholarship on colonial empires has stressed the importance of such questions. Eric Williams, C. L. R. James, and more recently Laurent Dubois have made it impossible to ignore the agentive ways of the subjugated.[50] Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, and Robin Kelly's work about them, have prepared us for the "permanent readiness for the Marvelous."[51] A weapon of and a revolution from below, the Marvelous is inversion through innovation. It is a sensing. It is a perspective, and it is an orientation.[52] Franz Fanon, Frederick Cooper, and Ann Laura Stoler have taught us that Europe made the colonial world and the colonial world made Europe, while Sonya O. Rose and Catherine Hall have pushed the politics of making and unmaking to include questions of national identity and citizenship.[53] Working on different scales, in different locations, and with

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[49] As Davis Pascoe explained, "Airspace was once so simple to comprehend. English common law guaranteed the bearer of a fee title—a manor in Hounslow, West Middlesex, say—that his fiefdom stretched as far as the Heavens above and deep into the Earth. Despite the fact that the terms of this ownership could be imposed only at or close to the ground—the level at which one might cultivate or construct—that perception of privilege gave landlords an extraordinary sense of infinite power." David Pascoe, *Airspaces* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 9.

[50] Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); C. L .R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd rev. ed, (1938; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 1963); Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

[51] Suzanne Césaire in Robin D. G. Kelley, "A Poetics of Anticolonialism," in *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire (1955; repr., New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 25. Also, see Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002).

[52] Suzanne Césaire often cited surrealism as an example of the Marvelous.

[53] Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda'," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (1961; repr., New York: Grove Press, 1963); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2002); Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Britain, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Also, see

different approaches, Michael Adas, Alice Conklin, and Daniel Headrick have helped make the theme of technology central to imperial studies, while David Arnold has helped move science and technology studies away from diffusionist models and towards a heightened understanding of how local colonial practices subverted and transformed European technologies.[54]

My work builds on and brings together these literatures. The project began in the Caribbean. My intention has always been to focus on colonial agency and action, foregrounding how West Indian people and places altered, as they were changed by, the development of the metropolitan airline. My aim has always been to make visible how people in colonies enabled, resisted, and ultimately transformed the political and cultural identity of a seemingly national technology.[55]

Originally, I wanted to carry out an historical ethnography of British Airways in the Caribbean. In the late 1990s and throughout the early 2000s, I had a series of structured conversations with government officials, NGOs, airline executives, private pilots, and returned and repatriated nationals in Jamaica and Barbados. Six of them changed this project profoundly.

Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, "Being at Home with the Empire," in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-31.

[54] Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); David Arnold, "Europe, Technology, and Colonialism in the 20th Century," *History and Technology* vol. 21, no. 1 (March 2005): 85-106; Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[55] My thinking here, and my approach to looking at the national identity and citizenship of an artifact, has been shaped by Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998); Rudolf Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts have Politics?" in *The Social Shaping of Technology: How the Refrigerator Got its Hum*, eds. Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman (Milton Keynes: Open University Press,1985), 26-38.

Two were about the experiencing of flying from the Caribbean to the United States and Britain before and after independence. In one conversation, several references were made to "the great days of Pan Am in this region."[56] He believed that "Pan Am did more for us than [the] British," and felt that the "Pan Am network out of Miami" was the most important.[57] In the other conversation, the speaker described flying from this home in the southern Caribbean to Britain in the early 1960s. He had qualified for the university scheme, which allowed him to live, work, and learn in Britain.

> It was a great opportunity to start a new life. It was a colonial thing. Colonial experience ties you to Britain. I went by BOAC [British Overseas Airways Corporation] via Bermuda to London to Edinburgh. I remember flying over the red roofs of Edinburgh.[58]

Other conversations were about British Airways, its local operations, and its impact on regional development. One woman mentioned that in the 1970s, after widespread independence, most major international airlines "pulled out [of the islands]," but BOAC stayed.[59] It "divided the [region] into three clusters: North Latin America, South Latin America, Caribbean." Ironically, she felt that because the company remained,

> BA [British Airways] now has a better feel for customs and has worked towards sensitizing its crew towards cultures and cultural differences. The music and entertainment on routes are specifically designed for that route in an effort to promote regional offerings. . . . People will fly British Airways because it is Britain on a plane. . . . The expectations are that it is British. Now there are

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[56] Retired government official, in discussion with author, January 2001.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Government official, in discussion with author, June 2001.

[59] Founded as Imperial Airways in 1924, British Airways underwent two major name shifts. In 1939, Imperial Airways became the British Overseas Airways Corporation (hereinafter, BOAC). In 1971, BOAC became British Airways.

> mandatory language requirements for all crew and the national crews on certain flights . . . wear 'national' costumes.[60]

Other conversations focused on air routes and flight patterns. In one conversation, a woman described feeling "quite upset . . . the colonial routes were still maintained," and complained that flying from the Caribbean to London was cheaper than flying from the Anglophone to the Francophone Caribbean.[61] In another conversation, a man described feeling frustrated with how the Caribbean is routed. Concerned about "links between Africa and the African diaspora," he wanted a "direct airline linkage between Barbados or the Caribbean and West Africa." Interested in directness and reduced travel time, he observed,

> Right now for Caribbean people to get to Africa we have to go through either the United States or Britain, a very long journey through Britain. Eight hours to Britain . . . A direct flight across the Caribbean, it would probably take no more than five or six hours from Barbados.[62]

The sixth conversation was about history and memory. Anticipating the future, one man wanted people in the present to preserve the past,

> I think that the sad thing in our region is that the history of aviation is slowly being lost because it is in the minds of people. Few of us remain. A lot have passed on and that information has gone on with them. So that governments in the region should take stock of the situation and see to it that this history of development is written is there for the children or grandchildren to have access to.[63]

Each conversation changed this project. The six catalysts were the desire for history, the absence of direct links, the maintenance of colonial routes, the clustering of

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[60] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Airline executive, in discussion with author, October 2000.

[61] Return national, in discussion with author, October 2000.

[62] NGO director, in discussion with author, April 2001.

[63] Retired government official, in discussion with author, January 2001.

the Americas, the red roofs of Edinburgh seen from above, and the dense presence of Pan American Airways (hereinafter, Pan Am). What began as an historical ethnography of an airline became an historical ethnography of air.[64]

Airline travel is deeply woven into the fabric of everyday life in the West Indies. In small places such as Anegada in the British Virgin Islands, people organize their daily activities around the departure and arrival times of the island's only scheduled airline. Three times a week, a plane leaves Anegada in the morning, flies to the main island, which is Tortola, and returns in the late afternoon with passengers, groceries, medicines, and mail. On larger islands such as Trinidad,

> The jet bores like a silverfish through the volumes of cloud
> . . . . . .
> The jet's shadow ripples over green jungles as steadily as a minnow through seaweed."[65]

Over Barbados,

> his silvery jet blades slicing the day open like the carcass
> . . . . . .
> Panorama fades:
> he sees the world through a small tube:
> as he angles straight up
> at glass-shattering speed
> . . . . . .
> his jet the loudest word
> the air speaks[66]

[64] For a compelling anthropological and historical argument about technology, the sky, and outer space in the Caribbean, see Peter Redfield, *Space in the Tropics: From Convicts to Rockets in French Guiana* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

[65] Derek Walcott, *Midsummer* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1981), 1.

[66] Diane Ackerman, "Air Show in Barbados" in *Jaguar of Sweet Laughter* (New York: Random House, 1991), 65.

Written histories about aviation in the West Indies have tended to focus on tourism. Often, they have started with the arrival of long-haul jet-engine airplanes in the 1960s.[67] Historical narratives about similar themes but earlier periods have tended to focus on airlines from the United States.[68] To a certain extent, this is understandable. Before the Second World War, Britain mostly concentrated on developing commercial air routes to and through its colonies east and south of London. To shed a different kind of light on the ways that the people and places in the West Indies shaped the development of commercial airspace, I situate this project in the Atlantic world.[69]

Understandably, studies about the Atlantic world have tended to draw attention to interactions and transactions that occur on water and in relation to land. A disproportionate number of them have concentrated on the eighteenth century, which is also understandable.[70] As Paul Gilroy argued in *The Black Atlantic*, the Age of Revolution and "the sea may turn out to be especially important for both the early politics

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[67] For example, see Polly Pattullo, *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean* (London: Cassell, 1996).

[68] For examples, see William A. Krusen, *Flying the Andes: The Story of Pan American Grace Airways and Commercial Aviation in South America, 1926-1967* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 1997); Rosalie Schwartz, *Flying Down to Rio: Hollywood, Tourists, and Yankee Clippers* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004).

[69] My thinking here has been inspired by B. W. Higman's call for alternative histories and future histories of the West Indies. B. W. Higman, *Writing West Indian Histories* (Warwick: Warwick University, 1999), 242-252.

[70] For examples, see David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many Headed-Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); Julius S. Scott, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution," (PhD dissertation, Duke University, 1986).

and poetics of the black Atlantic world that I wish to counterpose against the narrow nationalism of so much English historiography."[71] For Gilroy and others, the

> image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean as a central organising symbol for this enterprise and as my starting point. The image of the ship—a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion—is especially important for historical and theoretical reasons . . . . Ships immediately focus attention on the middle passage, on the various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artifacts: tracts, books, gramophone records, and choirs.[72]

As Gilroy pointed out, the image of the ship helps anchor and orient us towards the past. It is tremendously important and it should never be abandoned, but ships do not help us think critically about the present and the future. How have new technologies of transatlantic crossings changed the politics of the black Atlantic world? What if the Atlantic world was not on the ocean only, but also in the sky? How would the image of the airline in motion focus our attention? As Claude Lévi-Strauss cautioned, we should not automatically assume air travel conquered ocean travel in the Americas. Rather, we should always strive to understand how they have coexisted:

> The end of one civilization, the beginning of another, and the sudden discovery by our present-day world that it is perhaps beginning to grow too small for the people inhabiting it . . . I had fondly imagined that since the introduction of passenger air services between Europe and South America, only one or two eccentric individuals still travelled by boats. Alas, it is an illusion to suppose that the invasion of one element disencumbers another. The sea has no more regained its tranquility since the introduction of Constellations than the outskirts of Paris have recovered their rustic charm since mass building developments began along the Riviera.[73]

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[71] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 12.

[72] Ibid., 6.

[73] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (1955; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 22.

As the Trinidadian-born intellectual and activist C. L. R. James said in his pamphlet *The Case for West-Indian Self Government*, airplanes and ship are the bedfellows of colonization and emancipation:

> Governors and governed stand on either side of a gulf which no tinkering will bridge, and political energy is diverted into other channels or simply runs to waste. Britain will hold us down as long as she wishes. Her cruisers and aeroplanes ensure it.[74]

The Caribbean occupies an odd and awkward place in the project. First, I focus on the British West Indies. This focus obscures the other empires, islands, and mainlands that touch the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. However, it is not insular. The framework of the Atlantic world insists that we shift back and forth between Europe and the Americas.[75]

Second, my focus on the British West Indies is peripheral. At first glance, Britain appears centered. As the different narratives unfold, it seems to perform as the principal historical agent. Awareness of the actions and inactions that occurred on the edges of an emerging industry brings into view the ways West Indians and the West Indies influenced the decisions made and abandoned in the metropole. Though seemingly slight, these ways are significant. Consideration of them shifts how we think about the making of modern modes of mobility; inclusion makes it difficult to define those modes as merely national.

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[74] C. L. R. James, *The Case for West-Indian Self Government* (London: Hogarth Press, 1933), West Indies Collection F2131.J25 Pamphlet A, at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados (hereinafter, UWICH).

[75] Julius S. Scott, "Crisscrossing Empires: Ships, Sailors, and Resistance in the Lesser Antilles in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion,*" ed. Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 128-143.

Imperial Airways

Though the project began in the Caribbean, the airline in question started in Britain. For centuries, artificial flight has captured the imagination. Daedalus and Icarus created wings of wax in ancient Greek mythology. Emperor Shun used hats to parachute from a tower in ancient China. Wayland the Smith covered his clothes in bird feathers and soared in an Anglo-Saxon legend. In the ninth century, Bladud, King of the Britons, made a pair of wings and flew from Bath to London. In the eleventh century, Eilmer of Malmesbury, an Anglo-Saxon monk, made a "quasi-parachute apparatus."[76] He jumped from a tower, survived, and became one of the first tower jumpers to live. In the thirteenth century, Roger Bacon, a Franciscan monk, wrote extensive scientific theories about flying. In the late fifteenth century, Leonardo da Vinci designed an ornithopter, glider, parachute, helicopter, and several other flying devices. In the early sixteenth century, Giovanni Battista Danti, a mathematician, used feathered wings and iron bars to make a flying machine. In the late eighteenth century, Joseph and Jacques Montgolfier invented the hot-air balloon in France. On June 4, 1783, the first public demonstration of an unmanned lighter-than-air craft took place in Annonay. A year later, aeronauts executed the first lighter-than-air voyages in the Americas. In 1784, hot-air balloons were seen over Saint-Domingue.[77] Nearly a decade later, Jean Pierre Blanchard, a French aeronaut, made the first air balloon ascent in the United States on January 9, 1793. In the nineteenth century, Jacob Degen, an Austrian aeronaut, flew in an ornithopter-like machine. Later that century, Ferdinand von Zeppelin invented the rigid airship design.

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[76] Lynn White, Jr., "Eilmer of Malmesbury, an Eleventh Century Aviator: A Case Study of Technological Innovation, Its Context, and Tradition," *Technology and Culture* vol. 2, no. 2 (Spring 1961): 98.

[77] Wenda Parkinson, *This Gilded African* (London: Quartet Books, 1978), 22.

On December 17, 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright achieved the first sustained, machine-powered flight. It took place in a controlled, heavier-than-air craft.[78]

From 1903, when the Wright Brothers built and flew the world's first airplane, to 1919, when the First World War ended, the airplane was used mainly for pleasure and military purposes. Before the war, stunt pilots, daredevils, sky-writers, pioneering aviators, air races, and air shows helped to popularize flying. Their bold aerobatics and sometimes their individual deaths turned airplanes into a spectacle of entertainment.[79]

The First World War changed what flight meant. The spectacle went from delightful and titillating to aggressive and deadly.[80] Though aerial warfare started with lighter-than-air crafts in the late eighteenth century, militaries used a combination of lighter-than-air and heavier-than-air machines for the first time during this war. As Maurice John Bernard Davy put it, "The year 1919 marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of aeronautics."[81] After the war, states started to establish regular commercial air transport services. Belligerent machines, such as the Handley Page

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[78] For surveys and studies about the early history of artificial flight, see Janet B. T. Christie, "Reflections on the Legend of Wayland the Smith," *Folklore*, vol. 8, no. 4 (Winter 1969): 286-294; Tom D. Crouch, *Wings: A History of Aviation from Kites to the Space Age* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), esp. 3-84; Maurice John Bernard Davy, *Air Power and Civilization* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1941), esp. 1-52; A. T. Fear, "Bladud: The Flying King of Bath," *Folklore*, vol. 103, no. 2 (1992): 222-224; Michael Aron, "Flying: The Heavens as Airspace," *Harper's Magazine*, September 1975, 3-11; Clive Hart, *The Dream of Flight: Aeronautics from Classical Times to the Renaissance* (London: Faber, 1972); Clive Hart, *The Prehistory of Flight* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Lord Montagu, ed., *A Short History of Balloons and Flying Machines* (London: "The Car Illustrated," 1907), esp. 1-14.

[79] For works dealing with airplane as spectacle, see Joseph J. Corn, *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation, 1900-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Robert Dixon, *Prosthetic Gods: Travel, Representation, and Colonial Governance* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001); Wohl, *A Passion for Wings.*

[80] For representations of aerial warfare during the First World War, see Michael Paris, *Winged Warfare: The Literature and Theory of Aerial Warfare in Britain, 1859-1917* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

[81] Davy, *Air Power and Civilization*, 110.

Bomber in Britain, became cargo and passenger planes flown by battalion pilots. As Ron Davies aptly said, postwar states "turned their eyes towards air transport as a contemporary method of converting swords into ploughshares."[82]

Britain was not at the vanguard of commercial air transport. It was near it. Germany, France, and the United States pioneered airline travel. In January 1914, St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line, which was a company in the United States, launched the first scheduled passenger services in the world. It carried one passenger each way between two cities in Florida. In May 1918, the United States Post Office started a scheduled transport service for cargo not passengers.[83] In early February 1919, shortly after the Armistice, a German company called Deutsche Left Reederei commenced sustained passenger services. In late February, a French company called Farman inaugurated a regular air passenger service.

August 1919 marked the start of commercial air services in Britain. That month, a British company called Aircraft Transport and Travel (hereinafter, ATT) started a scheduled passenger service from Middlesex to Paris.[84] It was the first international passenger service in the world. In September, the Handley Page aircraft company created an airline. Handley Page Transport offered a scheduled service from London to Paris. In the early 1920s, three more airlines were founded in Britain. In 1921, Instone Air Line began. In 1922, Daimler Airway started. In 1923, the British Marine Air Navigation Company commenced.

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[82] R. E. G. Davies, *A History of the World's Airlines* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 3.

[83] The Austro-Hungarian Military Line also operated a short-lived cargo service in March 1918. See ibid., 7.

[84] George Holt Thomas founded ATT in October 1916. However, the company did not offered scheduled services until 1919.

At first, the British were ambivalent about airline travel. On the one hand, the nation was enthusiastic about it.[85] On the other, there was concern over whether the postwar government should subsidize the nascent private industry.[86] Culturally and financially, the country was already deeply invested in the maritime and railroad industries.

To decide, the British Air Ministry held three Air Conferences in London between 1920 and 1923. At the first conference, the Controller-General of Civil Aviation, Frederick Sykes, delivered a paper on the merits of airline services. An advocate for aviation, he cautioned delegates, "Let us have no illusions about the difficulties confronting civil aviation. Never has the need of national retrenchment been greater, and it is clear that financial stringency will increase rather than diminish." Focused on the future, Sykes stressed, "I firmly believe that a reasoned policy of financial encouragement towards productive services will in the long run prove an infinitely more profitable investment than others which have been made." From his perspective, "Without such encouragement the air transport industry, which is yet in its infancy, may

[85] David Edgerton has used literature, film, and government documents to "emphasise English enthusiasm, indeed over-enthusiasm, for the aeroplane, though to many people the idea that England was enthusiastic about any technology will appear perverse." By focusing on "technology, industry and business, on the warfare state rather than the welfare state, and on the Right rather than the Left," he has argued against assuming England was "a nation slow in supporting aviation." David Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane: An Essay on a Militant and Technological Nation* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1991), xiv.

[86] Davies has surveyed government documents and shown there was a "crisis in the United Kingdom . . . British companies were soon to learn that, much as the press and public applauded the pioneering efforts . . . . There was much controversy, both in Parliament and in the press." Davies, *A History of World Airlines*, 30.

wilt . . . . What we still need is visible public support; the imagination to take a bird's eye view of the future blended with the British characteristic to persevere in the present."[87]

At the second conference, the government continued to rally financial support for air transportation. The tension between present and future, survival and preparation shaped the development of airline services in Britain. In February 1922, during the Second Air Conference, Lord Weir of Eastwood questioned, "Up to date, what has civil aviation done for civilization? What is it at present capable of doing?"[88] Weir, who identified as "intensely pro-aviation," observed, "In Great Britain the aeroplane has been unable to demonstrate its practical utility, commensurate with the cost . . . I except the cross-Channel service. That is a very hard statement to make, but I find little evidence to controvert it."[89] Sykes responded, advocating again for the government to support the nascent industry. He asked his colleagues three questions: "(1) Is aviation a necessity of our national life, and therefore to be afforded at any cost? (2) Can service aviation exist without its civil counterpart? (3) How best can civil aviation be developed."[90] His colleagues remained relatively unconvinced. As Lord Gorell, who was the Under-Secretary for Air, acknowledged, there was a "decided increase in the interest taken by

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[87] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Sir Frederick H. Sykes, "Civil Aviation and Air Services" (12 October 1920) in Air Ministry, *Air Conference*, Cmd. 1157 (12-14 October 1920), 15-16.

[88] Lord Weir of Eastwood, Speech to Delegates, 8 February 1922, Air Ministry, *The 2nd Air Conference*, Cmd. 1619 (7-8 February 1922), 81.

[89] Ibid., 82. The government did allocate a small, but temporary sum for the cross-Channel service between Britain and France. See Air Ministry, *Report on Government Financial Assistance to Civil Air Transport Companies,* Cmd. 1811 (15 February 1923).

[90] Sir Frederick H. Sykes, Speech to Delegates, 8 February 1922, Air Ministry, *The 2nd Air Conference*, Cmd. 1619 (7-8 February 1922), 83.

the public in the air," but the government "would require much greater justification" before it decided to subsidize an airline industry.[91]

By the next year, the attitude of the government had shifted. In January 1923, Samuel Hoare, who was the Secretary of State for Air, formed the Civil Air Transport Subsidies Committee (hereinafter, the Hambling Committee). He asked the committee to answer the subsidy question, namely "to advise on the best method of subsidising Cross-Channel Air Transport in the future."[92] Chaired by Herbert Hambling, the committee met fifteen times in January and February. During those meetings, it heard evidence from aircraft manufacturers, airline operators, the Air Ministry, and others.

While the committee convened, the Third Air Conference took place. This time, the development of imperial air services dominated discussion. On February 6, 1923, during the opening speeches, Alderman E. C. Moore, who was the Lord Mayor of London, declared,

> [W]e are living in this atmosphere of war and as long as the world is in this state of confusion and uncertainty . . . until there is a new spirit in the world and until we have got out of this atmosphere of wars and rumours of wars, we cannot afford to let our air defenses fall below the Empire's needs.[93]

Admitting there was "very little money to spend," Moore and several of his colleagues were "very anxious to see a start made with an Imperial air route . . . . How useful such a

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[91] Lord Gorell, "Civil Aviation" (paper, 7 February 1922) in Air Ministry, *The 2nd Air Conference*, Cmd. 1619 (7-8 February 1922), 8, 30.

[92] Air Ministry, "Terms of Reference," *Report on Government Financial Assistance to Civil Air Transport Companies,* Cmd. 1811 (15 February 1923), 3.

[93] Alderman E. C. Moore, Speech to Delegates, 6 February 1923, Air Ministry, *The 3rd Air Conference*, Cmd. 1848 (6-7 February 1923), 5.

route can be politically . . . ."[94] Lord Gorell wanted them to understand that "England is unfortunately situated in having no possibility, until trans-Atlantic Flight is practicable, of going westward."[95]

A week later, the Hambling Committee gave a report to Hoare. It recommended that the government dissolve the existing airlines and create a new company. However, it argued against "the creation of a Corporation or Company administered under Government control." It pushed for a commercial organization "with a privileged position with regard to air transport subsidies . . . ."[96] The new airline would be a government-backed monopoly.

On December 3, 1923, the government agreed to acquire the assets of the existing airlines, and form the Imperial Air Transport Company. Only British subjects could be directors and shareholders. The company had to use British built and registered aircraft. In exchange, the government agreed to administer annually part of a ten-year direct subsidy, which totaled £1,000,000.[97] On March 31, 1924, the government incorporated the company. The next day, Imperial Airways began.

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[94] Air Ministry, "Terms of Reference," *Report on Government Financial Assistance to Civil Air Transport Companies,* Cmd. 1811 (15 February 1923), 3.

[95] Lord Gorell, Speech to Delegates, 7 February 1923, Air Ministry, *The 3rd Air Conference*, Cmd. 2599, (6-7 February 1923), 91.

[96] Air Ministry, "Terms of Reference," *Report on Government Financial Assistance to Civil Air Transport Companies,* Cmd. 1811 (15 February 1923), 16.

[97] Air Ministry, *Agreement Made with the British, Foreign, and Colonial Corporation, Ltd., Providing for the Formation of a Heavier-Than-Air Transport Company to be Called the Imperial Air Transport Company, Ltd.,* Cmd. 2010 (1923).

Structure of the Study

Based on the aforementioned conversations, I have selected four themes that best reveal how Imperial Airways and empire shaped each other: speed, perception, route, and prestige. Chapter Two historicizes speed and shows how it was fundamentally altered by the invention and experience of heavier-than-air mechanical flight. Chapter Three, which is about perception, reveals how the first generation of airline travelers experienced both speed and the shift from horizontal to vertical travel. Analyzing what they saw and how they saw it demonstrates that the image of airline travel as extraordinary worked in tandem with the image of airline travel as ordinary.

Chapter Four focuses on transatlantic air routes. The first section establishes that routes are more than fixed points on maps. They are power relations and they are historical relationships. The second section explores the development of air lines between Britain and the United States. In doing so, it reveals how this formation forced the so-called failure of a local airline in the West Indies. Chapter Five, which is about prestige, looks at the consequences of this international alliance. It explains why the British government decided to nationalize its airline. It reveals that one of the reasons why Imperial Airways became the British Overseas Airways Corporation, and eventually British Airways, was in the West Indies.

CHAPTER TWO

SPEEDING UP THE EMPIRE: THE EMPIRE OF SPEED

Fig. 1.1. Imperial Airways, *Speeding up the Empire*, n.d. [probably 1936-1939]. Reproduction courtesy of the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution; the British Airways Archive and Museum.

In the mid to late 1930s, in a sharp and vibrant colored advertisement, Imperial Airways announced that the airline was "Speeding up the Empire" (see fig. 1.1). The document depicted a *Canopus* class flying boat arriving at an unnamed, yet clearly tropical, destination.[98] From the silver steel moored airplane, white passengers, who had

[98] The *Canopus* was the first in the short S 23 C class empire flying boat series. Imperial Airways inaugurated its passenger service on October 30, 1936, which was from Egypt to Italy. Thereafter, the airline mainly used the *Canopus* on its trans-Mediterranean route between Alexandria and Brindisi (with

alighted on translucent blue water undulating calmly, were boarding a smaller but presumably still mechanized brown boat with red trim. Nearby, in an even smaller rowboat, a black figure stood and steered with a long straight post. In the foreground, palm-like leaves, pink hibiscus and blood orange flowers, and the face of a black woman framed the events that were unfolding on the water.[99]

By the time that Imperial Airways crafted "Speeding up the Empire" in the 1930s, a particular tradition of illustrating colonized people and places, especially those of the so-called tropics, was long established and well known throughout Greater Britain.[100] In his study of advertisement and jingoism in nineteenth-century England, Thomas Richards suggested that mid to late Victorian advertisers tended to contrive and circulate images that portrayed equatorial lands and their inhabitants as dark and liminal.[101] Working within a similar chronological scope but writing comparatively about how companies throughout Europe's colonizing countries presented the geographic space of the West Indies, Jan Nederveen Pieterse called attention to how imagery often conjured sex and

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stopovers at Mirabella and Athens). The average flight lasted seven hours and twenty minutes. The *Canopus* could carry up to twenty-four day passengers and it had sleeping accommodations for up to sixteen night passengers.

[99] The image was featured on the cover of an Imperial Airways travel brochure for the company's new flying boat service. It was illustrated by F. H. Coventry, a British commercial artist known for his depictions of transport machines and travel experiences.

[100] I draw inspiration from Catherine Hall's (2000) efforts to rescue and reclaim the term 'Greater Britain' for the people and places of the so-called 'other' British worlds. Building on her work, I deploy the device 'Greater Britain' as part of an on-going effort to minimize sharp analytical distinctions between metropole and colony (Cooper and Stoler 1997), but also as an attempt to keep in focus the powerful and profound ways that the people, places, and things of a Greater Britain shaped the development of the Great one (Fanon 1961; James 1938).

[101] Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), esp. 119-167. For a thorough discussion of race, empire, and advertising also see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995), esp. 207-231; Karen Pinkus, *Bodily Regimes: Italian Advertising under Fascism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), esp. 22-81.

race to promote products. "The non-western world—whether the warm South or the sensual Orient—is idealized and eroticized on the one hand as a paradise on earth, and on the other hand rejected and condemned."[102]

As a visual source, the Imperial Airways advertisement drew on these familiar tropes of imperial travel.[103] It replicated the convention of representing nature and the geographical space of the tropics as a picturesque paradise. It presented the viewer with an exoticized and idealized colonial landscape; the sunlight, weather, water, and plants, for instance, appeared unending, hot, lucent, and verdant. Through racialized, and eroticized gestures, the structure of the visual narrative offered up the seemingly naked bodies, the skin of the presumed locals as sexualized counterpoints to the fashioned and ordered airline passengers disembarking on arrival; the craned neck, crimson lips, and coy stare of the black woman, for example, enticed the onlooker to participate directly.[104]

Conversations between the images used in the advertisement unfolded stories about time and history.[105] The careful manipulation of scale and orientation transformed the image of the three water vessels into two progressive and teleological tales about the history of the then present. One narrative opened chronologically forward, from the

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[102] Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 172, and esp. 108-122; 188-210.

[103] Jeffrey Auerbach argued that five tropes have tended to dominate colonial and postcolonial advertisements. As he put it, "The development of these five tropes—exoticization, racialization, sexualization, commodification, and civilization—took place historically as a form of propaganda, a way to advertise the empire, necessary to persuade people to populate otherwise inhospitable places and to justify political and economic rule." Jeffery Auerbach, "Art, Advertising, and the Legacy of Empire," *Journal of Popular Culture* vol. 35, no. 4 (2002): 2.

[104] In the next chapter, I argue that Imperial Airways imagined the ideal viewer as white, middle-class, metropolitan-British, and male. Of course, there were instances of exception.

[105] I use 'unfold' in its three senses. I use it to capture the sense of developing and expanding; opening and spreading; revealing through gradual exposure.

perspective of the external viewer. A linear account about the advancement of a technology, the smallest boat came first in the story. The physical might of a black, presumably native, man motored. Marked as a primitive apparatus, the smallest boat gave way to a second, slightly larger instrument of travel. Seemingly more modern than the first boat, the second vehicle was located between the two other liners and was allowed to carry the British civil air ensign; flying the official flag of the air, this boat bridged the technological past with its future. Finally, the visual timeline culminated in *Canopus*. Powered by four engines and marked by the British ensign, the Imperial Airways flying boat was the largest and most modern looking of the three vessels.

The second story unraveled chronologically backward, from the perspective of the air traveler who was disembarking. A circular tale about imperial time, it began with the arrival of the flying boat. As the visual moved from the image of the most modern carrier to the image of most primitive boat, the trajectory of technological advancement was reversed. This implied that the airline had landed not only in another place, but also in a kind of past time; said differently, Imperial Airways had transported passengers back in time. Thus, from this vantage point, the second boat was a go-between. It ferried from the modern flying boat to the elsewhere and elsewhen, which the rowboat and mooring represented. The story, however, did not end with arrival. Rather, similar to the aforementioned first account, this narrative culminated in the flying boat. An advertisement for white travel to the black unknown in the 1930s, the story had to conclude with the unseen but implied return trip to 'home.'

The tales that the illustrations told about technology and progress presented the airline as an icon and enabler of time travel and the modern. Text, however, explicitly

linked the images to empire. Words in the advertisement described empire in two ways. First, empire was a non-place. Compared to late Victorian and Edwardian period advertisements for imperial travel, each of which tended to focus on a single colonized region, the Imperial Airways advertisement suggested that empire was all places at once. It mapped through words the routes of the airline, which included places that were not official British territories. The empire was all places. It could be anywhere at once: "Europe, Africa, India, The Far East, Australia, Bermuda, New York."[106]

References to foreign cities and countries as part of the empire were curious. Were the physical borders and boundaries of the empire expanding? Was the idea behind empire shifting?[107] Was the empire becoming universal? If so, to whom, if anyone, did it belong? Was it still British?

The second way the advertisement referenced empire offered clues. According to the title, empire was speeding up. Without explicitly naming who or what was causing this to happen, the elements of the advertisement seemed to suggest the airplane as agent, while simultaneously suggesting that the airline was the major driving force behind speed up. But, what did it mean to speed up empire?[108]

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[106] Imperial Airways, *Speeding up the Empire*, n. d. [probably 1936-1939], F1I-600000-01/9A00689, National Air and Space Museum, Washington D.C. (hereinafter, NASM).

[107] Through the character of Marlow, Joseph Conrad said, "The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look at it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. . . ." Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1902; repr., Boston: Bedford Books, 1996), 21.

[108] In this chapter, I distinguish between speed-up and speed up. As I argue later, this distinction is significant. Speed-up refers to an increase in the rate of speed. Speed up refers to acceleration and underscores the importance of direction.

This chapter explores how this phrase became meaningful.[109] It begins by tracing some of the contemporary uses of the word 'speed.' In doing so, it argues that speed had lost its sense of slowness and kept its sense of fastness. When did this breach occur? What are the implications of forgetting that speed itself is both fast and slow?

The second and third sections take up these questions. They argue the advent of air travel significantly shifted the meaning of speed. The second section looks at how airplanes accelerated speed and illuminates some of its consequences. The third section looks specifically at this process in Britain before the First World War. The fourth section assesses how the process changed after the war and reveals the state turning air into civil airspace. This was connected to the development of imperial air routes and their impact on the geography of empire.

Terminology

Often, the term 'speed' is used to refer to the rapidity of movement. Frequently, it is a synonym for fast, quick, hastened, and hurried. Carl Honoré, for example, has argued that speed and slowness are opposites:

> These days, the whole world is time-sick. We all belong to the same cult of speed. Standing in that lineup for my flight home to London, I begin to grapple with the questions . . . . Why are we always in such a rush? What is the cure for time-sickness? Is it possible, or even desirable, to slow-down?[110]

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[109] To put it in a slightly different way, how could "Speeding up the Empire," used as a slogan, be any more than nonsense? What was its meaning in the 1930s? What, and for whom, did it resonate? As Ruth Iskin argued, "An important characteristic of posters as a medium was the fact that their conditions of display and advertising functions necessitated that they be designed to make strong impressions instantaneously and with high impact." Ruth E. Iskin, "Father Time, Speed, and the Temporality of Posters around 1900," *Kronoscope* vol. 3, no. 1 (2003): 29. Also, see Raymond Williams, "Advertising: The Magic System," in *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays* (London: NLB, 1980), 170-193.

[110] Carl Honoré, *In Praise of Slowness: How a Worldwide Movement is Challenging the Cult of Speed* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2004), 3. It is striking that Honoré's book is called *In Praise of Slowness* in the United States and *In Praise of Slow* throughout the rest of the English-speaking world.

According to Honoré and others, the so-called cult of speed is totalizing. Defined and driven by a relentless wish for fastness, it appears perpetual, uninterrupted, and inescapable. As Honoré put it, speed is a sickness and the panacea is slow-down.[111]

References to cults, possession, and the decay of humanity are common in the literature on speed in the twenty-first century. "The New Speed is perceived as the symbol and substance of our new freedom," commented Juan Alonso in his essay on "the New World Religion." Concerned about how the hunt for more rapid ways of existing is transforming the "psychological climate" of humans, he criticized "the more exalted among the faithful" who urge to "go faster and faster from here on until Time itself flattens out into an immediate present which never ends." Worshipers seek "The Long Now." They show reverence and adoration for immediacy and the instantaneous, hoping to one day "overpower and possess" the now. Imbibing endlessly from fonts filled with "darkly dry, electric speed juice," the followers "feel excitedly on the point of being able to rape Time itself."[112]

While Alonso has shed light on the volatile relationship between a quickening of existence and the violent ravaging of time, others have illuminated ways whereby this

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[111] For other works that define speed as fastness see James Gleick, *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999); Mark Kingwell, "Fast Forward: Our High-Speed Chase to Nowhere" *Harper's Magazine* vol. 296, no. 1776 (May 1998): 37-48; Jeremy Millar and Michiel Schwarz, eds. *Speed—Visions of an Accelerated Age* (London: The Photographers' Gallery, 1998).

[112] Juggling the language of race, religion, and colonialism on the one hand, and tropes of the enlightenment, darwinism, and social darwinism on the other, Alonso further explained that "our new speed is also perceived as the point of entry into a veritable paradise, for the adept, that is. As for the non-adept, undeserving, they will perish in outer darkness . . . . At the very least, the faithful expect they will feel more powerful, and so they shall be in some senses. And one also cannot help get the sense that their progeny are expected to fulfill themselves in that paradise, far more than we ever will, as some kind of priapically joyous Noble Savage, but techno-style. That is, beings made not in the image of any old god but in the image of electronic machines such as our computers (unimaginably more advanced ones, of course)." For all passages quoted in the paragraph and footnote, see Juan Alonso, "Speed and the New World Religion," *Queen's Quarterly* vol. 108, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 365-373.

link, though vulnerable, is believed beneficial. In the early winter of 2002, David Gergen, a reporter for *U.S. News and World Report*, interviewed Klaus Schwab, the founder and president of the World Economic Forum. The conversation was about the troubled state of "the global economy" after 2001. Asked, "With a worldwide recession, terrorist attacks, Argentina's collapse" was 2001 just a rough patch, or is something more fundamental going on," Schwab remarked, "Fragility. That word characterizes best the situation we are in now." Envisioning economic transactions synced across the world in real-time, he further observed, "With globalization we have much more synchronization—this is the first really synchronized world recession. A second factor is speed, time compression, mainly driven by technology advances."[113]

At first glance, Schwab appeared deeply ambiguous about the consequences of speed. He believed that speed, which he defined as technology driven time compression, creates conditions under which it becomes possible for the seemingly globalized market to transact in a single world time, without delay. Schwab acknowledged that this configuration is delicate, referencing the "Argentine implosion" and the "ripple effect of the Mexican, Russian, or Brazilian crises" as evidence of the reverberations felt quickly by all when the financial system of one country collapses or crashes. Ultimately, however, Schwab affirmed speed. As the interview ended, Gergen asked Schwab, "[H]ow do you think we'll look back upon the 21st century's early years?" Reflecting on the future and remarking on the reduction of time and the obliteration of geographic distances, Schwab responded, "[I]t's the first time in the world when to a large extent we

[113] Klaus Schwab, Interview by David R. Gergen, "A Fragile Time for Globalism," *U.S. News and World Report* (February 11, 2002): 41. In a different context, Schwab argued, 'We are moving from a world in which the big eat the small to one in which the fast eat the slow.' Klaus Schwab quoted in Honoré, *In Praise of Slowness*, 4.

can determine our own and our children's fate. So it depends whether we recognize that we live in a global village, that we must act together as a global community."[114]

Several scholars have commented on the relationship between speed and power. In his work on the dromocratic revolution, Paul Virilio argued that speed is a form of political power.[115] Curious about why modern states continuously seek out, cultivate, and covet technologies of acceleration, he asserted, "[S]peed is the hope of the West."[116] For Virilio, this desire is strategic and militaristic; modern states crave devices of immediacy and instantaneity in order to exert force and exercise control over others. The invention of technologies of speed is intimate with the on-going determination of states to master the ability to execute violent acts in real time and thereby dominate instantly—despite geographical distances.[117]

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[114] For all passages quoted in the paragraph see Schwab, Interview by Gergen, "A Fragile Time for Globalism," 41. For other examples of speed as fastness, see Marshall Berman's *All That is Solid Melts into Air*. Analyzing *Faust*, he argued, "There is nothing inherently bourgeois about the experiences he [Mephisto] wants Faust to buy. The 'six steed quatrain suggests that the most valuable commodity, from Mephisto's perspective, is *speed*. First of all, speed has its uses: anyone who wants to do great things in the world will need to move around and through it fast. Beyond this however, speed generates a distinctively sexual aura: the faster Faust can 'race along,' the more of a 'real man'—the more masculine, the more sexy—he can be. This equation of money, speed, sex, and power is far from exclusive to capitalism. It is equally central to the collectivist mystiques of twentieth-century socialism, and to the various populist mythologies of the Third World . . . ." Also, see Patrick Dixon's *Futurewise*. In chapter one, "Fast: Speed Will be Everything," he began, "The first face of the future is FAST: speed will be everything. Never before has the future so rapidly become the past. History is accelerating whether you look at trends in the economy, global events, industry, social factors or politics, or dotcom hype and bust" [emphasis in original]. Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 49; Patrick Dixon, *Futurewise: The Six Faces of Global Change*, 3rd ed. (London: Profile Books, 2004), 1.

It is important to note that the passage by Berman suggested that speed is a form of sexual power; that speed is gendered. Faust constituted his masculinity through it.

[115] Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (1977; repr., New York: Semiotext(e), 1986).

[116] Ibid., 47.

[117] During an interview with Niels Brügger, Virilio argued, "Clearly, in war, which for centuries has essentially amounted to wars of movement, wars of displacement (based on assaults, attacks), one must

Conversely, Italo Calvino argued that speed is a form of private power.[118] In 1984, when he started to think about writing *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, he identified the indispensable peculiarities of literature. Quickness was one of them.[119] Calvino defined quickness as "the speed of thought." He believed in the ability and the agility of the imaginative mind jumping from idea to idea, and pushed writers to capture and communicate the pace of energy, the kinetic frenzy of thinking. He compared, for example, different versions of a single ancient legend and observed that some accounts lacked a sense of speed. Curious and concerned about the obliteration of concision in the literary imagination, he concluded, "The secret of the story lies in its economy: the events, however long they last, become punctiform, connected by rectilinear segments, in a zigzag pattern that suggests incessant motion." For Calvino, it is aggressive and redemptive to craft stories that can catch mental speed without arresting unremitting movement. He reflected on the relationship between physical speed and the speed of the mind, and warned we live in "an age when other fantastically speedy, widespread media are triumphing, and running the risk of flattening all communication onto a single, homogenous surface . . . ." From the mechanized clock to the motorcar, he pointed out

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start implementing greater, more decisive speeds in military confrontations. This tendency is of course evident in assault techniques (cavalry, tanks), but it becomes even more manifest in telecommunication techniques, that is, techniques of perception and information. . . . The technologies of real time that still weren't perfected with the invention of the telegraph and the telephone since a delay remained (due to the coding and transmission of the message), have attained their maximum scale. It is now possible for us to act, to tele-act, in real time and not only to gather information and perceive by satellite." Paul Virilio, Interview by Niels Brügger, *Slagmark* vol. 18 (1991): 145-160 in *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, ed. John Armitage, trans. Stacey Cozart (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 82.

[118] That is, private in the sense of intimate, internal, and secret (Johnson 2002).

[119] For Calvino, the six essential qualities of literature were lightness, quickness, exactitude, visibility, multiplicity, and consistency. Invited to deliver the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard University during the 1985-1986 academic year, he planned to explore one quality during each address. Dying shortly before his first lecture, he was unable to write about consistency, the sixth memo.

the different mechanical forms that have "forced speed on us as a measurable quantity." Nevertheless, the intimacy of mental speed can relieve:

> [It] cannot be measured and does not allow comparisons or competitions; not can it display its results in historical perspective. Mental speed is valuable for its own sake, for the pleasure it gives to anyone who is sensitive to such a thing, and not for the practical use that can be made of it. A swift piece of reasoning is not necessarily better than a long-pondered one. Far from it. But it communicates something special that is derived simply from its very swiftness.[120]

Wolfgang Schivelbusch's work on rail travel in the early nineteenth century has demonstrated that speed is also a form of cultural power. Interested in how the railroad changed people's lives, he examined how the increased speed of trains compressed time and annihilated space, revolutionizing how travelers behaved.[121]

Roland Barthes has shown that speed can be a form of biopower. In his work on modern mythologies and the advent of the jet-man, Barthes looked at how small and large plane pilots relate to speed differently. Pilots in small planes are deeply aware of speed; flying at lower altitudes, they experience the plane's motion and see the details of the grounded landscape change beneath them. "The pilot-hero was made unique by a whole mythology of speed as an experience, of space devoured, of intoxicating motion." Pilots in large planes, however, are not aware of speed; they fly level at higher altitudes, above the weather. Unless there is turbulence, they feel no motion. These jet-men, Barthes argued, want to overcome speed. They crave weightlessness and, in doing so,

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[120] Calvino cited Galileo and Borges as champions of mental speed. In different ways, their works captured how "[q]uickness of style and thought means above all agility, mobility, and ease, all qualities that go with writing where it is natural to digress, to jump from one subject to another, to lose the thread a hundred times and find it again after a hundred more twists and turns." For all passages quoted in the footnote and paragraph, see Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, trans. Patrick Creagh (New York: Vintage International, 1988), 31-54.

[121] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (1977; repr., Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1986), 33.

end up submitting their bodies, selves, and lives to the machine. "The *jet-man* . . . no longer seems to know either adventure or destiny, but only a condition" [emphasis in original].[122]

Milan Kundera made a similar point about speed in his novel *Slowness*. In the opening scene, the narrator drives on a highway in France with his wife and begins to think about the other travelers on the road. He sees a man on a motorcycle and is mesmerized, imagining that

> the man hunched over his motorcycle can focus only on the present instant of his flight; he is caught in a fragment of time cut off from both the past and the future; he is wrenched from the continuity of time; he is outside of time; in other words, he is in a state of ecstasy; in that state he is unaware of his age, his wife, his children, his worries, and so he has no fear, because the source of fear is in the future, and a person freed of the future has nothing to fear. Speed is the form of ecstasy the technical revolution has bestowed on man. As opposed to a motorcyclist, the runner is always present in his body, forever required to think about his blisters, his exhaustion; when he run he feels his weight, his age, more conscious than ever of himself and of his time of life. This all changes when man delegates the faculty of speed to a machine; from then on, his own body is outside the process, and he gives over to a speed that is noncorporeal, non-material, pure speed, speed itself, ecstasy speed.[123]

Like the jet-man, the motorcycle-man surrenders his body to the accelerated pace of the machine. In doing so, he approaches a transcendent state, experiencing extreme intensity and rapture. For Kundera, speed is tied intimately to time and memory. Experienced as fastness, speed rips the motorcycle-man out of time and enables him to sever ties with the

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[122] As Barthes explained, "This paradox is that an excess of speed turns into repose. . . . [T]he *jet-man* . . . is defined by a coenaesthesis of motionless ('*at 2,000 km per hour, in level flight, no impression of speed at all*'), as if the extravagance of his vocation precisely consisted in *overtaking* motion, in going faster than speed. . . . [T]he myth of the aviator loses all humanism. The hero of classical speed could remain a 'gentleman,' inasmuch as motion was for him an occasional exploit, for which courage alone was required . . . . It is inasmuch as speed was an *adventure* that it linked the airman to a whole series of human role" [emphasis in original]. For all passages quoted in the footnote and paragraph, see Roland Barthes, "The Jet-Man" in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (1957; repr., New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 71-73. For a useful interpretation of this essay, see Mitchell Schwarzer, *Zoomscape: Architecture in Motion and Media* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), esp. 118-163.

[123] Milan Kundera, *Slowness*, trans. Linda Asher (1995; repr., New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 1.

past and the future. Unlike the runner, he is oblivious to pain, aware of his present only. And, while the motorcycle-man thrills to the sense of fearlessness and ecstasy, Kundera lamented, "There is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting."[124]

The idea that rapidity is bound intrinsically to the process of forgetting, and slowness to the production of memory, helps reveal part of the power and politics masked behind the term 'speed.' Physicists have long shown that speed is simply a measure. It describes motion. It is the rate at which an object changes its position; that is, speed is the distance traveled divided by the time taken to travel that distance.[125] Importantly, speed is a scalar quantity. It has magnitude but no direction.[126] It can be fast and slow, high and low. It can be any place.

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[124] Kundera went on to say, "Consider this utterly commonplace situation: a man is walking down the street. At a certain moment, he tried to recall something, but the recollection escapes him. Automatically, he slows down. Meanwhile, a person who wants to forget a disagreeable incident he has just lived through starts unconsciously to speed up his pace, as if he were trying to distance himself from a thing still too close to him in time. In existential mathematics, that experience takes the form of two basic equations: the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting." Ibid., 39.

Alonso also alluded the close rapport between rapid speed and forgetting when he said, " I must also say I also sense about me, in this new envisioned paradise that makes men forget other things, the virulently anti-humanist and triumphalist belief that our progeny in the image of the computer will not even quite as the Noble Savage, man returned to a state of Nature, but something closer to the animals that live only in the present. Only, less sentient." Alonso, "Speed and the New World Religion," 369.

[125] There are three basic types of speed in physics: constant, instantaneous, and average. Constant refers to change in position without change in speed. Instantaneous refers to the speed of a moving object *at a particular moment* in time. Average speed is distance traveled divided by time traveled. Unless otherwise mentioned, average speed is the focus of this chapter. For a fuller discussion on the history of speed in physics see Robert H. March, *Physics for Poets*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996), esp. 5-18.

[126] Velocity, a vector quantity, describes both magnitude and direction. In other words, velocity is speed with direction (for example, 60 miles per hour, west).

Speed has appropriated the characteristic of fast and lost its sense of slowness in scholarship and the popular imagination.[127] In the sections that follow, I argue the advent of air travel helped develop and shift the meaning of speed. By analyzing the language used to articulate if the state would start an airline, we can better understand some of the politics that separated slow from speed; the stakes engaged as we sustain the distinction between the two. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot has reminded, "Terminologies demarcate a field, politically and epistemologically. Names set up a field of power."[128]

Speed-Up and Speed Up

Numerous scholars have shown that notions of space and time changed dramatically during the opening decades of the twentieth century. David Harvey has pointed out that "the second great wave of modernist innovation" rose between 1910-1914. As evidence, he noted several significant developments that unfolded around those years. Einstein published his first and second paper on relativity (1905 and 1915); Ford and his engineers used the moving assembly line for the first time (1913); the Eiffel Tower sent a radio signal around the world for the first time (1913); Durkheim published *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912). These and other events fundamentally

[127] We could ask a slightly similar kind of question about acceleration. The term 'acceleration' is often used to signal an increase in speed while 'deceleration' is often used to refer to a decrease in speed. In physics, however, acceleration, a vector quantity, describes the rate whereby an object changes its velocity. Thus, average acceleration is the change in velocity divided by the amount of time lapsed; an object accelerates if it changes speed and direction; if it changes speed; if it changes direction (even if its speed does not change). I would like to thank Frederick Becchetti for encouraging me to think about kinematics and the physics of motion.

[128] Speaking about the politics of word-choice that arise when writing histories about European expansion and colonialism in the Caribbean, Trouillot went on to explain, "But the awkwardness and the fact that the entire issue [of whether to use 'discovery' or 'conquest' to describe Columbus in the Americas] can be dismissed as trivial quibbling suggests that it is not easy to subvert the very language describing the facts of the matter. For the power to decide what is trivial—and annoying—is also part of the power to decide how 'what happened' becomes 'that which is said to have happened'." Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 115.

changed how people experienced time and space. If the compression of time and space marked the first great wave of modernist innovation in the mid-nineteenth century, then "speed-up," which Harvey defined as the acceleration of time, symbolized the second.[129] And as Henri Lefebvre has asserted,

> [t]he fact is that around 1910 a certain space was shattered. It was the space of common sense, of knowledge (*savoir*), of social practice, of political power, a space thitherto enshrined in everyday discourse, just as in abstract thought, as the environment of and channel for communications . . . . This was truly a crucial moment.[130]

One of the central movements in the metamorphosis of speed into speed-up was futurism.[131] On February 20, 1909, the Parisian-based newspaper *Le Figaro* printed on the front page the first "Manifesto of Futurism." Written by the Egyptian-born Italian poet F. T. Marinetti and aimed at artists and writers, this foundational text mapped the main principles of the futurist movement. It called for a fervent and absolute rejection of the historical past, and a total embrace of the modern city and the seemingly invigorating energy of the industrial society.[132] As it rubbished all things and ways that smacked of

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[129] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford; Blackwell, 1989), 265-266.

[130] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (1974; repr., Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 25.

[131] It is difficult to speak of a single futurist movement, and perhaps it is better to call it a moment (Perloff 2003). As many writers have shown, there were different national camps within futurism, each of which had a distinct political agenda. That said, there was a core network of beliefs that shaped, guided, and, to a lesser extent, unified across factions. Unless otherwise noted, I am speaking about that core in this chapter. See Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Vladimir Markov, *Russian Futurism: A History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[132] As Marinetti decreed, "It is from Italy that we launch through the world this violently upsetting, incendiary manifesto of ours. With it, today, we establish *Futurism* because we want to free this land from its smelly gangrene of professors, archaeologists, ciceroni, and antiquarians. For too long has Italy been a dealer in secondhand clothes. We mean to free her from the numberless museums that cover her like so many graveyards" [emphasis in original]. F. T. Marinetti, "Manifesto of Futurism," *Le Figaro,* February

stasis, it welcomed explosive violence, destruction, abandonment, and the absurd, upholding and holding up speed, motion, and momentum as equipment to dominate all aspects of nature. The first principle announced, for example, "We intend to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness;" the third pronounced, "We intend to exalt aggressive action, a feverish insomnia, the racer's stride, the mortal leap, the punch and the slap;" the fourth commanded, "We say that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty; the beauty of speed."[133]

Speed was fundamental to futurism. Expressions and representations of it thread throughout the paintings, sculptures, buildings, words, and other works of the futurists.[134] As the abovementioned passage revealed, they believed in the beauty of speed; this did not mean they thought speed was beautiful. Rather, futurists swore by the capacity of speed, particularly fast speed. On May 11, 1916, seven years after he released his first manifesto, Marinetti wrote and circulated "The New Religion-Morality of Speed" in the middle of the First World War. An overt parody, he conjured a Judeo-Christian language and asserted, "The *Futurist morality* will defend man from the decay caused by slowness, by memory, by analysis, by response and habit" [emphasis in original]. Speed, Marinetti explained, is the savior because

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20, 1909, front page, in *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1991), 50.

[133] Ibid., 49.

[134] For examples of speed in paintings, see Giacomo Balla, "Speeding Automobile (*Automobile in corsa*)," 1912; Giacomo Bella, "Abstract Speed—The Car has Passed," 1913; Umberto Boccioni, "States of Mind I: Those Who Go (*Sati d'animo: Gli addii*)," 1911; Umberto Boccioni, "States of Mind II: The Farewells (*Sati d'animo: Quelli che vanno*)," 1911; Umberto Boccioni, "States of Mind III: Those Who Stay (*Sati d'animo: Quelli che restano*)," 1911; Gino Severini, "Suburban Train Arriving in Paris," 1915. For examples of speed in sculpture, see Umberto Boccioni, "Unique Forms of Continuity in Space (*Forme uniche della continuità nello spazio*)," 1913. For examples of speed in architecture, see Angiolo Mazzoni, "Trento Railway Station," 1934-1936; Antonio Sant'Elia, "New City (*Città Nuova*)," 1914.

> *Speed*, having as its essence the intuitive synthesis of every force in movement, is naturally *pure*. Slowness, having as its essence the rational analysis of every exhaustion in repose, in naturally *unclean*. After the destruction of the antique good and the antique evil, we create a new good, speed, and a new evil, slowness.
>
> Speed = synthesis of every courage in action. Aggressive and warlike.
>
> Slowness = analysis of every stagnant prudence. Passive and pacifistic.
>
> Speed = scorn of obstacles, desire for the new and unexplored. Modernity, hygiene.
>
> Slowness = arrest, ecstasy, immobile adoration of obstacles, nostalgia for the already seen, idealization of exhaustion and rest, pessimism about the unexplored. Rancid romanticism of the wild, wandering poet and long-haired, bespectacled dirty philosopher [emphasis in original].[135]

Denouncing the past, Marinetti aligned slowness and memory, speed and forgetfulness. Playing with ideas about the sacred and the profane,[136] he proclaimed the former alignment evil and unclean, and the latter good and pure.[137]

Marinetti's notion of speed was coterminous with fastness, but of a particular kind. As the previous example illustrated, he considered speed itself god. High speed was prayer: "If prayer means communication with the divinity, running at high speed is a prayer." And technologies were sanctified, but not sacrosanct, alters: "Holiness of wheels and rails. One must kneel on the tracks to pray to the divine velocity. One must kneel before the whirling speed of the gyroscope compass . . . the highest mechanical speed reached by man." In short, Marinetti defined the futurist path to the god speed as the always on-going attempt *to be* faster: "One must snatch from the stars the secret of their stupefying incomprehensible speed. . . . The intoxication of great speeds in cars is

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[135] F. T. Marinetti, "The New Religion-Morality of Speed," *L'Italia Futurista* no. 1 (11 May 1916), in Flint, *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 102-103.

[136] It is important to note that four years before Marinetti wrote this manifesto, Emile Durkheim published *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* in which he defined the sacred and the profane.

[137] Recall Kundera came to a similar conclusion about the relationship between slowness and memory, speed and forgetfulness. Unlike Marinetti, however, he did not condemn the former and praise the latter. For Kundera, speed was ecstasy. For Marinetti, slowness was ecstasy. For both, ecstasy was undesirable.

nothing but the pure joy of feeling oneself fused with the only *divinity*" [emphasis in original].[138]

This argument about relentless speed-up was linked tightly to ideas about time and space. A desire to conquer these domains was an essential part of futurism. Rather than accelerate or compress, futurists wanted to *overcome* time and space. Speed-up, they thought, was the weapon that would dominate and demolish the dimensions. In his first manifesto, for example, Marinetti foretold a future world wherein, "Time and Space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, because we have created eternal, omnipresent speed;" in his 1916 manifesto on the new religion-morality, he argued, "Human energy centupled by speed will master Time and Space."[139]

The futurists were technophiles. They believed that machines helped harness and quicken speed. Gripped strongly by the everyday presence of motorized vehicles, they sought new ways to express the noise, pace, and rupture of rail trains, automobiles, steamships, and other forms of transportation and communication. On February 11, 1910, for example, the authors of the first "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters" pledged to "breathe in the tangible miracles of contemporary life—the iron network of speedy communications which envelops the earth, the transatlantic liners, the dreadnoughts,

[138] Ibid., 104. Marinetti believed and hoped that true maximum speed was ultimately unattainable, in part because each generation seeks to create conditions under which it exists faster than its predecessors did. "When we are forty, other younger and stronger men will probably throw us in the wastebasket like useless manuscripts—we want it to happen!" Marinetti, "Manifesto of Futurism," *Le Figaro,* February 20, 1909, in Flint, *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 51.

[139] Ibid., 49; Marinetti, "The New Religion-Morality of Speed," *L'Italia Futurista* no. 1 (11 May 1916), in Flint, *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 102.

those marvelous flights which furrow our skies, the profound courage of our submarine navigators . . . ."[140]

Of the many machines represented by futurists the heavier-than-air, fixed-wing airplane featured most prominently. Although rigid airships, dirigibles, and other lighter-than-air crafts existed, the airplane, which was less than six years old when Marinetti wrote the first futurist manifesto in 1909, was new. For futurists, it was *the* symbol of modernity for their generation. When "[t]hey will come against us, our successors," anticipated Marinetti, "[t]hey'll see us crouched besides our trembling airplanes in the act of warming our hands at the poor little blaze that our books of today will give out when they take fire from the flight of our images."[141]

The airplane transformed travel in a way that thrilled these artists and shaped their politics. First, they believed that it was ushering a new phase of speed. Whereas other modes of transportation had increased fastness, decreased travel time, and shrunk spatial distances by manipulating land and water, the airplane was, quite literally, speed *up*:

> All the fresh valleys, all the wild mountains beneath us! How many flocks of rosy sheep scattered on the slopes of the green hills that offer themselves to the sunset! . . . My soul, you have loved them! . . . No! No! Enough! No more, never again will such insipidities please you! . . . The reeds that once we shaped to shepherds' pipes make the armor of this plane! . . . Nostalgia! Triumphal intoxication! . . . Soon we'll over take the inhabitants of Gout and Paralysis because the headwinds give us speed . . . What says the anemometer? . . . The wind from ahead has a

[140] Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini, "Manifesto of the Futurist Painters" *Poesia* (11 February 1910), in *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, ed. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 183. For another example see the eleventh principle of the futurist manifesto, in which Marinetti decreed, "we will sing of the vibrantly nightly fervor of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents . . . adventurous steamers that sniff the horizon; deep-chested locomotives whose wheels paw the tracks like hooves of enormous steel horses bridled by tubing; and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd." Marinetti, "Manifesto of Futurism," *Le Figaro,* February 20, 1909, in Flint, *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 50.

[141] Ibid., 51.

> speed of one hundred kilometers an hour!—Who cares? I climb to two thousand meters to surmount the high plateau . . . Look! There are the hordes! There, there, ahead of us, already beneath our feet![142]

As this example suggested, the ability to use technology to ascend into air represented something of a shift. I deal in depth with the invention of aboveness and the politics of the transition from horizontal to vertical travel in a later chapter, but here I want to highlight the dynamic between direction and speed up. The language and punctuation of the passage played with the relationship between the past, the present, and the future. The airplane supplanted the past, in part by using the headwinds to increase its horizontal speed. Yet, we learned, the wind was still faster in the future.[143] Ultimately, however, it did not matter that the imminent "wind from ahead" was quicker. The airplane had achieved vertical speed. Ascended, it conquered nature further, seemingly severing humans from the ground. And climbing higher still into air, the airborne traveler continuously distanced, broke, and dominated the past "already beneath our feet."[144]

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[142] F. T. Marinetti, "Let's Murder the Moonshine" (1909), in Flint, *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 61.

[143] Reference to "one hundred kilometers an hour" (about sixty-two miles per hour) indicated that the speed of "[t]he wind ahead" was faster than the speed of the airplane in the present. By April 1909, when Marinetti wrote this essay, record-setting airplanes flew at a speed of about eighty kilometers per hour (approximately fifty miles per hour). On January 23, 1909, for example, the French engineer Louis Blériot designed and first flew the Blériot XI tractor monoplane at Issy-les-Moulineaux. Made of oak and poplar and covered in cloth, this plane, using pioneering technologies such as wing-warping, a horizontal stabilizer, caster landing gear, and a rudder, later flew famously forty kilometers across the English Channel from Calais to Dover in thirty-six minutes, thirty seconds on July 25, 1909. A year earlier, Wilbur Wright set a record when he flew thirty miles in forty minutes. More than likely, Marinetti, who loved modernization, innovation, and machines, knew about these well-publicized events.

[144] For other references to airspace, aboveness, and airplanes in Marinetti see "Electrical War" in which he said, "In our monoplanes we follow the fantastic growth of the forests towards the moon. Hurrah! Hurrah for those trains that run so fast down there! Freight trains, because only freight still creeps on the earth. Man, having become airborne, sets his foot there only once in a while!"; "Milan World Powerhouse of Futurist Poetry" in which he explained, "Flying with the pompous panettone in a Caproni to aerate it before we cook it/Sweetening added by the Sky . . . 'We need calories quick quick'/The enraged African sky weighing down the Giant Panettone writhes like a demented lizard . . . ."; "The New Religion-Morality of Speed" in which he declared, "Sportsmen are the first catechumens of this religion. Forthcoming destruction of houses and cities, to make way for great meeting places for cars and planes." F. T. Marinetti, "Electrical War (A Futurist Vision-Hypothesis)," in *War, the World's Only Hygiene* (1911-1915), in Flint,

References to a relationship between speed up, straightness, and the airplane peppered the artifacts of futurism. In April 1909, Marinetti wrote "Let's Murder the Moonshine," in which he celebrated the murderous delights of the airplane through overtly orientalist overtones. The story recounted the adventures of madmen and madwomen, two sets of characters who "crossed the ruins of Europe and entered Asia" where the "terrified hordes of Gout and Paralysis" chased them in "hot pursuit." To escape, the madmen and madwomen from Europe first took to a road and then a military railroad "down on peak and up another, casting themselves into every gulf and climbing everywhere in search of hungry abysses, ridiculous turns, and impossible zigzags." From there, they went "head-over-heels into Hindustan," the "vehement locomotives" overleaping the Ganges and climbing-up the Himalayan chain. As they "watched the [Indian] Ocean slowly stretch its monstrous profile," a madman yelled,

> Hurry, my brothers!—Do you want the beasts to overtake us? We must stay ahead, despite our slow steps that pump the earth's juices. . . . To the devil with these sticky hands and root-dragging feet! . . . Oh! We're nothing but poor vagabond trees! We need wings!—Then let's make airplanes.

Let's Murder the Moonshine, 114; F. T. Marinetti, "Milan World Powerhouse of Futurist Poetry," in Flint, *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 190-191; Marinetti, "The New Religion-Morality of Speed," *L'Italia Futurista* no. 1 (11 May 1916), in Flint, *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 104.

For works by other futurists that stressed the importance of the airplane and airspace see Carlo Carrà, "Graphic Rhythm with Airplane—Homage to Blériot," 1914; Hart Crane, "Cape Hatteras" in *The Bridge: A Poem* (1930; repr., New York: Liveright, 1992), 37-48; Vasily Kamensky, "Constantinople: Ferroconcrete Poem," (1914), in *Poems for the Millennium: The University of California Book of Modern and Postmodern Poetry Volume One: From Fin-de-Siècle to Negritude*, eds. Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Kazimir Malevich, "Airplane Flying," 1915; Alexei Kruchenykh, Kazimir Malevich, Mikhail Matiushin, "Victory over the Sun," 1913; Antonio Sant'Elia and F. T. Marinetti, "Manifesto of Futurist Architecture," (1 August 1914), in *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1975), 34-38.

For a different kind of analysis and survey of futurism and flight see Tim Benton, "Dreams of Machines: Futurism and l'Esprit Nouveau," *Journal of Design History* vol. 3, no. 1 (1990): 19-34; Willard Bohn, "The Poetics of Flight: Futurist 'Aeropoesia'," *MLN* vol. 121, no. 1 (2006): 207-224; Bruno Mantura, Patrizia Rosazza-Ferraris, and Livia Velani, eds., *Futurism in Flight: "Aeropittura" Paintings and Sculptures of Man's Conquest of Space, 1913-1945* (Rome: De Luca Edizioni d'Arte, 1990); Wohl, *A Passion for Wings*, esp. 125-201.

To mimic nature they colored their airplanes blue, "blue, the better to hide us from the watchful enemy and confound us with the blue of the sky." Therefore, "to the Buddha's glory, the madmen seized sky-blue mantles from ancient pagodas, to build their flying machines."[145]

They made "[f]uturist planes." They wove "the ocher-colored cloth of sailing ships" into eight cylinder, one-hundred horse power, eighty kilogram tail-steered sky blue biplanes with "a tiny machine gun that I can fire by pushing a steel button. . . ." Camouflaged, they took-off in "intoxication." Ascending, they shouted "Hurrah!" The planes soared above the grounded "enemy hordes" and the fliers exclaimed, "Look down, straight down, among the masses of greenery, the riotous tumult of that human flood in flight!" Climbing "[u]p 800 meters! Ready! . . . Fire! . . ." Straight up over south Asia, European air travelers enjoyed "the joy of playing billiards with Death!"[146]

Dangerously, the airplane made the position, perspective, and precision of the straight line possible. In this story, which Marinetti wrote before the First World War, the ability to look and fire straight down captivated the air travelers. Then, five years later, amid the first war to feature fixed-wing aircraft as weapons, Marinetti boasted, "Tortuous paths, roads that follow the indolence of streams and wind along the spines and uneven bellies of mountains, these are the laws of the earth. Never straight lines; always arabesques and zigzags. Speed finally gives to human life one of the

[145] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Marinetti, "Let's Murder the Moonshine," (1909), in Flint, *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 53-60.

[146] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid., 60-62.

characteristics of divinity: *the straight line*" [emphasis in original].[147] Although Marinetti did not mention the airplane explicitly in this passage, it appeared metonymically through the image of the god speed bestowing the straight line to humans; in "Let's Murder the Moonshine," it was the airplane which lifted and saved the mad Europeans from the terrain's "ridiculous turns and impossible zigzags" (and indeed allowed them to use the straight down perspective to kill efficiently and effectively).[148] Ripped from the ground and victorious over the physical constraints and boundaries of nature, the gift of the uninterrupted straight line was ultimately the gift of *being* at faster, higher speed.[149]

The airplane changed the definition and boundaries of speed. It accelerated time. But it simultaneously compressed and *expanded* space. The two-dimensional space of latitude and longitude shrunk, while the altitude of the airplane spread space upwards and outwards, into three-dimensions.[150] And the experience and perception of speed up was well on its way to becoming normalized as speed.

Speed Up in Britain

R. W. Flint has convincingly demonstrated that most leading artists, writers, and other intellectuals in England rejected futurism, although similar circles in several other

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[147] Marinetti, "The New Religion-Morality of Speed," *L'Italia Futurista* no. 1 (11 May 1916), in Flint, *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 103.

[148] Marinetti, "Let's Murder the Moonshine," (1909), in Flint, *Let's Murder the Moonshine*, 59.

[149] Supposedly, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line.

[150] It could be argued that the airplane expanded space into four-dimensions or six-dimensions, rather than the three of Euclidean space (width, height, length (depth); east/west [latitude], north/south [longitude], up/down [altitude]). In a relativistic context, the fourth dimension is orthogonal and thus includes time (spacetime). To know the trajectory and orientation of an airplane (that is, to figure out the degrees of freedom), we would have to include the three Euler angles and deal with six-dimensions.

countries, particularly in Russia, the United States, and continental Europe, did not.[151] Generally, this had to do with the fact that they did not take fully to futurism's fascination with machines, fixation on the advancement of industrial society, and fervor for the perpetual induction of existing at higher speeds.[152]

One of the most vociferous advocates against futurism was Wyndham Lewis, the well-known Canadian-born English writer and artist. In his autobiography, which was published in 1937 and circulated widely, Lewis ranted against Marinetti.[153] Early in the text, he recounted a fight that had erupted between them; this was a story about the relationship between quickness, national identity, and perception. Walking into a bathroom in London, Marinetti, who had just delivered a lecture, turned to Lewis and accused him of being a futurist.[154] Lewis retorted angrily,

> No . . . It has its points. But you Wops insist too much on the Machine. You're always on about these driving-belts, you are always exploding about internal combustion. We've had machines here in England for a donkey's years. They have no novelty to *us* [emphasis in original].

The reference to "Wops" and "donkey's years" suggested that Lewis used language that marked England as significantly more advanced than Italy. He aligned national progress

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[151] As R. W. Flint questioned, "Why the First Manifesto should have impressed so many Continental and Russian writers and artists but have produced only one English Futurist, the painter C. R. W. Nevinson . . . ." Flint, introduction to *Let's Now Murder the Moonshine*, 26.

[152] In the 1920s, leading artists, writers, and other intellectuals in England rejected futurism because of its connections to fascism and Mussolini.

[153] For example, Lewis said, "Marinetti for instance. You may have heard of him! It was he who put Mussolini up to Fascism," Lewis blamed sardonically. Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 33.

[154] Lewis did not date the lecture in his autobiography. More than likely, it would have occurred between 1910 and 1914, at the start of the war. During those years, Marinetti attended several futurist functions in London.

with mechanization and industrialization, which was strikingly close to the vision and ideals of futurism.[155]

The exchange was telling. As it continued, we begin to 'hear' the men banter about national identity and the experience of rate and motion; the contrast between how Marinetti and Lewis related to quickness exposed some of the hazards about the process of taking slowness out of speed and the ambiguities about the onset of speed up. Lewis, who claimed to "loathe anything that goes too quickly," for example, aligned acceleration with blindness. He believed that "[i]f it goes too quickly, it is not there. . . . I cannot see a thing that is going too quickly." Conversely, Marinetti argued that the experience of rapidity sharpened sight and increased the scope of perception. Criticizing the English, he charged,

> You have never understood your machines! You have never known the *ivresse* [intoxication] of travelling at a kilometre a minute. Have you ever traveled at a kilometre a minute? . . . It is *only* when it goes quickly that it *is* there! . . . [Y]ou *do* see it. You see it multiplied a thousand times. You see a thousand things instead of one thing. . . . You are a monist! . . . What a thing to be an Englishman [emphasis in original]![156]

From the fin de siècle through the end of the First World War, apprehensions about the everyday effects of acceleration circulated throughout Britain. As the debate between Lewis and Marinetti revealed, concerns about quickness often clustered around ideas about travel. Frequently, they were measured in term of loss.[157] In John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, for example, the protagonist and British civilian who got caught-

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[155] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid., 34. For an overview and analysis of Wyndham Lewis and his politics, see Toby Avard Foshay, *Lewis and the Avant-Garde: The Politics of the Intellect* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).

[156] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, 34-35.

[157] Lewis, for example, argued that an increase in the speed of travel caused a loss of sight.

up in a spy's plot, Richard Hannay, safeguarded the country's military secrets by using an "old bicycle," a "forty horse-powered car," "the slow Galloway train," and some other travel devices to avoid "those devilish Germans."[158] At one point, however, he attempted to hide in the rural countryside, which symbolized calm and relaxation.[159] Feeling safe, Hannay, who was about to lounge, "looked into the blue May sky, and there I saw that which set my pulses racing. . . . Low down in the south an aeroplane was climbing into the heavens. I was as certain as if I had been told that that aeroplane was looking for me . . . ."[160] Anxious but also nostalgic, he concluded,

> I did not like this espionage from the air, and I began to think less well of the countryside I had chosen for a refuge. Those heather hills were no sort of cover if my enemies were in the sky, and I must find a different kind of sanctuary.[161]

For Hannay, the above position of the airplane in motion represented exposure, the destruction of the countryside, and the loss of protection.[162] At other moments in the story, Hannay found himself in similar situations, chased by men in cars and on the train. Notably, however, only the sight and pace of airplanes made his pulse race. After the

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[158] John Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915; repr., London: Aeonian Press, 1965), 58; 44; 29; 93.

[159] Several scholars have looked at the symbolic meaning of the rural countryside in England. For examples, see David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998); Rose, *Which People's War?,* esp. 200; Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (1973; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). For a memoir about how innovations such as the motor car changed village life in England after the First World War, see Laurie Lee, *Cider with Rosie* (1959; repr., New York: Vintage, 2002).

[160] Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, 36.

[161] Ibid.

[162] These themes ran through several early science fiction stories in Britain. For examples, see E. M. Forster, "The Machine Stops" in *The Eternal Moment and Other Stories* (1909; repr., New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1928); H. G. Wells, "The Argonauts of the Air" in *The Short Stories of H. G. Wells* (1895; repr., London: Benn, 1927); H. G. Wells, *The War is in the Air and Particularly How Mr. Bert Smallways Fared* (1908; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

incident in the countryside, Hannay encountered another airplane and again internalized its rapid pace:

> Just then I heard a noise in the sky, and lo and behold there was that infernal aeroplane, flying low, about a dozen miles to the south and rapidly coming towards me. . . . Down the hill I went like blue lightening, screwing my head round, whenever I dared, to watch that damned flying machine. Soon I was on a road between hedges, and dipping to the deep-cut glen of a stream. Then came a bit of thick wood where I slackened speed.[163]

Earlier anxieties about the effects of elevated artificial airspace did not focus on speed. Rather, they were about aboveness.[164] In the early eighteenth century, for example, Jonathan Swift fantasized about air attacks and vulnerability in order to satirize the relationship between science, reason, and state power. In *Gulliver's Travels*, the king of the flying island Laputa punished his subjects, the vast majority of whom lived directly below in the dominions on the ground, by dropping large and heavy stones on them. When the grounded rioted or refused to pay taxes for thinking, they were "pelted from above with great Stones, against which they have no Defence [*sic*] but by creeping into Cellars or Caves, while the Roofs of their Houses are beaten to Pieces." If they continued to rebel then the king ordered "the last Remedy," which involved "letting the Island drop

[163] Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, 49. It is interesting to notice how Buchan, through the character of Hannay, used the word 'speed.' Unlike the futurists and other contemporaries, Buchan did not collapse the distinction between speed and types of speed. Rather, he presented speed as a rate; and, indeed, it was slowing-down not speeding-up.

[164] The sky, flying folks, and airborne objects have occupied a prominent place in British fairytales, legends, folktales, and other fictions for quite some time. It would be fascinating to examine if and how people thought about the above position and pace of dragons, fairies, souls, and other kinds of 'organic' beings who flew. For a discussion that orient us in that direction see David Cressy, "Early Modern Space Travel and the English Man in the Moon," *The American Historical Review* vol. 111, no. 4 (October 2006): 961-982.

directly upon their Heads, which makes a universal Destruction both of Houses and Men."[165]

State sponsored aerial warfare started in the late eighteenth century. France was the first to use lighter-than-air crafts strategically.[166] In 1794, during the Napoleonic Wars, generals situated hot air balloons over the Austrian army and spied. Then, throughout the nineteenth century, other countries in Europe and the Americas started to use hydrogen and air filled balloons for bombing, transportation, communication, and reconnaissance. Armed services in Britain, however, did not begin military balloon training until the 1880s. And, although they deployed squadrons of balloons during the South African War, the British state, which for centuries had constituted its authority primarily through supremacy in the maritime world, was ambivalent about air power and its advantages.[167]

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[165] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1919), 203.

In the nineteenth century, unease about travel through airspace tended to manifest around questions about ownership and the physical limits of private property. On August 3, 1802, for example, Mr. Garnerin, his wife, and a gentleman took-off from Vauxhall Gardens in a hot air balloon. Once they reached "a considerable height" Garnerin attached a parachute to a cat and dropped it from the car. The cat fell "gradual and perfectly safe" into the garden of Mr. C--- of Hampstead who "insisted on receiving three guineas for the indemnification of the trespass committed . . . ." Lord Montagu, ed., *A Short History of Balloons and Flying Machines*, 30. As David Pascoe reminded, "English common law guaranteed that the bearer of a fee title—a manor in Hounslow, West Middlesex say—that his fiefdom stretched as far as the Heavens above and deep into the Earth." Pascoe, *Airspaces*, 9.

[166] The first public spectacle to feature a lighter-than-air machine also took place in France; on June 4, 1783, Joseph-Michael and Jacques-Ètienne Montgolfier, who were brothers in the south of France, released an unmanned hot-air balloon.

[167] Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane*; L. T. C. Rolt, *The Aeronauts: A History of Ballooning, 1783-1903* (London: Longmans, 1966).

That said, in the mid to late nineteenth century, British scientists used balloon voyages for meteorological observations. Descriptions of their experimental endeavors evaluated aboveness in terms of the advantages of height: "In one ascent (July 17th) he found, when at a distance of 11,800 feet above the earth, that a band was heard; at a height of 22,000 feet, a clap of thunder was heard; and at a height of 10,070 feet, the report of a gun was heard. On one occasion, he heard the dull hum of London at a height of 9,000 feet above the city, and on another occasion, the shouting of many thousands of persons could not be heard at the height

Ambivalence towards lighter-than-air craft continued throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The advent of the airship as a machine of war and a mode of long-distance mass transportation complicated it. As Bernhard Rieger has shown, dirigibles gripped the public imagination in Britain, especially Zeppelins.[168] The immense, rigid, oblong, and elongated bodies of these aluminum airships captured interests, as people wondered and worried with rapt attention about their dangers and delights.[169] Observations often focused on length, hover, and hydrogen capacity.[170] References to speed were few, and those made tended to be about slowness or the failure to move faster. For example, in 1907, Baden-Powell noted that the engineer M. Santos Dumont had "built several more airships with which he had more or less success, but none accomplished a greater speed or distance."[171]

If remarks about speed were a subdued yet sustained silence in conversations concerning these early forms of artificial flight, when and how did they begin to percolate; when and how did they arise to prevail as reflections on rapidity?[172] The invention and development of heavier-than-air, controlled powered fixed-wing flight

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of 4,000 feet." See F. Marion, *Wonderful Balloon Ascents or The Conquest of the Skies: A History of Balloons and Balloon Voyages* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1871), esp. 205-210.

[168] Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany,* esp. 20-85.

[169] Raymond L. Rimell, *Zeppelin! A Battle for Air Supremacy in World War I* (London: Conway, 1984).

[170] For example, Baden-Powell observed, "A large airship, 164 feet long, and containing 224,000 cubic feet of hydrogen, was in Paris for Mr. Wellman to make an attempt to reach the North Pole." Major B. Baden-Powell, "Aëronautics in the Twentieth Century," in *A Short History of Balloons and Flying Machines*, ed. Montagu, 94.

[171] For other examples see passages in which he remarked, "Mr. Baldwin's 'Arrow,' though not attaining any great speed, and usually being carried away by the wind, did, on several occasion when very calm, return to its starting point." Ibid., 89; 94.

[172] My thinking here has been shaped by C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (1963; repr., Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Trouillot, *Silencing the Past.*

played an important role in this process. As we explored earlier, the advent of the airplane brought together ideas about acceleration and aboveness, helping to transform speed into speed up significantly. This change was fraught, particularly in Britain. In October 1906, for instance, when the Brazilian aviator and engineer Alberto Santos-Dumont achieved the first heavier-than-air flight observed officially in Europe, newspapers in various countries celebrated his success; however, in Britain, Lord Northcliffe, who tended to support aeronautical endeavors enthusiastically, remarked famously on the front page of his newspaper the *London Daily Mail*, "England is no longer an island." For Northcliffe, the airplane had altered the physical geography and spatial consciousness of the nation fundamentally. Concerned about defence, he anticipated a swift arrival of foreign "aerial chariots . . . descending on British soil" to stir violently the nation "sleeping soundly behind the wooden walls of England."[173] A few years later, it happened. During the First World War, airships and airplanes blasted and bombed the British Isles for the first time.[174]

As the introduction explained, the war significantly changed the meaning of flight in Britain. During the immediate postwar period, the British government started to develop a serious interest in the relationship between commercial aviation and speed. As British transport historian Vernon Sommerfield argued in 1935, "[A]eroplanes, it is true,

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[173] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see *Daily Mail*, October 1906.

[174] Tami Davis Biddle has warned against assuming that air raids panic struck the British public. Nonetheless, as she has highlighted, Lloyd George and his liberal government worried about how the war would shape opinions about aviation. Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). For the complicated, long-term psychological impact of militarized air power, see John Duggan and Henry Cord Meyer, *Airships in International Affairs, 1890-1940* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001). For a compelling discussion of how government officials in Britain reacted to the invention of the airplane see Alfred Gollin, *No Longer an Island: Britain and the Wright Brothers, 1902-1909* (London: Heinemann, 1984); Alfred Gollin, *The Impact of Air Power on the British People and Their Government, 1909-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

had reached quite a high stage of evolution before 1914, but the Great War greatly accelerated that evolution . . . . The airway is the speedway."[175]

Civilizing the Air

Nearly five months after the Treaty of Versailles was signed, towards the end of October 1919, the first British Secretary of State for Air, Winston Churchill, received a report from his newly formed Advisory Committee on Civil Aviation. It was relatively short. The document, which was six pages long, was about the development of imperial air routes. In the future, there would be several other and much longer documents on this topic. Yet, this report was unlike the others because it was one of the very first ones to ask if, why, and, to a certain extent, how the metropolitan state should build a heavier-than-air civil aviation system through the empire.[176] The decisions expressed and schemes outlined in the report and its surrounding documents shed light on a moment when the relationship between civil air travel and the cultivation of empire was not yet forged in Britain.[177] Examination of them helps us to understand how that relationship developed, rather than to treat it as foreordained and inevitable. I deal explicitly with the geography and experience of imperial routes in the next chapter, but I want to emphasize

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[175] Vernon Sommerfield, *Speed, Space and Time* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1935), xiv; 289. Also, see *The Book of Speed* (London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1934); Frank Hawks, *Speed* (New York: Brewer, Warren, and Putnam, 1931); L. K. Sillcox, *Speed! More Speed! —In Transport* (Princeton: The Guild of Brackett Lectures, 1939).

[176] The writers of the report used the terms 'commercial' and 'civil' interchangeably. Specifically, they looked at "the practicability in the immediate future of making use of the air element for everyday commercial purposes." Also and intentionally, they focused on heavier-than-air craft in this report: "This Report throughout deals only with heavier-than-air machines. The Committee propose to submit a further report dealing with the subject of the possible use of lighter-than-air craft in the development of Imperial Air Routes." From the Advisory Committee on Civil Aviation to Winston Churchill (Secretary of State for Air), *Report on Imperial Air Routes*, Cmd. 449 (30 October 1919), 3.

[177] Although not much has been written about it, it is important to note that France introduced lighter-than-air crafts into empire in the late eighteenth century. See Parkinson, *This Gilded African*, 22.

here the extent to which the decision to create a nationalized commercial aviation system pivoted on ideas about speed, the transformation of spatial control and consciousness, and the constitution of empire.[178]

There were eleven men on the advisory committee. Most of them were prominent military leaders, reputed aeronautical experts, or Conservative party politicians; in the future, several of these men would become key figures in British political history and the history of British aviation.[179] The chairman of the committee was Lord Weir of Eastwood, who was also the former Secretary of State for the Royal Air Force. The vice chairman was Sir James Stevenson, who was also a member of the Army Council and the Air Council. The committee also included the chairman of Lloyds Bank (Charles I. de Rougemont), the chairman of the Society for British Aircraft Constructors (H. White-Smith), the chief of the Air Staff (Air Marshal Sir Hugh M. Trenchard), and a professor of aerodynamics (L. Bairstow). All of the other members were government officials. They were Major-General Sir Frederick H. Sykes (Controller General of Civil Aviation), Sir Arthur Robinson (the Secretary of the Air Ministry), F. Bertram (Air Ministry and the

[178] My thinking here is influenced by the paradigmatic (albeit politically problematic) work of Carl Schmitt. In *The Nomos of the Earth*, he argued, "The struggle among European powers for land-appropriations made necessary certain divisions and distributions. These sprang from what I call *global linear thinking,* which represents a chapter in the historical development of spatial consciousness. It began with the discovery of a 'new world' and the start of the 'modern age,' and kept pace with the development of geographical maps of the globe itself. The word *global* captures the encompassing and planetary, as well as the external and superficial character of this type of thinking, based on the equation of land and sea surfaces" [emphasis in original]. What happened when air became part of the equation interests me; air, which importantly was not a surface *on* which to act per se, but an element *in* which to act *through*. How did air change global linear thinking and thus represent a new chapter in the historical development of spatial consciousness? Schmitt, *The Nomos of the* Earth, 87.

[179] For examples see Hugh Driver, *The Birth of Military Aviation: Britain, 1903-1914* (Suffolk: The Royal Historical Society and the Boydell Press. 1997); Michael Paris, "Air Power and Imperial Defence, 1880-1919," *Journal of Contemporary History* vol. 24 (1989): 209-225.

secretary for the advisory committee), Lord Inchcape of Strathnaver, and Colonel John Moore-Brabazon.[180]

When he formed the committee, Churchill asked its members to figure out "[h]ow best to organise Imperial Air Routes."[181] They answered by questioning what would make an air route imperial. The committee decided that a route was imperial if it could "enable the new transport element, namely, the air, to be made use of in speeding up communication between the various portions of the British Empire."[182]

The definition was sharply revealing. It suggested that the decision to create a state-driven air travel industry hinged on two factors: speed and geography. References to these elements were more than mere rhetorical devices and empty figures of speech. Rather, ideas about speed and geography drove the government's decision to invest in an airline.

The committee believed that speed had transformative powers. The members felt that "the element in which the air has the advantage over other means of transport is speed."[183] They argued that speed was not the same as time. Rather, it was what existed

[180] Colonel Moore-Brabazon was the first man in England to get an official pilot's license (1910). During the Second World War, Churchill made him Minister of Transport (1940-1941). Then he became the Minister of Aircraft Production (1941-1942), replacing Lord Beaverbrook. He also served as the president of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

[181] According to the report, "The Committee have given very careful consideration to the question, 'How best to organise Imperial Air Routes,' which was the question specifically referred to them for consideration and advice when they were appointed." From the Advisory Committee on Civil Aviation to Winston Churchill (Secretary of State for Air), *Report on Imperial Air Routes*, Cmd. 449 (30 October 1919), 3.

[182] Ibid.

[183] Ibid., 5.

in motion, between different indexes of time. For the committee, speed was a discrete dimension: "the time occupied in transit."[184]

The idea that speed was related to the amount of time it took to get from place to place was not new. According to Schivelbusch, speed first became associated with "transport time" in the early nineteenth century.[185] The invention and increased pace of the locomotive-driven railroad train shrank travel-times and distances. As a result and through a series of intricate cultural transformations, the concept of speed became synonymous with the compression of time and space.[186]

By the time Churchill's Advisory Committee on Civil Aviation met nearly a century later, the meaning of speed was starting to shift. Delegates on the committee turned speed into an object. The idea that speed now existed in-between different instances of time expanded the definition of speed beyond that of duration, measurement, and rate. It was a subtle, but important change because it suggested that speed meant more than fastness to the delegates; it was in the process of becoming an entity in its own right. As such, speed could be manufactured, marketed, controlled, quickened, and slowed.[187]

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[184] Ibid.

[185] As Schivelbusch explained, the "annihilation of space and time was the early-nineteenth-century characterization of the effect of railroad travel. The concept was based on the speed that the new means of transport was able to achieve. A given spatial distance, traditionally covered in a fixed amount of travel time, could suddenly be dealt with in a fraction of that time; to put it another way, the same amount of time permitted one to cover the old spatial distance many times over." Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 33.

[186] Writing in an Einsteinian world, Schivelbusch also noted, perhaps anachronistically, that speed was relative in the nineteenth century; travel by train was fast because travel by other means was slower. "The average traveling speed of the early railway in England was twenty to thirty miles an hour, or roughly three times the speed previously achieved by stagecoaches." Ibid.

[187] For example, in 1936, George Edward Woods Humphery, the Managing Director of Imperial Airways, described "The Price of Speed." He argued, "Air transport offers a speed unattainable by any other means of transport, and therefore will always have work to do which can be done in no other way. It is not cheap

The committee was extremely occupied with the acceleration of speed.[188] The intensity of this concern must be understood in relation to the preoccupation that the committee had with the geography of empire. In spite of the fact that the empire was a single unit, the delegates decided to select and focus on a few territories. Specifically,

> [t]hey have considered Canada, Newfoundland, South Africa, India, Australia, and New Zealand, as the main outlying portions of the British Empire (and to this they would add Egypt) to which they should direct their attention, and they thought it best to confine themselves to the question of the establishment of main trunk lines connecting these portions of the Empire with the United Kingdom by air.[189]

The choice was strategic and telling. India and Egypt aside, the delegates preferred to concentrate on the dominions, which was a rather recently formed political cluster in the empire.[190] They conceived of air routes as forms of control; the dominions were

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transport, but it is cheap speed for the carriage of passengers, mails, and high-grade commodities." *The Times* (London), "Dominion of the Air: Future of Empire Service," May 18, 1936. LH 15/3/120, at the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London, U.K., (hereinafter, LHCMA). Later, in 1958, Mr. L. F. Nicholson of the Royal Aircraft Establishment announced they had the "realization that speed was a saleable commodity in transport." *The Times* (London), "Air Travel at 3,000 M. P. H.: Speed a 'Saleable Commodity'," August 29, 1958.

[188] "The Committee are advised, for example, that the time occupied in transit from Egypt to India by sea, namely, nine days at a moderate computation, could be reduced by not less than three-and-a-half days if the transit were made by air, and in the future might be still further reduced." From the Advisory Committee on Civil Aviation to Winston Churchill (Secretary of State for Air), *Report on Imperial Air Routes*, Cmd. 449 (30 October 1919), 5.

[189] Ibid., 3.

[190] At an Imperial Conference in 1907, representatives from Britain and the colonies divided the empire's territories into two groups: the dominions of Britain and the British colonies. Although the empire was a single unit, the reconfiguration of its political geography into two groups threatened to diminish Parliament's power. While legal control over the colonies continued to be exercised directly of indirectly by Westminster, the newly recognized dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Newfoundland were starting to claim a political right to self-governing status within the empire. The Colonial Laws Validity Act of 1865 gave to the British monarch and Parliament the right to disallow and block all colonial legislation that challenged either English common law or constitutional practices. When the emerging dominions made claims to self-governing status within the empire, this statue secured the right of British officials to obstruct dominion affairs. Parliament, as well as the British monarch, rarely exercised this right. For a more extended treatment of the primacy and changing role of Parliament in empire building, see Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 7-14; Jeffrey Goldsworthy, *The Sovereignty of Parliament: History and Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 229-235.

becoming semi-autonomous, self-governing nations and the committee wanted to set-up a direct transportation line between each territory and Britain. In its imaginary, every line would keep each territory bound to Britain, despite transformations within the political structure of the empire.

The lines were bonds of speed up. On the one hand, the committee had created a spatial hierarchy; it focused on building seven main trunk lines *straight* to Britain, rather than to circuit them through other places:

> Such trunk lines would no doubt in course of time be supplemented, if not preceded, by local lines connecting up the various Dominions and Colonies internally, and with other Dominions and Colonies, but this portion of the problem is one which the Committee do not conceive themselves to be called upon to deal except on specific reference by the Secretary of State.[191]

On the other hand, it had constructed a temporal hierarchy; it aimed to reduce the amount of time occupied in transit between particular places. The geography of empire was shifting. It was being oriented upwards. It was also constricting inwards. If enacted, the plans devised by the committee would help to give rise to new global networks of high and low speed. If established, the routes it envisioned would alter the spatial and temporal distance between above and below, the airborne and the grounded, fundamentally. The decision to make "use of the air element for everyday commercial purposes" was closely connected to the desire to use rapidity to reconfigure imperial bonds.[192]

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[191] From the Advisory Committee on Civil Aviation to Winston Churchill (Secretary of State for Air), *Report on Imperial Air Routes*, Cmd. 449 (30 October 1919), 3.

[192] Ibid.

Conclusion

Often the term 'speed' is used to refer to fastness, hurriedness, and quickness. However, speed also refers to slowness, unhurriedness, and gradualness. This chapter asked how did speed, speed up; and, how did speed up become speed. It questioned how speed lost its sense of slowness, and it argued for its return.

Aviation dramatically altered the meaning of speed. High altitudes and the physical geography of the atmosphere allowed the airplane to increase the rate of transport and achieve directness. The airplane helped speed-up speed, and it literally turned speed up.

In Britain, speed up linked, as it was shaped by, airline travel and empire.[193] After the First World War, the British government contemplated whether it would develop a commercial aviation industry. The desire to transform the speed and geography of empire impelled it to decide in the affirmative. Officials wanted to use commercial air power to create rapid, direct communication and transportation lines between some parts of the empire. Others were excluded. Knowingly, they installed a new temporal and spatial hierarchy in the world. The dominions and India were speeding up, which meant that the colonies were slowing down.

The literature on speed is riddled with works that reference the universal compression of time and the ubiquitous acceleration of life. In them, transportation and communication devices often appear as agents of rapidity, which is to some extent

[193] In radically different ways, Lenin and Gandhi linked rapidity to imperialism. Mahatma Gandhi, "Hind Swaraj, Modern Civilization, and Moral Progress," in *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi: Civilization, Politics, and Religion*, vol. 1, ed. Raghavan Iyer (1909; repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), esp. 219-222; V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916; repr., New York: International Publishers, 1979), esp. 123-128.

right.[194] However, part of the perverse work of speed up—and the technologies enabling it—is its ability to mask the fact that speed is a rate and a relationship. Through airline travel, it carved and reordered the empire. Their confluence ensured that some people and places would exist in radically different dimensions.

[194] For additional examples, see David P. Billington and David P. Billington Jr., *Power, Speed, and Form: Engineers and the Making of the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Gleick, *Faster*.

CHAPTER THREE

CHANGING PLANES: THE VIEW FROM ABOVE

The last chapter examined the relationship between air travel, speed, and empire. This chapter explores how British men and women experienced that relationship. In an undated essay called "Flying over London," Virginia Woolf chronicled her first flight. It begins with a description of fifty to sixty airplanes grounded "like a flock of grasshoppers" in a shed. The pilot, Flight-Lieutenant Hopgood, made the Moth plane's propeller engine "roar," and Woolf described ascending and vanishing into the clouds above England. She watched houses, animals, gardens, streets, and other aspects of landscape become "swept into long spirals and curves of pink and purple," as the vertical gap between the plane and the ground grew. "Everything had changed its value seen from the air," she proclaimed. Then the open-carriage bi-plane turned downwards, and Woolf awed as "the fairy earth appeared" beneath her. Descending through the clouds, she noticed how the land "rose towards us with extreme speed, broadening and lengthening." Mesmerized, she observed how details on the ground grew closer and clearer. From above, she watched a horse gallop and noticed that "all speed and size were so reduced that the speed of the horse seemed very, very slow, and its size minute." She saw "millions of insects moving" turn quickly into "men of business." Woolf concluded, "one could indeed now see the tops of the heads of separate men and could

distinguish a bowler from a cap . . . which was an employer, which was a working man. And one had to change perpetually air values into land values."[195]

The flight never happened. At the end of the essay, we discover that Hopgood found a flaw when he roared the engine and cancelled the flight. However, at the start of the essay, we learn that "[a] thousand pens have described the sensation of leaving earth."[196] Strikingly, Woolf drew on these accounts to imagine her own.

This chapter uses real and imagined air travel stories to explore how the first generation of airline passengers experienced flight. I argue that these accounts played an important role in turning ordinary British subjects into what Peter Fritzsche has appropriately called "a nation of fliers."[197] As the last chapter demonstrated, in Britain and the empire, government-sponsored air travel developed in the ongoing aftermath of the First World War. During the war, lighter-than-air airships and heavier-than-air airplanes bombed Britain for the first time. As Michael Paris has convincingly argued, the war made the meaning of airspace and airborne technologies deeply ambiguous in Britain.[198] In the public imagination, the war had transformed aerial machines from ethereal and titillating spectacles to dangerous and deadly weapons.

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[195] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Virginia Woolf, "Flying over London" in *Collected Essays*, vol. 4 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1967), 167-172. Importantly, the grounded have a very different view. Several decades after Woolf flew, a four-year-old girl, who was flying for the first time, asked a woman on-board, 'When do we get smaller?' From the perspective of the grounded, the girl's question makes sense; looking skyward from below, airplanes grow smaller (and sometimes disappear) as they ascend. Ira Glass, "Kid Logic," (includes an excerpt from an interview with therapist), *This American Life*, NPR, March 2, 2007. As David Lodge put it, "In the sky the planes look very small." David Lodge, *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* (1975; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 9.

[196] Woolf, "Flying over London," 167.

[197] Fritzsche, *A Nation of Fliers*.

[198] Paris, *Winged Warfare*.

After war, how does a state make a nation and empire of fliers? The stories examined in this chapter appeared in the *Imperial Airways Gazette* (hereinafter, the *Gazette*), which was the airline's first official magazine. Often, the *Gazette* featured excerpts from passenger diaries, letters, tales, and other personal accounts. The narratives selected, published, and circulated exposed the escapades of air travelers. They revealed where passengers went, how they flew, and what they experienced; their disposition, sentiment, perception, and attitude. As Simon Gikandi has reminded, these kinds of travel writing practices existed long before the twentieth century. They were a crucial part of British imperial culture, and they were one of the many devices that travelers through empire used to record, preserve, and share their adventures with people 'at home.'[199]

As an historical record, air travel narratives shed light on how the first generation of passengers understood and experienced commercial flight after war. Histories that focus on the development of commercial aviation culture between the First and Second World Wars have tended to call this period 'The Golden Age.'[200] However, this kind of classification happens retrospectively, through hindsight. Consequently, it often reveals more about travel practices in the present and less about those practices in the past. As documents, the stories examined in this chapter return us to a moment when passengers

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[199] Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), esp. 84-118. Also, see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992). For a discussion of English travel narratives from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Richmond Barbour, *Before Orientalism: London's Theater of the East 1576-1626* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Gerald MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[200] For examples, see Ron Dick and Dan Patterson, *Aviation Century: The Golden Age* (Boston: Boston Mills Press, 2004); R. G. Grant, *Flight: 100 Years of Aviation* (New York: DK Publishing, 2002); Tom Quinn, *Wings Over the World: The Golden Age of Air Travel* (London: Aurum Press, 2003).

did not know if the nascent airline industry would last. They did not know they were living in a so-called Golden Age. Often first-hand accounts, the documents help to expose how people at the time felt about the flights they took.

The travel narratives also open insight into some of the different tactics Imperial Airways used to promote and sell its services. Published in a company magazine, the writings were deployed to encourage people to view air travel as a form of public transportation. Scripted at a time when flying was not an 'everyday' or an 'ordinary' activity, the stories and the magazine return us to a time when airlines and governments were trying to establish and normalize commercial aviation as a practice.[201] The narratives, as well as the images, advertisements, announcements, and other articles in the *Gazette*, help us to glimpse some of the ways that British men, women, and children learned how to travel by air.

The *Gazette* was more than an entertaining editorial magazine. It was also a guidebook. It put ideas and images about nationhood and empire, selfhood and otherness on display. It sought to transform readers into tourists by telling them where to go, what to see, and, importantly, how to get there. It told them how to be British air travelers and explained—as it indeed helped to create—a system of rules and etiquette for the new form of transportation. It invoked, perpetuated, and generated a "grammar of difference."[202] As Inderpal Grewal has shown in her work on nineteenth-century British museums, "guidebooks directed the public." They created a "very selective, dichotomized taxonomy . . . which presented not only a history of the whole world but

[201] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1979; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Thomas Dumm, *A Politics of the Ordinary* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

[202] Cooper and Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony," 3.

also that of England, for it inculcated the opposition of Self and Other, subject and object."[203]

The first part of this chapter provides some background information on the *Gazette*. Little information exists on the history of the magazine. However, what does exist hints at where the *Gazette* might have circulated, who might have read it, who and what might have flown on Imperial Airways, and why consumers might have wanted to use the airline's services.

The chapter's second and third sections examine different types of airline travelers. The second focuses on airmail, a broad category that included letters and other forms of personal correspondence as well as commercial cargo. The third looks at representations of the ideal air passenger. Together, the two sections suggest that depictions of mail and passengers worked in tandem to create an airline travel industry and culture. Close examination of these themes reveals that the production of air mindedness was deeply rooted in the postwar politics of class and gender in Britain.

Between the world wars, the country experienced a series of economic recessions, an extensive economic depression, high unemployment rates, and widespread labor strikes. Few people could afford to use the different international and intra-empire services offered by the airline and, according to a government survey conducted in 1936, "no strong demand for fast travel seems to exist" for domestic journeys.[204] Simultaneously, from Liberal government of Lloyd George after the First World War to

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[203] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 90.

[204] Air Ministry, *The Report of the Committee to Consider the Development of Civil Aviation in the United Kingdom, Accounts and Papers,* Cmd. 5351 (January 1937), 26.

the Conservative government of Neville Chamberlain before the Second World War, several state funded institutions, such as the British Empire Film Society and the Post Office, sponsored a variety of cultural events, which were designed to cultivate public interest in the new airline industry.[205] For example, in fall 1919, the government subsidized fares for short "joy-rides" over Britain, which allowed working-class adults and children to experience the thrill of an airplane trip firsthand.[206] Despite such efforts to cultivate a widespread interest in flying, women were frequently excluded from the image of the ideal airline passenger during this period.

The fourth and fifth sections concentrate on the range of stories airline travelers told about their experiences on the empire routes. Together, these sections reveal that geography and the shift from horizontal to vertical travel, from surface to air transport, profoundly shaped how the first generation of airline passengers viewed the empire. The fourth looks at the experience of flying above land and discovers that airborne passengers fixated on the happenings *outside* their windows, below on the ground; they described long-distance flights as exotic adventures. The fifth looks at the experience of flying above water and learns that airborne passengers indulged in the amusements offered *inside* the cabins; they described sustained flights over water as luxurious and entertaining. Finally, the last section uses this dual vision of flight to interrogate the

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[205] For a useful discussion of early aviation films and imperial propaganda, see essays in Michael Paris, ed., *The First World War and Popular Cinema: 1914 to the Present* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000); Gordon H. Pirie, "Cinema and British Imperial Civil Aviation, 1919-1939," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* vol. 23, no. 2 (2003): 117-131.

[206] C. G. Grey, "Joy-Riding and Commercial Aviation," *The Illustrated London News*, September 9, 1919. The flying circus was another type of pleasure flight popularized during the interwar period. By the 1930s, flying circuses were highly organized and well attended. During the summer months, they toured the country and performed various aerial displays and stunts. At the end of the day, paying customers often received short pleasure flights. Air Ministry, *The Report of the Committee to Consider the Development of Civil Aviation in the United Kingdom, Accounts and Papers,* Cmd. 5351 (January 1937), 8-9.

tension between airline travel as adventure and airline travel as ordinary. It suggests that the relationship between the unfamiliar and the mundane played a crucial role in generating and maintaining a prevailing industry of fliers.

The Gazette

In July 1928, Imperial Airways launched the premier issue of the *Gazette*, which was almost four years after the airline was founded. Approximately six to eight pages long, it was a monthly magazine and the last issue was probably released sometime in the fall of 1939.[207]

From its inception, the *Gazette* was an educational tool. According to the company, it was designed to promote the airline and its services, and to tell readers about the latest innovations in the air transportation. It was "A Magazine devoted to the Welfare & Interests of all concerned with the work of Imperial Airways & Commercial Aviation generally" [emphasis in original].[208]

It is difficult to know who read the *Gazette*. According to the subscription details, the magazine was free. Adults could write to the company's publicity office in London and obtain a monthly subscription. Schoolteachers and headmasters could request copies for students and other children. Moreover, the popular British circular *Aeroplane* included the *Gazette* as a supplement magazine from June 1934 to April 1935, which would have expanded its readership.

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[207] I thank Brian Riddle at the Royal Aeronautical Society for helping me to clarify this point. It is difficult to determine precisely when the airline released last issue of the *Gazette*, but it is likely to have been sometime between August and November 1939; in September 1939, the British government, having formally declared war on Germany, banned all forms of non-military aircraft from flying; by November 1939, the government had terminated Imperial Airways and created the British Overseas Airways Corporation.

[208] The phrase appeared on the cover of the *Gazette* from July 1928 to April 1930.

It is unclear whether the *Gazette* circulated outside of Britain for sustained periods of time. Frequently, its articles, advertisements, and announcements addressed potential passengers; typically, the authors conceived of their audience as metropolitan British.[209] For example, one advertisement for flights to continental Europe explained, "The diagram we give below may be of value to our readers when making up their minds the way they should travel between London and various important cities in Western Europe."[210]

By the time this advertisement appeared in September 1937, it was possible to purchase tickets for flights that did not originate, stopover, or terminate in England. For example, Desmond Young, who was the editor of the famous Indian newspaper *Lucknow Pioneer*, was the first passenger to fly from India to South Africa in the spring of 1935.[211] Although a short article about Young's flight appeared in the *Gazette*, the majority of stories, advertisements, maps, timetables, and other narratives tended to focus on services that left from and returned to London. Sometimes, they explicitly concerned customers who lived in the dominions and colonies, which suggests that the magazine did circulate throughout the empire. An article on the Pageant of England celebration in Slough, for

[209] An article from December 1935 offers a notable exception. It boasted that doctors and dentists in South Africa had asked the airline to send copies of the *Gazette*, in part to display them in their patient waiting rooms. "Imperial Airways Gazette Makes Dentistry Pleasant," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, December 1935, 7.

[210] "Fly to European Capitals," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, September 1937, 5.

[211] "India to South Africa by Imperial Airways," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, April 1935, 4.

instance, included information on flights for "intending travellers by Imperial Airways from Europe and the Empire."[212]

Company notices reveal that the *Gazette* was also a staff magazine. Known as "the official organ" of the airline, the magazine standardized communication between owners and employees, some of whom worked in foreign and colonial offices.[213] Mostly, it informed agents about new fare schedules, routes, services, and other operations.

The Perfect Passenger

Who or what did Imperial Airways actively imagine and portray as its ideal passenger?[214] Subsidized air transportation developed in tandem with the opening-up of the steamship travel market. Lorraine Coons and Alexander Varias have shown that the end of the First World War marked a major turning point in the culture of steamship travel in Britain. In the early 1920s, an increasing number of middle-class tourists took advantage of the thriving steamship travel industry; an increasing number of working-class adults and adolescent boys also traveled on these massive ocean liners, but often one-way as immigrants and stowaways.[215] Angela Woollacott has revealed that steamship travel was also popular in the dominions, as an increased number of white

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[212] "The Pageant of England," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, April 1935, 5. It is important to note that the article sought to appeal to customers in Europe and the empire, but it also offered "a special invitation is extended . . . for Britons abroad to take part in it." Ibid.

[213] "The Importance of Imperial Airways Gazette," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, April 1933, 1.

[214] Airlines fly not only passengers, but also freight. As Barry Lopez put it, at "D. F. Malan International Airport in Cape Town, I watched a six-man crew load freight—Cape wines, salted snook headed for New York fish counters, 3,056 pounds of ostrich meat bound for Brussels, and one Wheaton terrier named Diggs for Toronto." Barry Lopez, "Flight," in *About This Life: Journeys on the Threshold of Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 85.

[215] Lorraine Coons and Alexander Varias, *Tourist Third Cabin: Steamship Travel in the Interwar Years* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), esp. 25-64.

women sailed from Australia to England to look for work during this period. The steamship had a profound impact on how these women self-identified as part of the modern, white colonizing class. As their vessels sailed from the Pacific to the North Atlantic in four to eight weeks, they stopped at several different imperial ports. A stopover in places such Bombay and Cape Town allowed female passengers to alight and experience other parts of the colonial empire directly.[216]

In the 1920s, British men and women did not believe that airlines could rival and eclipse ocean liners and trains, and become the dominant form of public transportation. When Imperial Airways started to offer a new form of mobility in the mid-1920s, the steamship was an established and recognizable icon of the modern. In Britain and elsewhere, the purchase of a first-class ticket for travel on ships like the Queen Mary epitomized the height of leisure and luxury. Comparatively, the railway journey symbolized function and reliability in Britain; the car represented privilege and prestige.[217] As Robert Wohl has suggested, popular interest in aviation rarely concerned mass transportation or commercial advantage. People did not want to risk loosing "the comfort, safety, regularity, and relative rapidity of trains for city-to-city journeys and steamships for transoceanic voyages."[218]

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[216] Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. 19-46.

[217] Bernhard Rieger, "'Fast Couples': Technology, Gender, and Modernity in Britain and Germany during the Nineteen-Thirties," *Historical Research* vol. 76, no. 193 (August 2003): 364-388; Rieger, *Technology and Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany,* esp. 20-50; John K. Walton, "Power, Speed, and Glamour: The Naming of Express Steam Locomotives in Inter-war Britain," *Journal of Transport History* vol. 26, no. 2 (September 2005): 1-19.

[218] Wohl, *A Passion for Wings*, 255. Woollacott made a similar point when she argued, "While the commercial airplane eclipsed the steamship starting in the 1930s, for the most of this period [the 1920s] it was the steamship that represented power and speed." Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 23.

During the 1930s, public attitudes about commercial air travel shifted. Ideas about geography, trade, and high speed played an important role in helping them to do so. In 1936, the Air Ministry carried out an extensive survey of the domestic air travel market in Britain and discovered that a "paucity of traffic" existed in the skies. According to the report, the public felt that "the air line could offer the greatest advantages in time." However, most people still preferred to use the different surface transportation systems, which were "already highly developed." One exception was "over water" air services. The public was "anxious and willing to use them" because they offered "greater convenience and speed." Another exception was routes connecting "principal manufacturing and trading centers." The Ministry found an already existing "sufficient volume of travellers willing to use the air" for commercial purposes; on these routes, "the demand for speed is at once most evident." The report also noted that Imperial Airways received "remunerative business" when these air links "are sufficiently long" and the airline provided "transport at high speed."[219]

From the beginning, Imperial Airways focused on developing airmail and freight services, especially within the empire. Flights on the empire routes carried composite loads: passengers and the mail. The heavier weight of the composite load demanded that Imperial Airways employ large aircraft, which helped cultivate air-mindedness by making airline travel appear more attractive to the public. As Lieutenant-Colonel H. Burchall, the General Manager of Imperial Airways said, "There is no doubt, also, that large aircraft have attracted to the air passengers who, but for comfort and security,

[219] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Air Ministry, *The Report of the Committee to Consider the Development of Civil Aviation in the United Kingdom, Accounts and Papers,* Cmd. 5351 (January 1937), 26.

would never have deserted motorcars, trains, and steamers . . . ." Composite loads also increased the frequency and cost-efficiency of flights. On the empire routes, the amount of mail varied in two directions. The amount leaving Britain for the dominions and colonies was "considerably greater" than the amount going from them to Britain. As Burchall explained, "a 'mails only' service would leave the home-bound [Britain] service with unsaleable capacity." Moreover, the separation of mails and passengers would "lead to the frequency of the services being halved and, instead of a weekly service for passengers and mails, mails would be carried one week and passengers the other." Decreased frequency effected the value of speed. Burchall calculated,

> No matter how much the mail services were accelerated—through the elimination of considerations of passengers' comfort [read as small aircraft] and so on—the infrequency of the service would more than counter-balance the improved speed. It will be obviously better on a long route to have a service once a week of moderate speed that a service once a fortnight at high speed. . . . In spite of this there is, and always will be, a minority who will put speed before every other consideration.[220]

In almost every issue of the *Gazette*, it printed at least one article about the importance of airmail. These articles tended to describe airmail as a "vision of cheap and rapid delivery" and as a "contribution to Empire corporate unity."[221] Regularly, they expressed enthusiasm for the weight of airmail. For example, in February 1933, the *Gazette* reprinted an article from the *Times* on the Postmaster General and the growing airmail service. The Postmaster General praised British patrons for setting a new airmail traffic record in 1932. A twenty percent increase, he celebrated and attempted to capture

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[220] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Lieutenant-Colonial H. Burchall, "Organisation of Air Routes: International Complications, Transport of Composite Loads," *Imperial Airways Gazette,* August 1934, 2. This article circulated widely. It appeared in the *Times* and as a supplement to the *Aeroplane*. Imperial Airways also printed and distributed it as a pamphlet because "we [Imperial Airways] believe the article will be of general interest to our readers . . . ." Ibid.

[221] "Extension of the Empire Air Mail Programme," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, August 1938, 2.

the significance of this achievement in numbers. He mentioned "the 52 ½ tons" of letters that flew from Britain to the colonies in 1931; within a year, it amounted to "64 tons."[222] He noted that the "Christmas mail dispatched to India by air during December amounted to about three tons; the mail of 10 December alone weighed over a ton."[223] Then, he compared the letter airmail traffic for 1931 and 1932 in a two-column chart. A dazzle of numbers showcased the "117,350" pounds of letters flown in 1931 and the "143,000" pounds of letters flown in 1932.[224] It was a "RECORD WEIGHT OF LETTERS" [emphasis in original].[225]

Weight measured significance. In his enthusiasm, the Postmaster General paid close attention to tonnage, which suggests it was the heaviness of the accumulative letters that set a record and signified importance; alternatively, he could have calculated the increase in airmail traffic in terms of the actual number of letters flown. In this context, heavy weight and tonnage symbolized power, progress, and the modern, and references to them helped establish airline travel as an icon of those symbols.[226]

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[222] "Air Mail Traffic," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, February 1933, 2.

[223] Ibid.

[224] The chart also recorded that the weight of letters sent from Britain in 1931 was (measured in pounds): Indian Air Service 52,500; African Air Service 5,500; Other Imperial Services 15,900; Foreign Extra European Services 7,350; Continental Services 36,100. In 1932, it was (measured in pounds): Indian Air Service 60,000; African Air Service 15,900; Other Imperial Services 14,300; Foreign Extra European Services 10,100; Continental Services 42,700. Ibid.

[225] Ibid.

[226] In her analysis of steamship architecture, Woollacott found that size, weight, and tonnage were important signifiers of modernity. However, they functioned in steamship and airline culture differently. In steamship culture, "[i]n addition to larger size indicating a smoother voyage, it is likely that tonnage was used metonymically to represent the ship's age, capacity, and standard of amenities." For airlines, I would argue that it was the combination of high speed and long distances, heavy weight and tonnage that helped to turn commercial aviation into the symbol of modern travel by the late 1930s. Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 21.

An article from the first edition of the *Gazette* provides another example of the symbolic importance of heavy weight and tonnage. In July 1928, Imperial Airways boasted that it had flown approximately 78,000 passengers, 3,000 tons of freight, and 3,500,000 miles since its inception in 1924.[227] Unlike the Postmaster General who used the physical gap between places to evoke a sense of the vast space traveled (for example, the Christmas mail flew from Britain to India), the airline used miles to measure distance. In this case, it was the total number of people, the accumulative weight of freight, and the accretion of miles that signified significance. A completely new industry, this form of measurement might have been a way to build confidence in and suggest the durability of "the chosen instrument of the state."[228]

Trust was one of the main themes used to encourage people to send post by airmail. Often, protection was the definition of trust mobilized by the airline. To make airspace appear trustworthy and not vulnerable, Imperial Airways stressed that its sustained airborne position allowed the company to avoid the hazards of transshipment. For example, an Imperial Airways advertisement from the early 1930s compared air and surface transport, and emphasized the differences between them. It concluded that airmail was "quicker . . . so easy." It was "so safe."[229]

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[227] "Cross Channel Statistics," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, July 1928, 1. Comparatively, in its first year, Imperial Airways carried about 13,478 passengers and approximately 508 tons of cargo. It operated 4,677 flights and flew a 890,000 miles. Directorate of Civil Aviation (Air Ministry), *Annual Report on the Progress of Civil Aviation, Reports,* Cmd. 2489 (April 1924-March 1925), 30.

[228] The "chosen instrument of the state" was the official designation of Imperial Airways. For examples of the airline using this phrase to promote air-mindedness in Britain and the empire, see "The Empire Air Mail Programme: World Testimony," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, May 1937, 2.

[229] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see "The Advantages of Sending Your Letters and Freight by Air," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, July 1934, 8.

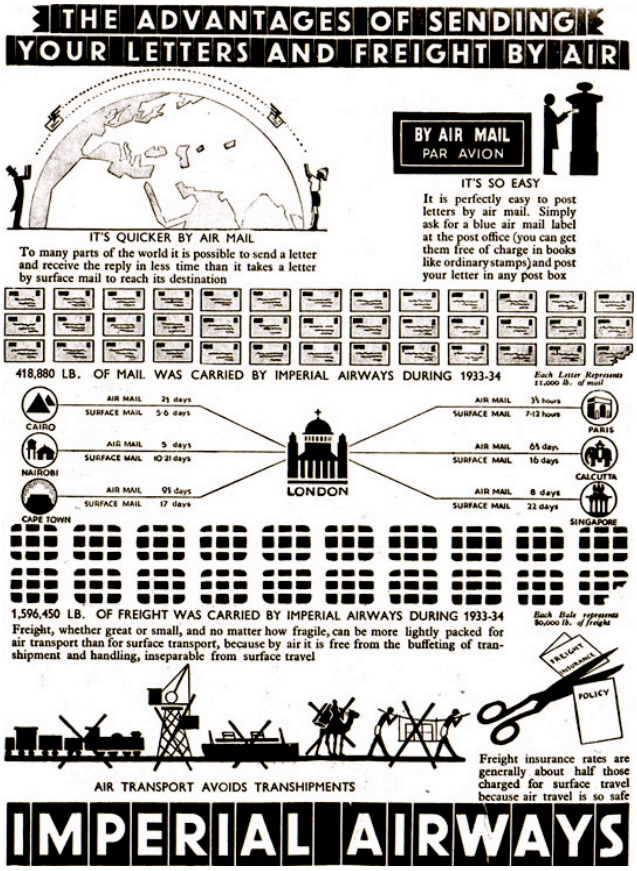

Fig. 3.1. "The Advantages of Sending Your Letters and Freight by Air," *Gazette*, July 1934.

The advertisement was a promotional device. It declared rapidity, effortlessness, and security as "THE ADVANTAGES OF SENDING YOUR LETTERS AND FREIGHT BY AIR" [emphasis in original]. To underscore the point, the advertisement illustrated the advantages (see fig. 3.1). Visually, it told two stories. In one story, letters and freight traveled the world by surface transport and transshipment. They left from London; images of a postbox, top hat and tails, and St. Paul's Cathedral made this clear. They moved by train, rig, ship, camel, and natives, and arrived in Paris, Calcutta, Singapore, Cape Town, Nairobi, and Cairo. Because they traveled by surface and transshipment, the letters and freight needed an insurance policy for protection. In the

second story, letters and freight travel by air. They also left from London and arrived in the dominions and colonies; images of landmarks and an imperial uniform implied this. They moved as if by magic. No airplane appeared in the advertisement. Once mail was placed in a postbox, wings attached, and the mail literally dashed back and forth across the globe. The air offered it protection; a scissor cut the insurance policy in half.

The advertisement was also an educational device. People needed to learn how to prepare and pack airmail parcels, and they needed to learn how to use the new postal system. To teach them, Imperial Airways distributed pamphlets, sponsored exhibitions, and gave lecture materials to schools. Some advertisements also contained directives and systematic instructions. For example, the abovementioned advertisement, told readers where to find the new blue airmail labels, and it explained how to use them.[230]

Along with protection, airmail was connected to ideas about global ethics, imperial unity, and national obligations. Some articles in the *Gazette* linked commercial aviation and internationalism. Frequently, they stressed that improved communication networks between the metropole, dominions, and colonies, as well as with other nation-states, could facilitate peace. For example, in 1933, the chairman of Imperial Airways, Sir Eric Geddes, described the airline's "Empire Mission" to guests and shareholders at the company's annual meeting. Focusing on the future of global relations, he perhaps invoked ideas about a new kind of civilizing mission when he said,

> To-day we reside in a world which is very disturbed. But there is a majority amongst intelligent people who do realize that the future of civilisation depends

[230] The advertisement explained, "It is perfectly easy to post letters by air mail. Simply ask for a blue air mail label at the post office (you can get them free of charge in books like ordinary stamps) and post your letter in any post box." Ibid.

> upon the spreading of a closer international understanding. The essential link in such a bond is transport.[231]

During the 1930s, as tensions between nation-states intensified, an increasing number of articles on airmail as a conduit for peace appeared in the *Gazette*. In the February 1937 issue, one article declared that air services were the fastest way to increase contact across cultures and produce the "happy state." A reference to the work of Samuel Butler, the seventeenth-century British poet, the happy state was a place. Its motto was "the more people see of each other the less likely they are to disagree." It was where "the spread of knowledge" induced "goodwill":

> Contact can only be gained by communication in some form or other, and so it is essential that the methods of communication should be continuously improved throughout the world because the easier and the quicker people can see and correspond with each other the less likelihood there is of a misunderstanding.[232]

Airmail helped create an air-minded British culture. The movement of personal post, money orders, and commercial freight was an important part of how air travel became a part of daily British life.[233] Alongside mail, other forms of cultural work helped distance the sky from the shadow of militarism and turn it into a space through which people would want to move. As the aggressive and accusatory questions of an

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[231] Sir Eric Geddes, "The Annual General Meeting of Imperial Airways," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, November 1933, 2.

[232] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see "The World Travels by Air," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, February 1937, 4.

[233] On November 15, 1932, Imperial Airways and the British Post Office started an airmail money order service. The government hoped that the new service would move money and purchased goods around the empire faster. An imperial scheme, money orders could only be sent from a colony or dominion to Britain and Ireland. The first airmail money order flew from Kenya to London on the first day. For an announcement, see "Money Orders by Air Mail," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, January 1933, 3.

Imperial Airways advertisement for growth exhibited, "why don't YOU fly? why don't YOU post by air? why don't YOU send freight by air?"[234]

Trafficking the Sky

Imperial Airways tried to turn the desires, expectations, and gaze of the British traveler away from the surface and towards the sky.[235] One way was to make airplanes seem like ocean liners. A sustained survey of advertisements, photographs, and columns in the *Gazette* revealed that Imperial Airways tended to compare not contrast the design, aesthetics, and prestige of its fleet to those of the more established steamship companies and their vessels. In one article, for instance, the airline described its new fleet of Empire class flying boats as the "Queen Marys of the Air."[236] Owned by the famous Cunard White Star Line, the Queen Mary was one of the fastest transatlantic steamships, and it made its highly publicized maiden voyage on May 27 1936, a few months before the article appeared in the *Gazette*; perhaps, Imperial Airways tried to benefit from the celebrated ocean liner's fame? Like the Queen Mary, the twenty-nine planes were expensive and the fleet was specifically designed to help Imperial Airways crisscross the Atlantic.[237]

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[234] "The Growth of Imperial Airways," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, September 1934, 8.

[235] John Urry's work on the tourist gaze shaped my thinking here. See John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage Publications, 1990).

[236] "Queen Marys of the Air," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, July 1936, 5.

[237] The fleet cost more than £1,000,000.

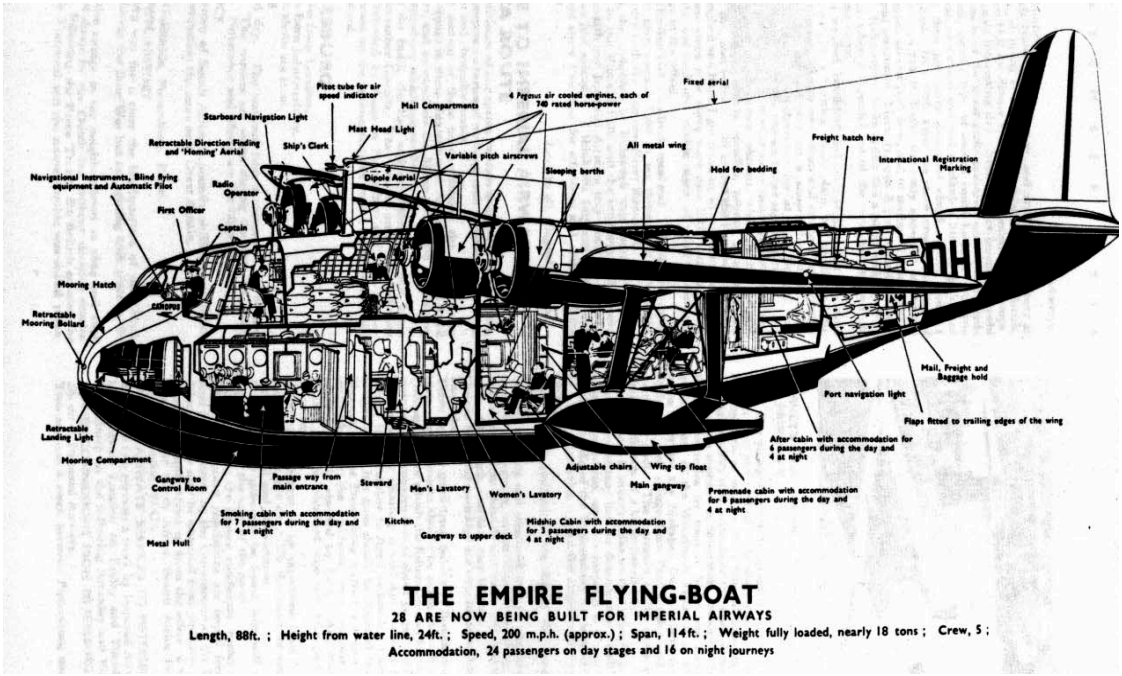

Fig. 3.2. "The Empire Flying Boat" *Gazette,* September 1936.

In the *Gazette*, "Queen Marys of the Air" was one of the only articles to focus on how airplanes were made. It began with a description of the factory yards in Rochester. Walking through the yards, the journalist stumbled when he saw "a remarkable sight, the impressive spectacle" of 3,000 men building ten flying boats. Noting the hefty number of workers it took to make a few planes, he was fascinated and overwhelmed by the "buzz of steady activity." With pride, he observed the workers who were "busy building the new Empire." The journalist admired how the workers interacted with and cared for the metal; tenderly, they "bent and hammered and bored and filed, fitting small piece to small piece with the most loving care." The men became little boys riveted in Meccano model sets. With wonder and desire, he marveled,

> each was absorbed in his task. . . . There must be thrill in this work; the men looked as though they took a joyous pride in it. I envied the apprentice boys, whose faces shone as if they were in some angelic dream as no doubt they were![238]

[238] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid.

Escorted, the journalist went deeper into the factory. There, the aesthetics of the machine captivated him. As he wound through the rooms, he sometimes stopped to inspect the piles of duralumin and stainless steel, or the "long wings" shaping around circular petrol tanks. The "silvery shining metal hulls . . . skin . . . absolutely smooth" impressed him. Near the end of his tour, the guide showed him a full-size model of the 18 tons flying boat. The journalist went inside and asked, "Like a ship?" Walking around the interior, he concluded that it was "decidedly" like a steamship. It had two decks in the fore of the hull and "proper beds, and proper sleeping births, and comfortable chairs that are adjustable to a nicety" (see fig. 3.2). The cabins were "beautifully lighted, carpeted, heated, ventilated, and decorated." Like an ocean liner, "the whole outfit speaks of comfort, indeed of luxury." Importantly, the journalist declared travelers in the sky and not those on the sea "[s]ymbols of a new age of travel, argosies of the air, armadas of peace!"[239]

Middle-class ideas about luxury and leisure were central to the airline's image of the ideal traveler. Some of its earliest and most popular kinds of excursions were the London tea and the London-Paris lunchtime service flights. Compared to joyrides, which were cheaper and thought common and vulgar by the middle-class, short flights on the national airline were seen as modern. They represented social superiority and a willingness to embrace technological change. For example, the London tea flight, which started in 1929, was a thirty-minute service that cost £2 2s; this was more than double what a joyride cost. Within two years, it epitomized chic frivolity. An advertisement from that year announced that Imperial Airways intended to offer the flights at a

[239] Ibid.

"considerably reduced fare" for the summer social season. Similar to hot air balloon ascents in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which chapter two discussed, tea flights were about height not high speed.[240] They were for hosts who wanted to "give a novel party for friends who have already done all the usual things," and for boyfriends who wanted to impress "your fiancé up from the country." For £1 10s a ticket, Imperial Airways toured passengers over the Tower, Buckingham Palace, and other well-known sights. From this vantage point, and while gorging on a full tea service, air travelers looked down and peeped inside of areas hidden from the eyes of tourists on the ground.[241]

Commercial air travel was also a form of elite transportation. In March 1933, Imperial Airways offered and operated a luxury service from London to the Grand National in Liverpool. A ticket cost £8 8s. A company car transported passengers to and from the airport. A *Heracles* class airplane carried them to Liverpool. In flight, they received a cold lunch; on the return flight to London, passengers received a hot tea service. Alighted in Liverpool, passengers collected their entrance tickets to the famous steeplechase event. They sat in a reserved section.[242]

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[240] For example, in January 1785, an Englishman named Dr. Jefferies wrote to the Royal Society in London and described ascending by balloon over the cliffs of Dover: "the broad country lying behind Dover, the sown with numerous towns and villages, formed a charming view; while the rocks on the other side, against which the waves dashed, offered a prospect that was rather trying." Marion, *Wonderful Balloon Ascents or The Conquest of the Skies,* 142.

[241] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see "Tea Flights," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, February 1931. 2.

[242] "An Air Service to the Grand National," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, March 1933, 2.

Fig. 3.3. "To Paris While You Read Your Paper," *Gazette*, August 1934.

Segregation by class was another service Imperial Airways sold. It was advertised as one of the greatest benefits of air travel.[243] In the same issue of the *Gazette* that publicized the Grand National, the airline offered readers an opportunity to watch the annual and infamous Oxford-Cambridge boat race from the air. The price of each ticket was £2 2s. Similar to the promotions for the London tea flights, the advertisement for this sports-related service mobilized elevation as a signifier of luxury. Those who could

[243] In the United States, some believed that segregation by race was one of the greatest advantages of air travel. Writing about a slightly later period, C. Vann Woodward explained, "The arrival of the age of air transportation appears to have put a strain upon the ingenuity of the Jim Crow lawmakers. Even to the orthodox there was doubtless something slightly incongruous about requiring a Jim Crow compartment on a transcontinental plane, or one that did not touch the ground between New York and Miami. No Jim Crow law has been found that applies to passengers while they are in the air. So long as they were upon the ground, however, they were still subject to Jim Crow jurisdiction." C. Van Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3rd rev. ed. (1955; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 117.

afford it were situated above the crowd, literally. Isolated from the horde below, passengers gazed downward and uninterrupted from the air on the water spectacle beneath them.[244]

As these examples illustrate, advertisements for and articles about domestic flights aligned leisure and luxury with altitude. A survey of the materials used to foster passenger traffic on the international and empire routes suggest that the airline often referred to speed up when it wanted to represent long distance flights as sumptuous and unhurried. Early advertisements for the London-Paris lunchtime service flights provide some of the best examples of how the combination of increased rapidity and altitude became a signifier of luxury and leisure in postwar Britain; as the previous chapter demonstrated, before the First World War, many people in Britain considered speed up obscene and believed that it was destroying the pleasure and experience of travel. In one of the first ads in the *Gazette* to show men and women flying together, Imperial Airways raved that its passengers traveled to and from Paris "while you read your paper and home again in time for dinner!" According to the advertisement, airline travel was as time efficient, comfortable, and lavish as the railway journey, and its passengers valued swiftness, service, and lavishness (see fig. 3.3). For £7 12s, they expected and received inexpensive indulgences and experiences while traveling:

> The luxury of Imperial Airways' air liners is proverbial. Pullman-like comfort, meals, attentive stewards, lavatories and luggage space. For you the chops of the Channel look like ripples and you arrive in Paris fresh and unfatigued, having spent no more time in the air than it takes to run in your car from London to lunch

[244] As the advertisement put it, "By far the most satisfactory way of seeing the University Boat Race is from an armchair seat in one of Imperial Airways' air-liners of the *Heracles* class. You are not only more comfortable than you can be in any other point of vantage, but you can also have an excellent view of the whole race. The air-liner follows the boats, you watch the whole contest and are in at the finish. You are not jostled and nobody can obscure your view at the critical moment!" " See the Boat Race from the Air," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, March 1933, 2.

> with your cousins in the country. Air travel is not expensive and it is very delightful—try it![245]

The image of the airline passenger as frugal and extravagant involved ideas about air travel as an expression of civic duty. In October 1930, the cover of the *Gazette* read, "£3 12s 6d London-Paris or The Terrestrial Complex?" According to an unnamed leading London newspaper, Britain was sick. It had the terrestrial complex, a virulent disease that made people cheap and irrational ground-worshippers:

> The reduction by Imperial Airways Ltd., of its passenger rates to Paris and other Continental points to an equality with rail and sea rates will confront a good many worthy citizens with a somewhat disturbing problem. Hitherto it has been quite simple and easy to excuse oneself from adventuring into the air on the ground that it was too expensive. Now that excuse has perished, and we must ask ourselves if we are really 'air-minded,' or if a projected flight to the Continent is still fraught for us with the terrors of the unknown. If we have to admit that we rather 'funk' aerial travel, we can console ourselves with the thought that our Victorian ancestors felt just the same way about the train.[246]

The passage used language that coded the air traveler as a concerned citizen, air travel as an antidote, and the airline as a healer. It described the British public as plagued. It acted illogically; the British favored surface transport even though air transport cost the same; they were scared of technological backwardness, but terrified by technological innovation. Good and worthy citizens could help heal the country by flying.

Representations of airspace and airline travel were profoundly gendered. As Wohl and other scholars have explained, the First World War "reinforced the image of

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[245] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see "To Paris While You Read Your Paper," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, August 1934, 8.

[246] *Imperial Airways Gazette*, October 1930, front cover. Other articles in the magazine described a fear of flying as a metal illness. For an example, see a physician's remarks on the medical problems and fears associated with flying in "Health and Air Travel: Scientific Opinion," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, November 1934, 6.

the sky as a privileged male space."[247] After the war, as the airline industry developed in Britain, commercial airspace and masculinity remained bound together in the public imagination. Given this close affinity, it is hardly surprising that the British man was the model passenger in the *Gazette*; most likely, those good and worthy citizens who helped rid the country of its terrestrial complex were men.

The archetype of airline travel was the businessman. He was established, ambitious, and adventurous. Importantly, he was frugal-minded. He valued time. He welcomed speed up. In short, the flying businessman was not an Edwardian dandy.

Articles in the *Gazette* often depicted the ideal businessman as a man who wanted transport to provide utility, quickness, and security. For example, in January 1931, the cover of the magazine read,

> Discussing the Future of Transport Reminds one about the Air Services. Even today, after only a decade of progress, they form an important link in World Communication. Your mail may take wing and fly to the East, your goods may travel swiftly and safely over land and sea alike, you yourself may sleep a thousand miles distant from your morning's waking place. The more you use these ever-ready services the more rapidly will the extend their field of usefulness.[248]

In this passage, the businessman soundly slept at home, while the airline quickly, promptly, and safely circulated his cargo around the world. He found commercial aviation increasingly useful. The quicker he moved his mail and goods across vast global distances, the more business he was able to transact.

Other articles also explained how airline travel improved business. In them, the value of the air transport was relative to the value of surface transport. They focused on

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[247] Wohl, *A Passion for Wings*, 282. Also, see Bayla Singer, *Like Sex with Gods: An Unorthodox History of Flying* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003).

[248] *Imperial Airways Gazette*, January 1931, front cover.

the amount of time and money a businessman saved by flying, rather than on the amount of time and money spent. An article published in March 1933 described what happened to a London businessman when he flew for the first time. His clients lived in ten countries. He had to travel over 20,000 miles to see them.[249] Flying, it took him sixty days to complete his trip. It cost him £300. When he returned to London, he figured out that the entire trip would have taken 180 days and cost £360 if he had traveled by first-class surface transport. Observing that airline travel was marginally cheaper, he told readers that the air had saved him in other ways. When Imperial Airways interviewed him the businessman declared, "On all counts, I can say in conclusion the air tour scores. You save time. You save money."[250]

Straightness and the concept of saving helped shape the air-mindedness of entrepreneurs and other business elites. As the last chapter explained, the combination of the airplane and the uninterrupted geography of airspace made the precision of straight-line travel possible. During his interview, the London businessman said that he found straight-line travel and rapid pace very important:

> To cover any big territory by surface travel, particularly in a country like Africa, you may have to make long detours and roundabout trips; but the airways goes straight from one important point to another. Your mileage, therefore, is smaller if you fly. Also, when flying you travel so quickly that you simply have not the time to spend money on all those little things which crop up in long journeys by boat or train.[251]

Flying changed the topography of travel. Moving in a series of straight lines, the airline made fewer and shorter stopovers. For passengers and vendors, it reduced the number of

[249] Specifically, his clients lived in Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Uganda, Kenya Colony, the Tanganyika Territory, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and the Union of South Africa.

[250] "Flying 20,000 Miles on Business," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, March 1933, 2.

[251] Ibid.

opportunities to shop and sell during in-transit times. Coupled with speed up, the straight line also shrunk space and as the businessman noted, saved time and ultimately money. In the interview, the businessman exclaimed, "[T]ime is money." He calculated,

> By flying I save 120 days, and had on my air trip spent approximately £50 less than I should have done if I had made a similar tour by land and sea. From my own viewpoint as a business man, I estimate the value of each of my working days at, say £3. Therefore the 120 days I saved by air represented to me a sum of approximately £360. Thus, including the saving on travel costs, I am more than £400 in pocket through having made use of aerial travel.[252]

Fortification of the mind and body was a theme repeated throughout articles about and ads for business travel. Often, it was linked to the image of the commercial aircraft as shelter, shield, and enabler of efficient and effective work. According to the London businessman, the airline was modern, "up to date . . . . It is a question of psychology." Throughout his sixty days journey, he was able to "avoid fatigue . . . benefit in health and mental outlook." Across Africa, the airplane had made "all the difference between comfort and discomfort. Flying on one of the big air-liners you escape heat, dust, fatigue." For the businessman, the airplane had helped him to shore up his energy, which "means that when you reach your journey's end you are fresh and vigorous, ready to plunge into the business on hand."[253]

A month earlier, in February 1933, Major Oliver Stewart, who was the air correspondent for *Tatler*, made a somewhat similar statement about commercial aircrafts and the coddling of the male body. Speaking about British men in general, he described men who chose to travel abroad by surface transport as sadists:

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[252] Ibid.

[253] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid.

> To-day, he who deliberately travels between London and Paris, for instance, by any other way than by the air way can only be compared with those enthusiasts who lie for long periods of time stretched at full length upon beds composed of a great number of sharp iron spikes pointing upwards . . . simply to hurt themselves. Those who travel internationally by other ways than the air way are deliberately and unnecessarily hurting themselves.[254]

The businessman was the archetype of the ideal airline traveler, but the female passenger did appear in some sections of the *Gazette*. She often showed up in narratives about travel to continental Europe. Unlike the businessman, the female passenger was depicted as fragile and afraid. She believed that airline travel was unsafe, unhealthy, too high, and too fast. In November 1933, the *Gazette* published "Air Travel for Women," which was an article from *The Morning Post* about a privileged woman who flew Imperial Airways from London to Paris. She flew because she felt obligated; she had won the airline ticket at a charity event. She absolved herself of agency and responsibility, and figured that it was "Fate having decided that I must fly." Like "many women," she swore, "I shall never fly; I would never think of flying." Like the others, she had a "dislike of heights, a fear of air-sickness, a belief that height combined with great speed will affect heart or blood-pressure, lack of faith in the safety of air-travel, and lastly, a vague horror of an unknown element."[255]

As a promotional device, the article offered women redemption. At the end of the article, the female passenger declared her self and her views transformed. Through Imperial Airways, fate had liberated her: "From the moment I set foot inside the machine every sense of fear vanished." Now she worshiped ungrounded suspension and high

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[254] "Imperial Airways London-Paris Service," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, February 1933, 1.

[255] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see "Air Travel for Women," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, November 1933, 5.

altitudes: "I have flown four times and each time I like it more. I have flow at heights varying from 50 to 8,000 feet."[256]

As part of a guidebook, "Air Travel for Women" was dubious. On the one hand, its prescriptive message perpetuated the dominant view, which said that British women should not and did not fly. The woman in the article flew because she had to; fate had forced her. On the other hand, the article explained why women should want to travel by air, and it told them how they should act while they were airborne. Once the so-called fated woman was in the sky she became transfixed, awed in how it felt to look out and down the airplane window:

> Sometimes there is a rift—a chasm—in the peaks. One glimpses, down at the bottom, the world like a pebble at the bottom of a well and, oddly enough, however dear the world is to you—and it is very dear to me—there is an extraordinary sense of detachment. Away up in that rarefied atmosphere all troubles and worries vanish. One is completely indifferent to taxes, conferences, the stock market, work unfinished, worries unresolved, and the myriad other things that haunt our footsteps when they are set on solid earth.[257]

For this woman, travel by air opened new vistas, enabled detachment, and liberated her from the rituals of daily life.

A Scottish woman expressed similar sentiments about a flight she took from London to Zurich in May 1933. Unlike the woman who flew to Paris, this was not her first flight to continental Europe. On Thursday morning, she arrived at the aerodrome in Croydon. She was not surprised to learn that she was the flight's only female passenger. Like the businessman, she flew because she needed to conduct business quickly. She had "less than three days at my disposal to go to Zurich, transact business, and return to

[256] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid.

[257] Ibid.

London." At the aerodrome, she found "the revealing face" of the weighing machine turned away from the crowd and towards the airline official, and she was pleased. It accelerated the process.[258] Then, the agent quickly took the passengers to the airplane in case "there should be a latent craven who may elect to change her (or *his*—it has been known) mind"; he thought the female passenger might prefer to travel "the prosaic surface route." She boarded her "floating hotel" and when the aircraft was over the English Channel, the woman glanced out her window. Absorbed in what she saw, she rejoiced through metaphor,

> It is magic—white magic—the very soul of the poetry of motion—to be skimming up there on velvet air speeding so easily and lightly to foreign lands. I feel a glad exhilaration and warm rush of gratitude that I have lived in this wonderful age of sky travel. I am no engineer, and to see the great wings cleaving the heaven is to me nothing short of a miracle which can never become ordinary and commonplace.[259]

For this female passenger, the airline was an inherently good technology.[260]

It is somewhat striking that Imperial Airways excluded women from the foreground of its image of the ideal passenger. Throughout the 1930s, women aviators, especially English ones, captured the public imagination in Britain. Dress historian Barbara Burman has demonstrated that the image of the female aviator influenced how

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[258] In other publications, Imperial Airways celebrated its "weighing machine that looks backwards." It reduced wait times and offered discretion. Commissioned by the airline to write a travelogue, H. Stuart Menzies remarked, "TACT!—the rarest of all qualities in a weighing machine. . . . The weighing machine has a peculiarity—its face is turned away from you, so that the booking clerk can save time by noting your weight while you are buying your ticket across the counter. No one sees your weight but the booking clerk. A neat idea that, especially for the women folk! and [*sic*] come to think of it, very tactful." H. Stuart Menzies, *All Ways by Airways* (London: Imperial Airways, 1932), 3. TL 526.G7M55, at the NASM.

[259] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see "In Swiss Cloudland: A Scotswoman's Voyage." *Imperial Airways Gazette*, July 1933, 3.

[260] My thanks to Mary Harris O'Reilly for pointing out that, in the interwar period, references to 'white magic' were often about whether intentions were inherently good or bad, and they were not necessarily about race.

upper and middle-class women dressed in Britain; fashion designers made clothes to resemble the garments worn by "speed queens" and styled sharper, more streamlined cuts to invoke the sleekness of the airplane.[261] Likewise, Bernhard Rieger has compared how the public perceived and received female aviators in Britain and Germany, and stressed that pioneering female pilots such as Amy Johnson were celebrities in England. The conventional public saw them as glamorous and feminine society girls rather than risqué and lewd like flappers. Furthermore, women like Johnson were able to cultivate a celebrity status by casting their daring flights through the dominions and colonies within the conventional narrative of exploratory travel as imperial adventure. As Rieger has put it, "the language of empire furnished an opportunity to extol the risk-taking with which her flights were associated. The noble cause of empire justified women exposing themselves to dangers and shouldering their part of the white man's burden."[262]

The image of the British woman as a civil or adventure pilot made sense inside of existing tropes of imperial travel, but the image of the British woman as a paying airline passenger did not. Memoirs about and stories from the years surrounding the First World War indicate that women often enjoyed short joyrides in airplanes.[263] And as the articles in the *Gazette* revealed, some British women did fly as airline passengers to continental Europe. However, British women were strikingly absent from narratives in the *Gazette* that concerned travel, adventure, Imperial Airways, and the empire route.

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[261] Barbara Burman, "Racing Bodies: Dress and Pioneer Women Aviators and Racing Drivers," *Women's History Review* vol. 9, no. 2 (2000): 299.

[262] Rieger, "'Fast Couples'," 378.

[263] Arguably, the American Hart O'Berg was the first woman to fly as a non-paying passenger in September 1908. For examples of British women flying, see Markham, *West with the Night*; Woolf, "Flying over London."

Above Ground

In the early 1930s, when Mr. W. D. H. McCullough flew from London to Baghdad on an Imperial Airways ticket, he wrote a travel diary. The first sentence read, "This narrative starts a thousand feet above Limasol, in Cyprus." As the flying boat was "climbing steadily and heading across the last strip of Mediterranean," McCullough remembered how his trip began. On Saturday, at 12:30 p.m., a *Hannibal* class airplane carried him from the aerodrome in Croydon to Paris.[264] It was the world's first four-engine passenger plane. A biplane, Handley Page, the first limited liability aircraft manufacturing company in Britain, specifically designed the *Hannibal* for comfort. It had carpeting, soundproofing, and a full-service bar.[265] As *Hannibal* carried him east to France, McCullough enjoyed the airline's famed four-course lunch.[266] Thirty minutes

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[264] McCullough did not say on which specific Saturday he flew. Regardless, this trip would have occurred between 1931 and 1934. Imperial Airways started to operate a London-Baghdad passenger service in January 1927, when it added a Cairo-Baghdad-Basra sector to its Britain-India route. However, the airline inaugurated the *Hannibal* class passenger service between London and Paris on June 11, 1931.

[265] Before McCullough left London, three friends met him at the aerodrome. They refused to wait in the official area for visitors and instead decided to sneak inside of a section called the "royal enclosure." There, they found and faced the *Hannibal*. Like several of the other aircraft in the Imperial Airways fleet, almost all of which the company named after ancient Greek and Roman gods or warriors, *Hannibal* bore the name of the famous Carthaginian general. Mesmerized, he and his friends marveled at the size and cost of the machine. It weighed nearly thirteen and one-half tons and, with some financial assistance from the state, the airline paid approximately £40,000 to own one of them. After they admired the airplane and agreed that it was "well worth it," McCullough left for France. W. D. H. McCullough, "Baghdad Bound," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, February 1934, 3.

[266] Before the Second World War advent of pressurized airplane cabins and 'above the weather' flights made air traveling smoother, passengers found it difficult and often sickening to eat during flight. A survey of advertisements and heath advisory notices from the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s shows that in-flight catering services marked and measured the modernness of an airline. See, for example, remarks on "Travelers who made flights on the first air lines operating between London and the Continent and who now make trips to-day in big modern air liners, comment in terms of keen appreciation on the compress in comfort which has been achieved in the past eighteen years. Pioneering air passengers, after driving out to draughty war-time sheds, embarked in small, noisy machines in which there were no catering facilities at all, those wanting refreshments in flight being obliged to take sandwiches up in the air with them. To-day that primitive phase is a thing of the past. Modern air ports have their commodious booking halls, waiting-rooms, restaurants and hotels; while up in the air, seated in spacious, luxuriously-equipped saloons which are heated, ventilated, and silenced, passengers have only to press a bell at their elbows in order to summon

behind schedule, the flight lasted two hours and forty-five minutes. Later and importantly, McCullough remembered his flight from London to Paris as "pleasant and uneventful."[267]

McCullough had a six-hour stopover in Paris. Imperial Airways had booked him on the Simplon-Orient express train to Brindisi, which was scheduled to leave from Gare de Lyon at 9:30 that night.[268] While he waited, McCullough swam and ate at the Imperial Airways hotel. After dinner, he rested in the hotel lounge. Days later, he decided the status of his trip had shifted in the lounge; what he had thus far described in his diary as merely pleasant and uneventful became through hindsight "magnificent."[269] Reflecting, he recalled,

> I had the rather exciting experience of having a uniformed official coming into the hotel lounge to ask for passengers on the Empire air route. I rose to my feet and strode pit-a-pat down the lounge, feeling every inch an Empire builder.[270]

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a white-coated steward and have placed at their disposal all the resources of a highly-organized catering service." "Catering Up in the Air," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, September 1937, 6.

Although he enjoyed it, McCullough did not describe the specific contents of his lunch. However, advertisements for the airline's tea and lunchtime flights to Paris suggest that Imperial Airways would have offered him cocktails, as well as his choice of a hot or cold lunch option "served in as smoothly and efficiently a manner as if you were seated in a fashionable West End restaurant." "To Paris While You Lunch," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, January 1934, 3.

[267] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see McCullough, "Baghdad Bound," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, February 1934, 2-3.

[268] The train ride from Paris to Italy would take two days, from Saturday night to Monday morning. McCullough believed strongly that the journey would be long and he would be miserable. As he put it, "This was a long train journey . . . and I expect to feel very miserable . . . ." Ibid., 2.

[269] Frequently, McCullough used the word 'magnificent' to describe his experiences after Paris. Sometimes, he used the word descriptively. For instance, during a three-hour stopover in Milan, he said, "A magnificent meal is served . . . We spent some time in Milan Cathedral, which is a magnificent building . . ." Ibid., 3. Other times, however, McCullough used the word to stand in for civilized or for British technological progress and dominance: "There was something exceedingly thrilling in arriving at the end of the Sea of Galilee just by the River Jordon and changing over from the rather dirty antiquity of the native village to the quiet efficiency of the British aerodrome and the magnificent *Hannibal* type of aerodrome which lay waiting for us." McCullough, "Baghdad Bound," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, May 1934, 5.

[270] Ibid., 3.

The experience of being classified and beckoned as an empire air route passenger made McCullough feel proud and purposeful. As the uniformed airline official ceremoniously escorted him, McCullough embarked on what felt to him like an imperial project.

McCullough published his diary in the *Gazette*. From February to May 1934, the magazine printed excerpts from the diary in a column called "Baghdad Bound."[271] In some installments, the *Gazette* printed subheadings such as "From London" and "Over the Desert." Like a guidebook, these titles mapped the empire route. They allowed the reader to 'travel' with McCullough.

Not much is known about McCullough. He identified himself as an Englishman in his diary. More than likely, he was upper or middle-class. By the time he flew to Baghdad in the early 1930s, Imperial Airways offered a second-class service on its London-Paris route.[272] Nonetheless, airline travel was still expensive and this was not McCullough's first Imperial Airways flight.[273] However, it was his first time on an empire route.

Flights on the empire routes typically involved two or more forms of transportation. Each could take days to reach its destination and often it made frequent stops along the way. The idea that an airline journey would make several scheduled,

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[271] It is important to note that Imperial Airways printed a short statement before each installment. The reference to "private circulation" suggests that the airline might have been trying to establish McCullough and his diary as unbiased and impartial sources. It read, "The following is the first installment of an article written by Mr. W. D. H. McCullough, which was printed for private circulation, but which the author has allowed Imperial Airways to republish with acknowledgements. The journey was made some time ago, but still we think that our readers will be very interested in it." W. D. H. McCullough, "Baghdad Bound," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, February 1934, 2.

[272] For the introduction of a second-class air service and fare between London and Paris, see "Company Meetings: Imperial Airways," *The Times* (London), September 8, 1928, 3.

[273] For a survey of air travel prices in the 1930s, see Hudson, *Air Travel*.

often overnight stopovers was an important part of the travel experience. Unlike railroad and steamship journeys, which also included stopovers, the higher speed of airplanes deepened the compression of space by time, and shortened the travel gap *between* multiple layovers.[274] This meant that airline passengers spent less time traveling between intermediary places, thus condensing and compacting the experiences they had on the ground, along the way.

McCullough's trip to Baghdad was no different. First, he flew from London to Paris. Later that night, he and the other airline passengers took the express train to Brindisi. For two days, they zigzagged through Switzerland and Milan, along the southeast coast of Italy until they arrived at Brindisi. Then that same day, McCullough boarded a *Scipio* class flying boat and flew across the Mediterranean Sea to Piraeus, where he spent the night.[275] In the morning, a flying boat took him to Rhodes and then another one carried him to Cyprus. After refueling in Cyprus, McCullough flew over the Jordon River, landed on the Sea of Galilee, ferried to Palestine, and spent the night. The next day, he flew over the Syrian Desert, landed at Rutbah Fort in Iraq, and flew to the aerodrome in Baghdad.[276]

McCullough, who left France feeling "every inch an Empire builder," hardly mentioned the empire in his diary directly. He interpreted his travel experiences,

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[274] For railway travel, see Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*; for steamship travel, see Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*.

[275] The *Scipio* was a four-engine flying boat, which the airline mainly used to fly over the Mediterranean on its India and Africa services. Typically, it carried no more than sixteen passengers, a captain, a first officer, a wireless operator, and a steward; according to McCullough, his *Scipio* had forty seats.

[276] Rutbah Fort was also known as Rutbah Wells. As Priya Satia has reminded, "It was in Iraq that the British first practiced, if never perfected, the technology of bombardment, there that they first attempted to fully theorize the value of airpower as an independent arm of the military." Satia, "The Defense of Inhumanity," 16.

especially the ones that occurred on the ground during stopovers, through a language of otherness and a lexicon of orientalism.[277] For example, when McCullough spent the night in Palestine, he "strolled down to the sea front and wandered about, gathering my first impressions of the East." Walking, he encountered local musicians playing and singing. Listening, he remembered the other passengers who "spent a great deal of their time warning me against the perils of the East," and "quickly came to the conclusion that there was a good deal to be said for the West." Hearing the music of 'others' made McCullough feel like he was "passing a hospital in which at least one of the patients is right at the top of the danger list."[278]

The short duration and quick succession of stopovers shaped how McCullough identified as metropolitan and British. As he approached Rutbah Fort from above, McCullough complained about having to stop at "the most desolated and extraordinary hostelry in the world." In his opinion, it was "300 miles from any sign of civilisation." He did not look forward to being "stuck right in the very centre of the Syrian desert." After he landed and alighted, he learned that the stopover's time was both short and long, and his attitude shifted. The stopover was "about an hour." He did not have to wait long,

[277] Angela Woollacott's work on steamship travel and the experience of empire during the interwar years shapes my thinking here, especially her claim that "White Australian women's understandings of race, class, and colonialism were linked to the orientalism that shaped their worldviews. . . . Australian women would arrive in Colombo and exclaim over the magic and charm of 'the East.'" Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 39.

[278] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see McCullough, "Baghdad Bound," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, March 1934, 7. McCullough described his fellow passengers as "pretty tough old campaigners who had been out in the East for many years." Ibid.

but he had just enough time to enjoy an almost English breakfast at the station restaurant: "bacon and eggs, coffee, iced drinks, toast and marmalade, and electric light."[279]

McCullough included electric light in the list of British products he consumed, which is revealing. One of the main reasons why McCullough described his experiences on the empire route as "magnificent" was the opportunity to watch British industry at work in the world. He observed that airline travel had allowed him to see Britain modernizing and developing the interior of seemingly remote places. For instance, while McCullough was eating breakfast at Rutbah Fort, he glanced and saw a local electric lighting plant, which Metropolitan Vickers, a British broadcasting company, had installed. In that moment, he "could not help feeling rather proud of the fact that this British plant was carrying on so gallantly in such a forsaken part of the globe." He remembered that the British military built the fort and because the area "supplies remarkably good water" it was the center of Britain's defense and air police scheme for Iraq.[280]

Between stopovers, the experience of airline flight deepened the sense of British pride and patriotism that McCullough felt. Airborne after Palestine, McCullough was overwhelmed, almost guilty about resting "in complete comfort sipping iced drinks, far above the hot and dusty earth." He sat next to "a military expert," who showed him where Edmund Allenby, the "famous British general," fought during the First World War. Looking out the airplane window, McCullough felt lucky and contrite. Watching the landscape unfold from the perspective of the above made him reflect and compare,

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[279] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see McCullough, "Baghdad Bound," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, May 1934, 5.

[280] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid.

"How our men carried on fighting in a climate and surroundings like these simply passes the comprehension of a spoilt civilian like myself, who considers that he has a distinct grouse if has to step a few yards to a bus in a shower of rain."[281]

Other British men who traveled as airline passengers to Baghdad also wrote about their trip. Their reflections reveal that some British men found air travel whimsical and infantilizing. In 1933, a writer for *Modern Man* magazine flew the same empire route as McCullough, and he saw and did similar things. He, however, described his trip as a farce. For example, when he recounted what it was like to eat while flying at high speed from London to Paris, the journalist commented on the "absurdity of enjoying a four-course lunch three thousand feet above the English Channel while travelling 100 miles per hour." When he described flying into and landing in Iraq, he remarked on the "absurdity of coming down to an English ham and egg breakfast at Fort Rutbah, in the middle of the desert. The fantastic luxury of iced drinks 8,000 feet above the desert." Most strikingly, when he wrote about waiting in the hotel lounge for the night train to Brindisi, he observed mockingly how "the masterly way in which an official segregates the travellers on the Empire Route and shepherds then about like school children on their first train journey," had made him feel like a child.[282] Unlike McCullough, the journalist did not feel like an empire builder.

In addition to increased acceleration, fast speed, and global distances shrunk, aboveness—the change in temporal orientation, spatial position, and perspective that being airborne induces—was at the center of most air travel narratives published in the

[281] Ibid.

[282] "London to Baghdad in 3.5 Days," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, June 1933, 1.

Gazette.[283] For example, McCullough and the journalist for *Modern Man* both described the airline as a "magic carpet." Although each described it differently, the image of the "magic carpet" moving men from London to Baghdad was one of the most striking similarities shared between their stories. For the journalist, Imperial Airways was a magic carpet simply because it flew: "The astounding fact that this magic carpet goes on every week all the year round."[284] As his sardonic tone hinted, the relentless frequency of airline travel threatened to decrease the "magic" of flight. For McCullough, Imperial Airways was a magic carpet because it changed his perspective. Airborne, it shifted what and how he saw:

> This was the last stage of the magic carpet so far as I was concerned. . . . During the course of this flight we flew over the Euphrates and also over a lake called Habania, beside which a new Air Force aerodrome is going to be built at some future date. The sight of a huge blue lake in the middle of miles and miles of brown desert was quite staggering.[285]

The image of the airplane as a magic carpet existed before the 1930s. After the war, in September 1919, journalist Bruce Ingram conjured the magic carpet trope in order to convey the marvel and magic of his seemingly fantastical flight from London to Paris. He told readers of the *Illustrated London News,*

> Of all the tales for the young, the story of the Magic Carpet which enabled its owners to be transported from one quarter of the globe to another at will, and without the fares that render the modern railway and steamship travelling so costly, made an impression that has left its indelible traces throughout life. How often has the *Wanderlust* been originated by the fascination of the appeal to the imagination which this narrative of rapid and easy travelling cannot fail to produce! . . . Not for us, the wonderful carpet, the rapid transition through space,

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[283] Explained differently, aboveness is the embodiment of speed up; the embodiment of altitude and rapidity, and the experience of being seemingly distant and detached from the ground. I use the word 'induce' to signal the extent to which aboveness is intimately connected to the artificial.

[284] "London to Baghdad in 3.5 Days," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, June 1933, 1.

[285] McCullough, "Baghdad Bound," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, May 1934, 5.

> the abolition of 'distance.' So we thought, until suddenly, like many other things once deemed impracticable, the full possibilities of aviation were brought into view . . . the unreal and fantastic people of fairyland.[286]

Ingram flew across the Channel and wrote this article before the inception of Imperial Airways in 1924. He dreamed a world where airplanes were enchanted and cheap vessels using rapid speed to abolish distance and actualize for their owners the aged dream of instantaneous around-the-world travel; a fantasy from childhood imagination realized.

By the time that McCullough and the journalist described their airline adventures as spellbound in the 1930s, the image of airplanes and magic carpets registered differently. Along with the obvious overtones of orientalism, Imperial Airways sometimes invoked the magic carpet to capture what it meat to fly *over* rather than to pass *through* the empire; earlier references to the magic carpet seemed to associate aerial movements more with transport than with experience.

For example, in June 1933, the *Gazette* published the first installment of a travelogue serial called "The Magic Carpet—A Journey to India by Imperial Airways." Written by P. W. Pitt, the column chronicled his airline travels from London to India and illustrated how aboveness affected his perception of the historical past, of the political landscapes, and of the people literally beneath him. While he was flying, Pitt reflected, "I have had a great adventure." He had already traveled 5,000 miles in nine days and "during so short a time these changing scenes and all that they recalled had a strange effect upon my emotions." Intently, he looked out the airplane window, the "marvel of modern science" which was moving east and south over some places in Europe, and felt

[286] Bruce S. Ingram, "To Paris in Two Hours and Twenty Minutes," *The Illustrated London News*, September 6, 1919. Ingram, who might have been a captain in the military, became the editor of this newspaper.

"the whole history of the world had passed in review before my mind." He was contemplative as the airline "passed places where statesmen have recently gathered together from all parts of the Western Hemisphere, in attempts to bolster up what may be a toppling civilisation." He was melancholic as he "pondered upon the seeming futility of trying to prevent nations from wrangling." Through racialized undertones and from the above perspective that airline travel afforded him, Pitt "dwelt upon the past glories of the Roman Empire and been saddened by the broken beauty of the Greeks. My noisy modern spirit had been hushed by the associations of Palestine and the age-old unchanging mentality of the Arabs."[287]

Airline travel transformed the position and perspective of passengers from surface and horizontal to air and vertical. In turn, this transformation affected perceptions of empire and of race. Throughout the mid-1930s, the *Gazette* published a series of articles describing what passengers flying over the empire saw. One article, "Wings Over Africa," outlined how travel by air reoriented sight and distance. Prescriptively, it told readers that, while flying from Alexandria to Johannesburg, they can quickly "inspect quaint villages, note some of the curious customs of the little-known tribes, and catch fleeting glimpses of the continent's wild life." It mentioned a passenger who took pleasure in passing over and seeing colonized subjects, and noted that he was thrilled because he did not have to interact with them at all.[288] On his way to Uganda, he liked his look-down as he "passed over many native settlements, each surrounded by a wall of

[287] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see P. W. Pitt, "The Magic Carpet—A Journey to India by Imperial Airways," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, June 1933, 3.

[288] Indeed, the airline passenger also liked watching the seemingly exotic landscape and animals; the "elephants splashing about in the water accompanied by countless egrets" and how the "several groups of giraffe took to flight hearing the roaring of the 'plane, as well as the ostriches . . . ." "Wings Over Africa," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, May 1936, 1-2.

reeds and straw," and was extremely pleased when he could "detect black forms scattering from hut to hut, apparently calling to one another come and see the white man riding his 'strange bird'."[289]

The airline passenger's reference to race is one of the earliest descriptions of how black people on colonized ground might have reacted to the metropolitan airline situating and moving white passengers in and through the sky above them. However, the reference has particular problems of interpretation. Clearly, the airline traveler enjoyed the double gaze of looking at local inhabitants and having local inhabitants look at him. He also liked the new kind of distance between the watcher and the watched, which his vertical position in the air afforded him; moreover, he understood the power and privilege of his whiteness in relation to it. Yet, his reference to the gestures and wonderment of people on the ground suggested that colonized people might have found air travel and the spectacle of colonizers overhead absurd.[290]

The writings of Genesta Long, who wrote for *Vogue* magazine, provide a remarkable example of how the shift from horizontal to vertical travel shaped ideas about

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[289] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid. Some of the other articles that commented on flying over the empire described: the "continual joy-ride, to soar over Africa." "As Others See Us," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, July 1933, 1; "There, gazing up a little bewildered at this monster from the air, was a full-sized lion . . . When people realize the comfort and the thrill of flying over this amazing air route to the Cape we shall not be able to build machines fast enough to meet the demand." "A Journey Home by Imperial Airways From East Africa," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, May 1933, 1; "Passengers say that they find much to interest them as they look down from their saloon windows while flying along those sections of the Empire route which extend from Brisbane to Darwin and on to Singapore. . . . Along the Java coast an immense number of small fishing boats can be seen; while shipping visible on sea sections between Rambang and Singapore includes ocean liners, inter-island trading vessels and oil tankers." " What Air Passengers See While Flying From Brisbane to Singapore," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, November 1936, 2.

[290] On a very different flight and describing a very different kind of interaction, McCullough made the following observation about the people he met in Limasol: "As we sat there a group of natives collected and stared at what was no doubt their weekly exhibition of flying foreigners. We stared at the natives and the natives stared at us, and neither party seemed greatly impressed with the view." As this passage suggests, in some instances, the increased frequency of airline flights had rendered the passenger (who was also a foreigner) ordinary to the so-called natives.

geography, race, and gender. In 1937, Long, who was probably on assignment for *Vogue*, flew from Southampton (England) to Durban (South Africa) on Imperial Airways. She went by an Empire class flying boat and used her experiences to write "African Flight," which was an article that first appeared in *Vogue*. In November, the *Gazette* extracted and reprinted sections of Long's column. It was one of the few female-authored articles to appear in the magazine and it was one of the only ones to provide a detailed account of a female airline passenger flying above an empire route.[291]

Like other airline travel writers in the *Gazette*, Long's narrative about commercial flight focused on what she saw while airborne. She explained to readers, "For the full drama of travel—the bridging of continents, the kaleidoscopic changes of scenery, the sudden arrivals in new worlds—you must take to the air." She told them what different landscapes looked like at a distance and from the perspective of the above. Paying close attention to how the airline had transformed sight and speed, she informed,

> You may voyage, as on a magic carpet, over the hot Arabian deserts to Baghdad, glimpsing as you circle earthwards the golden domes of the mosque of Khadimain; you may speed across the sky above India's splendid palaces and fertile plains; you may look down upon uncounted miles of jungle, wild forest, and the purple seas of Malaya; or you may swoop over Africa, crossing the whole great continent from North to South, and this is perhaps the most lovely and exciting flight of all.[292]

In Long's article, references to perception overlapped with fashion advice and the female body. She told women what to wear, and when to wear what, when flying over the empire. She gave them meticulous shopping lists, which included items such as "the

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[291] For an example of a woman airline passenger writing prescriptively about how to fly the empire route to Australia, see "Flying in Comfort," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, July 1938, 6-7.

[292] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Genesta Long, "South Africa by the *Empire* Flying Boat," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, November 1937, 2.

right luggage and clothes . . . two hand-bags are a blessing . . . invest in a two-bottle, spill proof case for your day and evening scents, while you should have a special fitted travelling case for face lotions and all other liquid beauty things." She strongly advised that "[f]or the first day's flight wear a light wool suit with a gay scarf and a reckless hat." Then, on the "next day wear a light linen frock and jacket, and have your dark glasses handy, for you will need them during the various stops." From remarks on how to wear an olive green "double felt hat" in Cairo to reminders to keep an "uncrushable lace dinner frock at hand, in case a party materialises" in Rome, Long told women how to fly appropriately.

The instructions and advice that Long commanded concerned more than fashion. To account for her choices, Long stirred ideas about race, danger, and the exotic into her directives. She insisted that travel over Sudan was "a trouser day" because "there are halts, at strange, desert places such as Malakal and Butiaba, where, leaning upon their spears, groups of apparently one-legged people stand staring; silent, stork-like Dinkas, coal-black." Likewise, she urged readers to prepare for and protect themselves from the unknown by continuing to wear trousers when flying over places "mysterious and pregnant with strange things, a bit of the primeval world lost in the heart of the dark continent."[293]

Long used language and presented images that suggested that the airborne position offered women protection and pleasure. She argued that "aerial views" over the bogs and swamps of the Sudd safeguarded yet showed the so-called primordial beings "forgotten when the rest of the earth's surface and the animals upon it were evolving

[293] Ibid., 3.

towards modernity." She commanded women, who were still in trousers, to "watch carefully out of the window" as the flight moved south and eastward to Kenya. She encouraged them to glance down at "the savage red bluff of the Nandi Escarpment, a wild country and the home of a wild and difficult tribe." When they passed southward above and across Kenya, she instructed them to look "beneath you, true 'shire' country . . . It looks remarkably British." Towards the end of the flight, "after the many strange and primitive places you have seen from beneath the wings of your plane," Long told women that it was time to put back on a "thin linen frock."[294]

Other columns paired the experience of aboveness and perceptions of race with expressions of kinship and notions of home. From May to September 1936, the *Gazette* published a monthly column called "A Good Letter." The column contained extracts from a series of letters that Harry, who was flying from London to Johannesburg on Imperial Airways, wrote to his mother in England. Across different issues, the *Gazette* printed other 'letters home.' Typically, the magazine reprinted letters that fathers had written to their sons.[295] Harry's letters, however, were the only ones that the *Gazette* deemed good.

What made Harry's letters so exceptional? The content of his letters was similar to the other published letters. Harry wrote and mailed his letters while he was traveling. He concentrated on describing what and how he saw the below from the above. He told his mother about watching the sky change colors, "as the sun rose a broad band of colour also rose on the western horizon thus: pink, mauve, blue, sand, which was the most

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[294] Ibid., 2; 4.

[295] For an example of a father to son passenger letter, see "Letters From an Air Traveller to His Son," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, October 1936-May 1937.

beautiful to watch."[296] He gawked like the others at the daily lives of the people on the ground, and was acutely aware of the physical distance between his self and them. For example, he told his mother, "[W]e saw the Nile . . . a hive of activity, as wheels moved by donkeys, men in a line hoeing in unison certainly to a chant which we could not hear."[297] He described how animals reacted to the noise of the airplane: "we struck the swamp country, and we came down within 500 ft. of the ground and flew over at least four great herds of while elephant, which scattered as we flew over them."[298]

Unlike the other letter writers, Harry deployed a kind of candor about race, geography, empire, and airborne technology, which made his letters appear good to the *Gazette* editors. He paid close attention to how, from above, he could see when "the trees got thicker." Only then and from that perspective, he "could see the hand of civilised man, as paths and roads went straight" through the thick trees. In explicit and racist words, he told his mother,

> This is Africa now, the square mud houses of Egypt and the Sudan have changed for the mushrooms shaped hut, from the air the villages look more like clumps of mushrooms than anything else. The natives are not just niggers the same as in Brazil, not that it makes me feel more at home.[299]

Harry used language that suggested that he felt more at home in the air, at a distance; to him, the mountains of Kilimanjaro appeared "rather like a plum pudding."[300]

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[296] From Harry to Dearest Mother, "A Good Letter," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, June 1936, 5.

[297] Ibid., 6.

[298] From Harry to Dearest Mother, "A Good Letter," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, July 1936, 4.

[299] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see From Harry to Dearest Mother, "A Good Letter," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, July 1936, 4. Harry's comparison between Africa and Brazil is curious and suggests that he might have lived or visited Brazil at some point. However, throughout his letters he repeatedly mentioned how much his missed England.

[300] From Harry to Dearest Mother, "A Good Letter," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, September 1936, 4.

On the ground, however, he felt like a displaced outsider. During overnight stopovers or when the airplane needed to refuel or the airline needed to change aircraft and pilots, Harry slept anxiously, waited restlessly, and toured apathetically. He hated the heat and longed for "the cold rainy misty air of England."[301] When he ate lunch in a hotel in Wadi Halfa," he was unnerved because the "waiters are Sudanese and have their tribal marks cut into their cheeks."[302] But when he saw signs of white Englishness, he felt better. During a refueling stopover in Moshi, Harry walked inside the air station house and enjoyed that "all was cool, clean and civilised and delightfully arranged, the refreshments on a snow white table cloth showed that some Englishwoman (or at least British) was doing her bit to make the tropics better and brighter."[303] The next day, in Entebbe, he sat in a dining room, which was next to the airplane, and "found besides Englishmen, smart and shaven in shorts and helmets and Englishwomen, smart and cool in white frocks, a really good English breakfast . . . ."[304] In the afternoon, he had a "good lunch in the local hotel with its wide verandah and a variety of English people there having mid-day aperitifs."[305] For Harry, eating "bacon and eggs, sausages, marmalade, butter, toast, and coffee and milk" amid English men and women had made grounded Entebbe "quite a town."[306]

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[301] From Harry to Dearest Mother, "A Good Letter," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, June 1936, 5.

[302] Ibid.

[303] From Harry to Dearest Mother, "A Good Letter," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, September 1936, 4.

[304] From Harry to Dearest Mother, "A Good Letter," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, August 1936, 3.

[305] Ibid.

[306] Ibid.

Flying, airline passengers enjoyed watching colonial landscapes and lives unfold on the ground beneath them. Over land, the above perspective afforded them distance and detachment. It was a crucial part of how they experienced the empire. How did aboveness change on long-haul, over water flights? Above water, how did passengers experience the empire?

Above Water

As chapter two explained, in the opening years of the twentieth century, some people in Britain believed that motion at high speeds erased the process and experience of traveling. This idea coexisted with the idea that air travel created new journeys and quests. The tense dynamic underpinning this counterpoint underlay the development of transatlantic airline services in Britain. It was part of how Imperial Airways cultivated the image of airline travel as more modern than the already modern steamship voyage; and, without land as a constant visual reference point, it was how the company made sustained aboveness over long stretches of water seem like a sophisticated, interesting, and necessary experience.

For example, in January and February 1938, the *Gazette* published an article called "To Bermuda by Air." The article was a letter written by Lester D. Gardner, who was the Secretary of the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences in America. An American, Gardner, had flown many times, including across the Atlantic on the *Hindenburg* airship. He wrote this letter to "describe a flight that anyone in the United States can make without long preliminary travel," and first published it in *Shell Aviation News*.[307] When Imperial Airways reprinted it, the letter served a different purpose. Surrounding the first

[307] Lester D. Gardner, "To Bermuda by Air," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, January 1938, 2.

installment of the letter were other articles called "Modern Travel for Modern People," "The 250,000th Air Passenger," and "The Businessman's Impressions of Long-Distance Air Travel."[308] Adjoining the second installment were articles about "Speed and the *Empire* Flying-Boat" and "The Short History of the Empire's Airways."[309] To a British audience, Gardner's letter, which described traveling an Imperial Airways Empire class flying boat from New York to Bermuda, was about onboard interior entertainments and not about the onboard pleasures of exterior vitas. Almost hypnotically, he explained,

> And now you are rapidly going to sea. Below is the lane of ocean steamers; they look like the little toy ships you give to children. The sea is quite calm, no whitecaps showing. . . . You will have so enjoyed looking at the blue seascape which now extends to the horizon in all directions that you will suddenly realize that you have been so interested that you have not explored the interior of the *Cavalier* [emphasis in original].[310]

Having declared the watery scene outside the aircraft intoxicating but ultimately monotonous, he encouraged readers to "hasten to occupy one of the eight large club chairs reserved for smoking and drinking. . . . Seven thousand feet and at sea and all the comforts and delights of a steamer's smoking room."[311] He told them to stroll "the famous promenade" and enjoy the "modernistic effect" of the two-tiered flying boat.[312] He steered women to the "two lavatories, one for men and one for women." This "luxury

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[308] For all articles, see *Imperial Airways Gazette*, January 1938.

[309] For all articles, see *Imperial Airways Gazette*, February 1938.

[310] Lester D. Gardner, "To Bermuda by Air," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, January 1938, 2.

[311] Ibid.

[312] Lester D. Gardner, "To Bermuda by Air," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, February 1938, 2.

in the air" gave them "long occupancy for feminine 'make-up' without inconveniencing the unbeautified males."[313]

An article in the *Gazette*, "To Bermuda by Air" was about transatlantic flight. When Gardner flew, the New York-Bermuda air route was only a few years old. Imperial Airways and Pan Am jointly and equally owned and operated it. As the next chapter explains at length, seemingly unexpected places constituted the first bookends of commercial air routes across the Atlantic Ocean. Quite literally, on the surface, a route between New York and Bermuda does not appear trans-atlantic; after all, they are on the same side of the ocean. However, in the 1930s, when the United States and Britain coalesced to create a jointly owned air route between a city and a colony, the map of the transatlantic changed dramatically. With its owners and operators lodged on either side of the ocean, the British flying boat, suspended *above* the water between New York and Bermuda, crossed the Atlantic in a radically new way. And as Gardner explained to readers of the *Gazette*, the entertainments of transatlantic airline travel allowed passengers to cocoon inside the airplane cabin, distracting them from the seemingly uninteresting and unimportant things happening outside their windows, in the places on the surface below:

> The New York-Bermuda air route may therefore be regarded as one of the short branch lines of a great air network which will eventually connect England with all parts of the British Empire just as the New York-Bermuda route is also part of the far-flung systems of Pan American Airways.[314]

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[313] Ibid.

[314] Lester D. Gardner, "To Bermuda by Air," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, January 1938, 2.

Ordinary Observations

In 1975, the British writer David Lodge said, "Flying is, after all, the only way to travel." Explaining, he described two men flying simultaneously on two different flights in opposite directions across the Atlantic in 1969. Philip Swallow was "flying westward, is unaccustomed to air travel; while to Morris Zapp, slouched in the seat of his eastbound aircraft . . . the experience of long-distance travel is tediously familiar."[315]

In 1979, the Cuban-born Italian writer Italo Calvino observed, "To fly is the opposite of traveling." Elaborating, he captured the feelings of loss, disconnection, and displacement that amass when

> you cross a gap in space, you vanish into the void, you accept not being in any place for a duration that is itself a kind of void in time: then you reappear, in a place and in a moment with no relation to the where and the when in which you vanished.[316]

In 1984, the American novelist Don DeLillo cataloged the humdrum, isolation, and tedium felt by a young woman driving to the airport anticipating, "The enormity of the mission, of flying to a foreign country at nearly supersonic speed, at thirty thousand feet, alone, in a humped container of titanium and steel, caused her to grow momentarily silent."[317] Seven years later, he explained the disorientation and exhaustion embodied when

> feeling as though she'd been away for a month, six weeks, a sense of home folding over her now. These cups and spoons made her feel intact again, reclaimed her from the jet trails, the physics of being in transit. She was so weary

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[315] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Lodge, *Changing Places,* 8-12.

[316] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Italo Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, trans. William Weaver (1979; repr., London: Vintage, 1998), 210.

[317] Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (New York: Viking Press, 1984), 212.

> she could hear it, a ringing in the bones, and she had to keep reminding herself she'd been gone for less than two days.[318]

In 1995, the French anthropologist Marc Augé told Pierre Dupont's story. Dupont was flying from Paris to Bangkok. After a series of incessant encounters with automated voices and displayed goods at a cash machine and in the airport, he boarded his flight and

> adjusted his earphones, selected Channel 5 and allowed himself to be invaded by the adagio of Joseph Haydn's Concerto No. 1 in E major. For a few hours (the time it would take to fly over the Mediterranean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal), he would be alone at last.[319]

Flying, Dupont was in a non-place. Augé argued that a site of transit, such as an airport lounge, expressway, high-speed train, or jet, is a non-place. It is neither here nor there. Like a corridor, it connects to here, and it connects to there; and it connects the here to the there. For Augé, a non-place is "the opposite of utopia: it exists, and it does not contain any organic society."[320] It a space of "supermodernity," which means it is outside of history and exists only for the individual.[321] As Augé put it, "There is no room there for history unless it has been transformed into an element of spectacle, usually in allusive texts [such as an in-flight magazine article on the history of airline travel]. What reigns there is actuality, the urgency of the present moment."[322] Thus, as Haydn pumped through earphones to entertain Dupont, Dupont was alone in a non-place (despite the

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[318] Don DeLillo, *Mao II* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 87.

[319] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (1992; repr., New York: Verso, 1995), 6.

[320] Ibid., 111.

[321] Ibid. For Augé, the defining feature of modernity was "[t]he presence of the past in a present that supersedes it but still lays claim to it." Ibid., 75.

[322] Ibid., 103.

hundreds of other passengers who surrounded him).[323] Non-experience was the experience of airline travel.

Consideration of how mass airline travel culture developed reveals that the tension between flight as experience and non-experience, flight as travel and as the opposite of traveling, worked together to create and sustain this industry over time. Less than a decade after Imperial Airways started offering airline services, references to the experience of flight as ordinary appeared in the *Gazette*. They ran alongside the more dominant theme of airline travel as expedition. Often, they were found inside of other references; usually, the references were about the history of air travel; frequently, the history offered up the recent past as the technological inferior to the present. For example, an article from February 1933 talked about the airline's London-Paris service, which Imperial Airways first opened in late April 1924. The author recalled, "In those days every other trip was an adventure: in these, no trip is an adventure." Linking the lack of adventure to technological progress and the advancement of technical skills, he decided,

> they [the pilots] make the flying of a large transport machine, carrying, perhaps, thirty-eight passengers, seem simple, ordinary, and uneventful. They make it seem so ordinary a thing that its successful accomplishment does not seem to call for praise.[324]

For other authors, air travel stripped of adventure established the airline as modern. Compared to the steamship companies, which promoted their first and tourist-class services as modern transoceanic adventures, Imperial Airways crafted a definition

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[323] Augé recounted how Dupont experienced his flight. He did not observed the other passengers. He did note that "passengers boarded without problems." But, once on-board and airborne, he only described the actions of Dupont. Ibid., 3.

[324] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see "Imperial Airways London-Paris Service," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, February 1933, 2.

of travel in which the lack of adventure was a sign of the modern. For instance, another *Gazette* article from the 1930s instructed, "air travel has now indeed come into its own." For this author, airline travel, "is no longer an adventure but one of the modern comforts and conveniences." He linked this version of the modern to class and access, noting that airline travel was in the process of becoming an upper and middle class habit "at the disposal of every traveller and at a price which now compares favourably with that of any first-class surface transport."[325]

Later references to airline travel as unadventurous and modern explicitly incorporated aboveness. In the summer and fall of 1937, Imperial Airways and several British railway companies co-sponsored an exhibition called "The Empire's Airways."[326] The exhibit was held in two Victorian railway coaches, which toured through towns in England, Scotland, and Wales. The exhibition aimed to promote awareness about airline services and airmail effectiveness. It displayed aircraft models, models of passenger accommodations, miniature wireless sets, and sets of miniature postbox stations where visitors practiced airmailing letters to South Africa. The exterior of the railroad cars were stained "shining sky-blue" and along their sides, red painted letters read, "The aeroplane in the sky carries us above mediocre things"[327]

The assertion that airline travel situated passengers above the mediocre was curious, especially since the parallel discourse was saying that airline travel was an adventure above exotic colonial life and striking foreign landscapes. On the one hand, it

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[325] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see "To Paris While You Lunch," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, January 1934, 4.

[326] The following railway companies participated in the exhibition scheme: Great Western, the London, Midland and Scottish, the London and North Eastern, and the Southern Railways.

[327] "The Empire's Airway Exhibition Train," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, August 1937, 3.

suggested that life on the ground was mundane and pedestrian; that airline travel offered an escape. On the other hand, it was a statement which hinted that the airborne airplane was becoming an ordinary part of everyday life. In the context of an exhibition, the words on the exterior and the things on the interior worked in tandem to display the new and the curious; to teach visitors how to gaze, interpret, and interact with the unfamiliar; to make the abnormal normal.[328] As one visitor predicted, "If the Imperial Airways keeps up its present rate of progress the children will be glad to remember the funny things that to-day seem so marvelous and so safe to us."[329] In the future, airline travel will be common, and from that vantage point, histories, hindsight, and memories will render its inception remarkable.

Conclusion

This chapter questioned how does a state make a nation and empire of fliers after an air war. After the First World War, Imperial Airways, the state's chosen instrument, helped to cultivate air mindedness in Britain and abroad. Though its passengers were few, the airline published a monthly periodical that functioned as a magazine and as a guidebook. Articles, advertisements, and illustrations in the *Gazette* taught readers about the airline and its services. They told them how to use the new airmail system. They explained what it was like to travel by air, and they told readers that airline travel was intimately entwined in imperial endeavors and the imagery of empire.

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[328] Timothy Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol. 31, no. 2 (April 1989): 217-236; Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, esp. 17-72.

[329] "The Empire's Airway Exhibition Train," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, August 1937, 3.

In the *Gazette,* articles and letters written by the first generation of airline travelers revealed that aboveness played an important role in shaping how people understood the advantages of air transport. Above land, on the empire routes, several of them commented on how they enjoyed looking down on nature and the colonies. For many of them airline travel was extraordinary, almost remarkable. Above water, they tended to describe flight as ordinary, almost commonplace. From its inception, airline travel was unfamiliar and familiar. Together, they helped create a flying culture and a culture of flying. Airspace had become a place.[330] The airliner was a constructed environment. Airborne, it unfolded experiences, perspectives, and perceptions, shaping how landscapes and lives were seen, navigated, negotiated, and understood. In the future, a class of real and imagined air-dwellers will make it their business to call this seemingly transient place 'home.'[331]

[330] Several scholars have commented on the concrete differences between space and place. For examples, see Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977); Yi-Fun Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974). Also, see essays in Paul C. Adams, Steven Hoelscher, and Karen E. Till, eds., *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). I thank David William Cohen for encouraging me to imagine air as a space and a place.

[331] For an example, see Walter Kirn, *Up in the Air* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

CHAPTER FOUR

ROUTED: THE FAILED HISTORY OF CARIBBEAN AIRWAYS

Fig. 4.1. Imperial Airways, *Map of Empire and European Air Routes*, 1936. Reproduction courtesy of the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution; the British Airways Archive and Museum.

The last chapter looked at how the first generation of airline travelers experienced flight. This chapter examines the history of an air route. In the late 1930s, Imperial Airways published two maps. The first map was from 1936. It displayed the airline's European and empire routes (see fig. 4.1). It showed the world up, in the air. In a cloud-filled blue sky, continents floated. Only air routes connected them. Speedbird, the Imperial Airways logo, was also up there.

The map depicted three types of routes. There was a solid green route, which other air transportation companies operated. There was a broken yellow route, parts of which were "projected" and "under investigation for operation" by or in conjunction with Imperial Airways.[332] There was an unbroken yellow route, which Imperial Airways and its associated companies operated.[333]

The map was two-dimensional. The entire scene unfolded in the sky. There were no oceans.

An arrow on the green route's far left end said the map read from right to left. In the center was London. All of the routes seemed to originate and bundle there. From Britain, they spread across the world. When and where in the world the yellow routes touched bounded space, land materialized. Sometimes a name only appeared: Marseilles, Vienna, New York, and Saigon. Other times, whole territories illuminated. They were named and their regions, capitals, cities, and towns were named: the Dominions of Canada, Kenya, Lagos, and Sydney. The territories had lakes and they had rivers. They were pink, the cartographic color for the places possessed by Britain. The rest of the world was grey, empty space. Even as the green route cut through and wrapped around the world, the spaces it touched remained without grounds.

From a bird's eye view, the map changed. Inside the light blue, darker shades of blue created depth. The map was three-dimensional. The entire scene unfolded in

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[332] Imperial Airways, *Map of Empire and European Air Routes*, 1936, A19900605000, ct. neg. 98-20236, NASM.

[333] According to the map, the associated companies were Indian Trans Continental Airways, which operated the Karachi-Singapore route in conjunction with Imperial Airways; Qantas Empire Airways, which operated the Singapore-Brisbane route in conjunction with Imperial Airways; Rhodesia & Nyasaland Airways, which had feeder services to Rhodesia, Nyasaland, and Portuguese East Africa; Wilson Airways, which had feeder services to Kenya, Tanganyika, and Zanzibar.

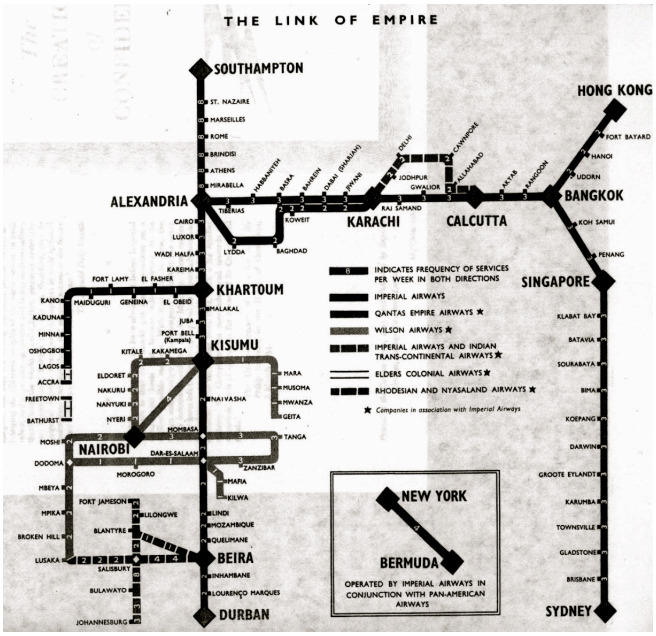

Fig. 4.2. "The Link of Empire," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, May 1938.
F1I-600000-05, at the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

relation to the ground. There were oceans, but they were unnamed. From London, the yellow routes flowed and touched the possessed, turned pink territories. The green route passed through grounded places stripped of political geography.

Two spheres were also on the map. The smaller sphere was a key. It explained the three routes. The larger sphere was another map. It only showed the routes Imperial Airways and its affiliates operated; it was the unbroken yellow route configured differently. On this map within a map, there was no land. Instead, in miles, it measured and displayed the air distance from London to each destination. Colors and shapes indicated the "daily and greater" frequency of flights.[334]

In 1938, Imperial Airways published another map. It was called "The Link of Empire." It showed the different routes operated by Imperial Airways and the associated

[334] Imperial Airways, *Map of Empire and European Air Routes*, 1936, A19900605000, ct. neg. 98-20236, NASM.

companies (see fig. 4.2). Numbers inside of each route indicated the frequency of flights flown per week, in both directions.

Between the two maps, there were striking differences. This map erased topography and reconfigured geography. There was no land, water, or air; no sense of depth or distance, thus no above or below. The frequency of flights was the only reference to time. There were no countries and no point of origin. There were cities, but London was not one of them.[335]

"The Link of Empire" was a map of perpetual movement. Each number represented two airplanes in motion.[336] There was no sense of when and where routes and times started and stopped; the airplanes moved constantly through a continuous closed circuit system of straight lines and square switch points.

Both maps represented routes as networks. At first glance, both sets of networks appeared closed. On the first map, the routes linked and flowed in a seamless line across the world; however, Imperial Airways had imagined the yellow route that ran over the Atlantic Ocean, down the eastern United States, down the Caribbean Sea, between London and Portugal, between Kano, Lagos, and Takoradi, and between eastern Australia and New Zealand. On the second map, all but one route twisted and branched through many places. They formed a single unbroken link through the empire; all of them existed

[335] Probably, the intended point of origin was Southampton. Imperial Airways used long-range flying boats on the empire routes. Flying boats departed from the harbor in Southampton and not from the aerodrome outside of London. However, the map did not say. There is no reason to not imagine Durban or Bima as points of origin.

[336] For example, the map showed one "4" on the route between Nairobi and Kisumu. Imperial Airways offered four one-way flights each week, in each direction. Thus, eight flights moved weekly on this route. On other routes, it is possible that the places listed between 'anchor cities' were stopovers. For example, Penang and Koh Samui might have been stopovers on the Singapore-Bangkok route, which would change the number of airplanes circulating. However, the document did not say. It would be amiss to assume that historical actors from the late 1930s would have interpreted the map in this way.

and operated. Boxed near the bottom was the one route that did not bend. Imagined on the first map and realized on the second, the line between Bermuda and New York was set apart from the others.[337]

Bermuda-New York was the first transatlantic route between Britain and the United States. Subsidized by and symbols of their states, Imperial Airways and Pan Am jointly operated an airline service between the colony and the city. On June 16, 1937, scheduled passenger services began. Weekly, the airlines offered two return flights. In less than a year, the frequency of scheduled flights had doubled.[338]

Promotional materials for Bermuda-New York showed the airlines advertising the route as transatlantic. For example, a timetable and tariff brochure explained, "[T]he world's two greatest air transport systems . . . operate their giant multi-engined ocean airliners over this, the first of trans-Atlantic air routes." It described the alliance between Imperial Airways and Pan Am as a sensible feat, "a practical miracle of modern transportation . . . ."[339]

The alliance opened territories and markets. Imperial Airways was the first foreign airline to obtain landing rights in the United States. In exchange, Pan Am hoped to gain access to the entire British empire, and not just Bermuda. As William Van Dusen, the publicity director of Pan Am, put it, the United States had joined "one of the

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[337] Two works influenced how I read the maps. They are J. B. Harley, "Deconstructing the Map," *Cartographica* vol. 26, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 1-20; Edward R. Tufte, *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative* (Cheshire: Graphics Press, 1997).

[338] Imperial Airways and Pan Am used flying boats on the Bermuda-New York route. Typically, a flight lasted five and one-half hours.

[339] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see "New York-Bermuda in 5 Hours," Timetable and Tariff Brochure, 6 April 1938, R. E. G. Davies Files, NASM. The airlines advertised New York-Bermuda as the ideal route for business travelers and tourists alike: "Alternate schedules are ideally suited to the vacationist and the business traveler. . . . Here is the combination of distinct advantages for those whom time is important but who wish the utmost in convenience—and luxurious travel . . . ." Ibid.

greatest of the world's great air transport systems whose networks of routes spread across Europe, Africa, Asia, and India, already cover half the globe."[340]

The alliance broadened the international scope of the United States and Britain. Reflecting on the new relationship with "our British cousins," Van Dusen observed, "Big and exciting things are happening in this world airway picture these days. Bigger things are going to be happening before very long." Together, the airlines were "moulding a new and powerful world force, assigning to aviation a role that goes far beyond anything heretofore expected of ordinary means of transport and communication."[341]

American and British newspapers praised the partnership. They argued that the development of an air route between Bermuda and New York reconfigured existing maps and enabled each country to extend its global influence with greater efficiency. A correspondent for the *New York Times* noted that the alliance "will close the only gap left in a system whereby the world will be girdled by air transport."[342] Another journalist for an American newspaper remarked, "Versatile Bermuda thus adds to its role . . . an important function as a 'stepping stone' on the projected southern transatlantic route."[343]

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[340] From William Van Dusen to Senor, 21 June 1937, Box 208, Pan American World Airways, Inc. Records, Special Collections Division, Otto G. Richter Library, University of Miami, Coral Gables, (hereinafter, PAA).

[341] As Van Dusen continued, his language made clear that he was thinking of the empire, "Imperial Airways is the chief artery of the Empire, the tissue by which the far-flung members of the vast British Empire are being knit together. The big gun is an amazing, national drive to put Great Britain first in the air as she has been, from time immemorial, first on the seas. It is the plan of Empire that Imperial Airways' argosies, flying the British ensign shall encircle the globe." For all passages quoted in the footnote and the paragraph, see ibid.

[342] *The Times* (New York), "Atlantic Air Service: Agreement with U.S.," December 13, 1935. LH 15/3/120, at the LHCMA.

[343] "Bermuda at the End of Plane Route," July 16, 1937. F2-788040-25, at the NASM.

A writer for the *Times* in London hoped "[t]he first link" would extend eastwards through Portugal's Azores islands to Britain.[344]

Radio programs also celebrated the opening of the new route. On June 8, 1937, the National Broadcasting Corporation of America (hereinafter, NBC) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (hereinafter, BBC) aired the observations of Captain W. N. Cumming, a British pilot who was carrying out the last experimental flight before the service began. During the broadcast, Cumming commanded an Empire class flying boat called the *Cavalier* from Bermuda to New York, and chronicled what he could see from 3,000 feet up in the air. As he described watching "the white roofs of Bermuda" turn quickly into "the dark buildings of New York," listeners in the Americas and throughout the British empire heard the captain commend two countries for facilitating a single "remarkable flight."[345]

Less than a month after Bermuda-New York opened, Imperial Airways and Pan Am started surveying the Atlantic Ocean.[346] Each wanted to establish an east-west airline service across the South and the North Atlantic corridors. By sharing landing rights in New York and Bermuda, and by obtaining landing rights from the Portuguese, the United States and Britain could operate separate airline services on the South Atlantic crossing, which the French and the German dominated. Generally, the weather was favorable on

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[344] *The Times* (London), "Ocean Flying: Five Air-Minded Nations," October 3, 1935. LH 15/3/120, at the LHCMA. For other celebratory remarks about the alliance between Pan Am and Imperial Airways, see C. B. Allen, "Want to Fly the Atlantic," n.d. F2-788040-25, at the NASM; *The Times* (New York), "Wings Roar Over Seas Skyways," December 17, 1939. F2-788040-25, at the NASM.

[345] Captain W. N. Cumming, "Bermuda to New York," *Imperial Airways Gazette*, July 1937, 4.

[346] For example, Imperial Airways and Pan Am carried out the first commercial survey flight across the North Atlantic on July 5-6, 1937. Imperial Airways, "First Experimental Trans-Atlantic Flight West and Eastbound," July 1937, AW/1/7271, British Airways Archive and Museum Collection, Hounslow, U.K., (hereinafter, BAAM).

the southern route and the Azores provided a good refueling station midway between North America and Europe.

The North Atlantic passage was notoriously dangerous. A flight from England to Canada, by way of the Irish Free State and Newfoundland, spanned more than 2,000 miles of ocean, lasted approximately sixteen hours, and was restricted to the summer months. As the General Manager of Short Brothers, which was one of the first aircraft manufacturing companies in the world, explained to the Institution for Mechanical Engineers, "The transatlantic route is the most difficult on which to establish regular services, due to the variable weather conditions, the presence of regions below freezing temperature, and the necessity of covering a great distance non-stop."[347] Nevertheless, from 1919 onwards, when the first heavier-than-air machines flew nonstop across the North Atlantic, airlines and governments tried to develop a commercial air service between North America and Northern Europe.[348] As a correspondent for an American newspaper said, "It is recognized that the northern route is much shorter and therefore will have the advantage of more economical operation . . . ."[349] For Britain, the route was

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[347] A. Gouge, "Transatlantic Air Transport with Particular Reference to Flying Boats," The *Institution of Mechanical Engineers* (London: The Institution of Mechanical Engineers, 1939), 3. F2-788040-25, at the NASM. For other sources describing the North Atlantic corridor as dangerous, see passages explaining, "Bridging the North Atlantic by regular services involved flying greater overall mileage than on the southern route and contending with more boisterous and uncertain weather." "Atlantic Mails by Air," March 1935. F2-788040-25, at the NASM; "The local weather bureau declares that in the course of the year there is a very limited number of clear days when it is safe to fly the Atlantic." "*The Times* (New York), "Atlantic Air Navigation," May 16, 1929. F2-788040-20, at the NASM.

[348] As one source put it, "It was obvious that Germans, Americans, Englishmen, and Frenchmen have been anxious for many years to secure landing permits, ground organizations, and meteorological service, necessary for a North Atlantic air service." Otto Julius Merkel, "North Atlantic Air Service: Germany's Preliminary Work—Plans of the U.S.A.," n.d., F2-788040-25, NASM.

[349] "Atlantic Air Service Soon to be Reality," June 10, 1936. F2-788040-25, at the NASM. A project engineer from the Glenn L. Martin aircraft company underscored the economic importance of this route when he explained to the Society of Automotive Engineers in Detroit, Michigan, "The North Atlantic between Europe and North America is the most active oceanic trade route in the whole world. In a normal year approximately 100 billion pounds of merchandise may be expected to traverse this route. . . . In

critical. As Van Dusen sharply noted, "[T]hey must bridge the North Atlantic to complete the final link in an empire chain to hold every land under the British flag to the mother country."[350]

The development of airline travel across the North Atlantic required Pan Am and Imperial Airways to coalesce and create a transatlantic service between New York and Bermuda.[351] However, the formation of this route rested on the fate of a local airline in Jamaica. At the center of what will prevail as the most powerful commercial air route in the world, is a colonial airline.[352]

Six years before Bermuda-New York opened, the first local airline in the British West Indies faced bankruptcy. In 1931, officials and elites in colonial Jamaica asked the empire-state for financial assistance. That year, the fate of this company forced the government in Britain to question: were colonial airlines necessary for imperial airline services?

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addition approximately one quarter of a million first class passengers travel each way across the North Atlantic annually. This tremendous potential volume of air traffic has stimulated ingenious and intensive development . . . ." L. C. McCarty, Jr., "Ocean Air Transport," January 1937, F2-788040-25, NASM.

[350] From William Van Dusen to Senor, 21 June 1937, Box 208, PAA.

[351] As Van Dusen explained, Bermuda-New York was "significant as it is of a new, swift link between the United States and nearby-but-foreign Bermuda as the first air service actually gotten under way on the North Atlantic—bears an even greater importance." Ibid.

[352] Several authors have commented on the longstanding importance of the North Atlantic route. R. E. G. Davies has remarked, "The North Atlantic was a formidable barrier between the two main industrial and commercial parts of the world; but this commercial need was a stimulant to the ingenuity of those concerned with air transport . . . ." Brian Graham has reminded, "The North Atlantic is the most important international market for air transportation, contributing almost one quarter of total IATA [International Air Transport Association] scheduled international passenger kms and over 33 million passengers in 1993. The US-Europe scheduled market accounts for 85 per cent of total transatlantic travel. . . . Historically, the North Atlantic has been a lucrative market for airlines . . . ." Kenneth R. Sealy has observed, "Of the international routes, the great North American bridge connecting the North American communities with Europe is by far the most outstanding feature." Davies, *A History of the World's Airlines*, 319; Graham, *Geography and Air Transport*, 169; Sealy, *The Geography of Air Transport*, 80.

This chapter engages that question. First, it explores why officials in Britain encouraged local entrepreneurs in the West Indies to develop regional airline services. It finds that they wanted to establish airline services in the Caribbean for imperial purposes, but they did not want to fund the project.

Second, the chapter examines the relationship between local colonial airlines and broader imperial projects. A discussion of specific vocabularies and visions reveals that concerns about the empire's future underpinned the development of colonial airlines. Reading the cacophonous debates about the role of local airline services sheds light on a question that officials had to face: could colonial airlines compete in the international market without imperial funds? The last section takes up this question. It suggests that entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, and officials all used the idiom of accountability to argue for and against rescuing an almost bankrupt colonial airline in the West Indies.

The West Indian Air Transport Committee

Two years after Imperial Airways commenced operations, the Air Ministry in Britain became preoccupied with airline development in the West Indies. In 1926, Samuel Hoare, who was the Secretary of State for Air, asked colleagues in the Colonial Office to help him create a West Indian Air Transport Committee. Based in London, the committee consisted of three delegates from the Air Ministry and one delegate from each of the following divisions: the Colonial Office, the Department of Overseas Trade, the General Post Office, the West India Committee, and the West Indian Aviation Committee.

Hoare campaigned avidly for the development of colonial airlines. He asked his newly formed committee to "consider generally what opportunities exist" for commercial

aviation in the West Indies.[353] A year later, the committee submitted its final report. Hoare declared it a "valuable survey."[354]

The committee advocated for airline services in the West Indies. The delegates were "impressed with the many advantages the West Indies would derive from air transport." One advantage was geographic. The image of the airplane overcoming natural obstacles ran throughout the report. For example, the committee conceived of the West Indies as "extended from British Guiana on the mainland in a chain of islands of roughly 1,800 miles in length and separated in some cases by considerable distances." Expansive geography placed the West Indies "in a position to derive the maximum benefit from the rapid transport facilities and the speeding-up of inter-island communications which regular air services would afford." Words such as 'rapid' and speeding-up' illuminated the government's desire to accelerate transportation flows between the island colonies. They also underscored the government's faith in the idea that air travel would bridge physical distances faster than the maritime system already in place.[355]

Air services reimagined which places belonged to the West Indies. The committee did not include all British territories touched by the Caribbean Sea in its definition of West Indies. Ironically, it argued that physical constraints forced the committee to exclude certain places from its plans. Notwithstanding the flexibility,

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[353] West Indian Air Transport Committee (hereinafter, WIATC), "Terms of Reference," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies, Reports,* Cmd. 2968 (September 1927), A2. CO 318/386/7, at the Public Records Office, Kew, U.K. (hereinafter, PRO).

[354] Prefatory Note from Sir Samuel Hoare to Members of British Parliament (4 October 1927), in WIATC, *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies,* 4.

[355] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see WIATC, "Introduction," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 5.

directness, and openness of airspace, "[w]e regret that, owing to the comparatively isolated position of British Honduras it has not been practicable to include this Colony in our proposals."[356]

Air services defined in relationship to geographic utility often overlapped a desire to improve communication flows between the colonies. According to the report, airlines across the West Indies "would provide regular and rapid transport between islands where means of communication are now either non-existent or intermittent and so tend to draw closer the bonds of common interest."[357] The impulse to transmit information efficiently, consistently, and quickly was linked to ideas about unity and kinship.

The committee's interest in improving communication networks between colonies worked in tandem with Britain's postwar desire to tighten administrative bonds across the empire.[358] As the report put it, air services "would in some cases effect a saving of a fortnight on mails to and from Europe and would facilitate administration of the islands of the Lesser Antilles."[359]

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[356] Ibid.

[357] WIATC, "West Indies Service," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 7.

[358] Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control.*

[359] WIATC, "West Indies Service," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 7. Survey work and trade were some of the other advantages mentioned by the committee. For the relationship between survey work and air transport, see passages explaining "operations subsidiary to the air service to be undertaken to the advantage of the Colonies . . . in particular, air surveys, which in the present backward state of trigonometrical and topographical surveys of the West Indian Islands would be of great value." Ibid. For trade, see passages summarizing, "In view of the recent development of trade between Canada and the West Indies, we desire, although the subject is outside of our terms of reference, to draw attention to the advantages which would accrue from the establishment of an air service between these two parts of the Empire." WIATC, "Canada and the West Indies," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 17.

References to the construction of an air route between British Guiana and Trinidad provide a clear example of the inter-colonial and imperial advantages of airmail. The committee believed that existing maritime services between Trinidad and Guiana, and between Trinidad, Guiana, and Britain, were "far from satisfactory" and "irregular."[360] By sea and land, freight sent from Britain to Guiana passed through Trinidad first. Then, it traveled 360 miles from Trinidad to Guiana. The journey lasted thirty-six hours to one week. To move freight faster, the committee recommended airmail. A three-engine seaplane or flying boat service between Trinidad and Guiana would reduce transit time to four hours.[361]

The committee anticipated airline travelers swiftly island hopping. As the last chapter explained, the committee made decisions at a time when most travelers traversed oceans by steamship and existing airlines accommodated a maximum of twenty passengers. It knew that the "carriage of mails by air is more lucrative bulk for bulk than passenger traffic."[362] Nonetheless, delegates delighted in the image of people flying to destinations in hours instead of days by boat.[363]

The image did not include the vast majority of West Indians. As migrant workers moved back and forth between islands, and the islands confronted extended population

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[360] WIATC, "Trinidad-British Guiana Route," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 11.

[361] As Douglas Anglin has argued, the airplane challenged the "slow and infrequent" surface mail service and revolutionized communication between the islands. Douglas G. Anglin, "The Political Development of the West Indies," in *The West Indies Federation: Perspectives on a New Nation,* ed. David Lowenthal (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 40.

[362] WIATC, "West Indies Service," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 8.

[363] For an example of delegates envisioning human traffic swiftly flying between islands, see passages explaining how air services between Trinidad and St. Kitts would generate a "saving in time" of seven days. WIATC, *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 8.

pressures, the writers of the report described airline travelers as "first class passengers."[364] They investigated "the prospects of future development of tourist traffic."[365] They envisioned passengers as leisure travelers and not "the comparatively small . . . population of the islands" who could not afford high priced airline tickets.[366]

The acquisition of natural resources shaped the kinds of air services the committee outlined. In one section of the report, it diagramed "the many advantages . . . from Imperial and commercial standpoints . . . the extensive scope for the employment of aircraft in survey and forestry work." Focusing on British Guiana, the committee argued that an amphibious aircraft such as the seaplane could open-up areas difficult to reach by land. It could provide fast and easy access to natural resources, and thus to potential commodities:

> The Commission, appointed [in Britain by parliament] to enquire into the question of a railway to the Mazaruni [a river in which the committee said "valuable merchandise" existed], reported that the knowledge of the mineral, timber and other natural resources of the Colony was limited to certain areas adjacent to the main waterways below the rapids and to the diamond and gold mining areas above the rapids. Further surveys are, we understand, now in progress and the employment of aircraft would enable these operations to be carried out and extended with a minimum of time and effort.[367]

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[364] WIATC, "Trinidad-British Guiana Route," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 11. For a discussion of population pressures escalating in Trinidad, British Guiana, Jamaica, and Barbados during the interwar period, see Elisabeth Wallace, *The British Caribbean: From the Decline of Colonialism to the End of Federation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

[365] WIATC, "West Indies Service," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 8.

[366] WIATC, "Summary," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 17. The committee also said, "Our discussions have made clear that there would be in the early years no possibility of a load of ten passengers being realised over the whole route on a regular weekly service at such fares. Even a load of five passengers would be uncertain, by reason of the comparatively small size and population of the islands to which the additional facilities would afford the most obvious advantage." WIATC, "West Indies Service," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 8.

[367] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see WIATC, "British Guiana," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 13.

Of the different natural resources discussed in the report, petroleum played an important role. The delegates said that seaplanes capable of carrying full oil drums between the north coast of Venezuela and Trinidad created "favourable opportunities" for Britain. Reconfiguring the geography of oil, they wanted to "connect the rich oil districts at Maracaibo and Curaçao with Trinidad." More than a link between places, an air route between Trinidad and Venezuela opened-up opportunities for trade. As the delegates explained, "[C]ertain oil companies that have expressed their willingness to take a financial interest in any British air transport company operating this route and to give certain assurances as to the utilisation of the air service."[368]

Ideas about foreign companies funding British air services were peculiar. Throughout the report, the committee commented on foreign airline operations, which strengthened its recommendation for "establishing British air services . . . as soon as reasonably possible."[369] Delegates noted, "[S]everal applications have recently been made by foreign undertakings."[370] They talked about "certain American companies" that offered "intermittent pleasure trips" from Florida to the Bahamas, which revealed that officials in Britain knew that foreign airlines like Pan Am were active in the Caribbean

[368] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see WIATC, "Trinidad-Curaçao-Maracaibo," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 11-12. It is possible that a desire to rival SCADTA, a Columbian airline, motivated delegates on the committee. In their report, they noted a proposal "put forward by Sociedad Colombo-Alemana de Transportes Aeroes to include Trinidad in its itinerary of an air service planned to be operated from Colon to Barranquilla and Curaçao and along the coast of Venezuela." see WIATC, "Past and Present Air Operations in the West Indies," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 7.

[369] WIATC, "Introduction," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 5.

[370] Ibid.

colonies.[371] They declared it "desirable, to prevent foreign penetration" in the West Indies.[372] They decided that protecting "British interests" depended upon kinking and constraining the influence of foreign companies in the colonies.[373]

Discussions about revenue complicate why the committee might have found the financial support of foreign investors appealing. The delegates were concerned about "finance and the difficulties of assuring adequate revenue," and fears about funds constrained the image of airline travel they were willing to conjure and carry out for the colonies.[374] They supported the development of air services, but

> hesitate to recommend that . . . a large subsidy from Imperial Funds should be devoted to the establishment of this particular service. The conclusion forced on us, therefore is that a scheme for a regular service throughout the West Indies cannot be for the present be entertained.[375]

Perhaps the committee wanted to use foreign funds to finance an imperial project, but other passages revealed that it had a slightly more "practical" plan in mind:

> The practical solution of the problem appears to be to establish first of all local services on those sections which seem to offer the best chance of early commercial success with the hope that, when their value has been demonstrated, the scope of the operations will be gradually extended to link up ultimately the whole of the West Indies.[376]

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[371] WIATC, "Past and Present Air Operations in the West Indies," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 7. Hoare was well aware of this fact. In his prefatory note to Parliament he said, "In view of the various proposals . . . which have from time to time been put forward for the operation of civil air services in and over the British West Indies . . . the possibilities of Air Transport in the British West Indies should be closely investigated." Prefatory Note from Sir Samuel Hoare to Members of British Parliament (4 October 1927), in WIATC, *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies,* 4.

[372] WIATC, "Introduction," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 5.

[373] Ibid.

[374] Ibid.

[375] WIATC, "West Indies Service," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 8.

[376] WIATC, "Local Opportunities," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 9.

The committee recommended that local colonial governments fund the project. To circumvent using imperial money to protect British interests, the empire-state had to convince colonial bureaucrats and elites in or interested in the Bahamas, Trinidad, British Guiana, the Windward Islands, and the Leeward Islands to build local airline services.[377] Ultimately, they were responsible for fusing and forging a British air transportation industry over the West Indies and across parts of the Atlantic.[378]

Local Colonial Airlines

As Frederick Cooper has demonstrated, the political cohesion of Britain's imperial system was highly unstable during the 1920s and 1930s, in part because territories such as South Africa, Canada, and Australia were transforming from colonies ruled indirectly by Britain to self-governing dominions.[379] It was precisely in these years that British officials cultivated the image of the airline as transformers of time and space; connectors between distant territories; facilitators of high-speed travel around the

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[377] The committee decided that the Bahamas, Trinidad, British Guiana, the Windward Islands, and the Leeward Islands were most likely to generate what it called "early commercial success."

[378] In 1919, delegates at the International Air Convention decided that all airlines registered in colonial territories must carry the nationality of their empire-states: "An aircraft shall not be entered on the register of one of the contracting States unless it belongs wholly to the nationals of such State." In this understanding, and in view of the recommendations proposed by the West Indian Air Transport Committee, all local airlines registered in the West Indian colonies were British by default. Air Ministry, *Convention Relating to International Air Navigation, Accounts and Papers,* Cmd. 226 (1919), article 5. Also, see articles in British aviation law that established that "[a]ircraft registered in the Colony, and aircraft registered in any other part of His Majesty's dominions when in and over the Colony, shall be deemed to be and are in this Order referred to as British Aircraft." Amendment, "The Air Navigation Act (Colonies, Protectorate, Mandated Territories)," Order No. 346 (1929) to Bill, *Air Navigation Act*, 1920, 1B/5/77/122, Jamaican National Archive, Spanish Town, Jamaica (hereinafter, JNA).

[379] Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. 23-109. For an overview of imperial politics during this period, see John Darwin, "The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century,* vol. 4, eds. Judith Brown and Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1999), 64-87.

empire.[380] For example, in 1923, Sir Alan Garrett Anderson, who was a Member of Parliament and a famous ship owner, noted how airplanes "enormously reduce" transport time.[381] For Anderson, the airline was the "magic carpet of the Arabian Night."[382] As chapter two illustrated, the British government had long since used exotic tropes to justify colonialism, however, it searched for new cultural and technological apparatuses to revive interest in the empire during the decades after the First World War.[383] The government's want for local airlines in the West Indies was part of a broader imperial project.

While Hoare's West Indian Air Transport Committee wrote its report, other conversations about airlines as instruments of "peace" and "imperial unity" circulated through official discourse.[384] In 1926, Hoare helped host an Imperial Conference in London. He asked delegates from the dominions, Britain, and the colonies for "advice

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[380] Indeed, British officials paired airplanes and imperialism before the First World War. For example, in 1911, Sir Joseph Ward briefly advised delegates at an imperial conference that the colonies might be "connected by the best possible means of mail communication, travel, and transportation," which he imagined were airplanes. Ward and others might have anticipated the relationship between airlines and empires, but their conversations were short-lived. They often said they couldn't say much; the machines did not exist. Sir Joseph Ward, Speech to Delegates 16 June 1911, "Minutes and Proceedings," *Imperial Conference*, Cmd. 5745 (1911), 345.

[381] Sir Alan Garrett Anderson, Speech to Delegates, 7 February 1923, Air Ministry, *The 3rd Air Conference*, Cmd. 2599 (6-7 February 1923), 96.

[382] Ibid.

[383] Several authors have written about the British government, exotic tropes, and colonialism. For the eighteenth century, see Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); for the nineteenth century, see essays in Lindsay J. Proudfoot and Michael Roche, eds., *Dis-Placing Empire: Renegotiating British Colonial Geographies* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2005); for the twentieth century, see essays in John M. MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

[384] Sir Samuel Hoare, "The Aeroplane as an Instrument of Peace and Imperial Unity," Speech to Delegates, 28 October 1926, "Appendices to the Summary of Proceedings," *Imperial Conference*, Cmd. 2769 (1926), 200.

and co-operation" on his new "Empire Air Route" project.[385] According to the mission statement, the project would build a single unbroken air route across the entire empire, and airlines would give "a physical unity to the Empire that it has never possessed before."[386]

Airlines did not automatically guarantee imperial unity. Hoare spoke as the Secretary of State for Air in a post air-war setting; he had to convince delegates that airlines were "objects of peace and goodwill" and not machines for "the destruction of civilization."[387] In his speeches, Hoare described airplanes as quixotic machines serving empires not nations:

> The invention of flying has brought more harm than good to the Empire . . . let us make the air a highway of peace, and the aeroplane an instrument, not for serving nations and destroying civilised life, but for making closer and more constant the unity of Imperial thought, Imperial intercourse, and Imperial ideals.[388]

According to Hoare, the Empire Air Route would attend to imperial and not national needs. It would promote tolerance and shared ideals. It would foster affinity and like-mindedness. It would bring the territories closer together.

Delegates dedicated to converting colonies and dominions into self-governing states doubted Hoare's intentions. Some disapproved of his imperialist tones. For example, Mackenzie King, who was the Canadian Prime Minister, found it "difficult to

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[385] Sir Samuel Hoare, Speech to Delegates, 28 October 1926, "Appendices to the Summary of Proceedings," *Imperial Conference*, Cmd. 2769 (1926), 192-201.

[386] Ibid.

[387] Ibid.

[388] Ibid.

find words wherewith adequately describe" the air route. Nonetheless, he was "inclined to use the word 'romantic' . . . fascinating . . . prophetic."[389]

Hoare responded. He said he was not a "fanatic" or a "visionary."[390] But, delegates from the dominions still found his empire air route project unrealistic.

The next year, in 1927, Hoare tried to mobilize support from colonial officials. In January, he told Leopold Amery, who was his emissary in charge of imperial affairs, to ask governors in the West Indian, African, and Southeast Asian colonies for help. Amery wrote to administrators around the world and begged support for the "development of air communications within the Empire." Like Hoare, he talked about airlines enabling unity. In some passages, he prophesied "all the territories of the Empire . . . ultimately linked together in a chain of aeroplane and airship communications." In others, he stressed that the Empire Air Route was "a matter of real urgency and importance." He also promised that airline travel would protect, preserve, and promote white racial interests:

> From the point of view of establishing a white civilization as a guiding influence throughout the whole of East Africa, it is very important that that region should be in close contact both with England on the one hand and with the white civilization of South Africa on the other.[391]

Amery did not explain how to transform visions into practice in his sixteen-page letter. Like other Air Ministry documents, his letter contained several references to the symbolism of airlines. It said little about building such services.

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[389]For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Mackenzie King, Speech to Delegates, 28 October 1926, "Appendices to the Summary of Proceedings," *Imperial Conference*, Cmd. 2769 (1926), 201.

[390] Sir Samuel Hoare, Speech to Delegates, 28 October 1926, "Appendices to the Summary of Proceedings," *Imperial Conference*, Cmd. 2769 (1926), 200.

[391] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see From Leopold Amery (Downing Street, London) to Governors (West Indies, all Malay States, Tanganyika Territory, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Nigeria, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and Gambia), 31 January 1927, 1B/5/77/122, JNA. For a similar discussion about race, empire, and railroad travel, see Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize,* esp. 40-72.

Officials in Britain knew that material conditions constrained the symbolic potential of airlines. In 1927, Hoare urged William Ormsby Gore, who was the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to send a circular to governors in the British West Indies and Africa. It was around the same time that Hoare received the West Indian Air Transport Committee's report, but months after Amery sent his letter. The circular was about building "a regular system of Imperial air communications."[392] Like Amery's letter, it tried to persuade readers to create air transport services and participate in the Empire Air Route scheme. Unlike Amery's letter, it clearly stated that the project was a major economic undertaking. Like the committee's report, it argued that local airlines enabled survey work, reconnaissance missions, and rapid communications, and underscored that imperial funds would not finance the project.[393] Unlike the committee's report, the circular had to convince colonial governments to pay for an imperial scheme.

Gore's strategy had two components. First, he invoked the rhetoric of colonial development and imperial duty:

> Civil Aviation as a means of furthering the development of Colonial Territories. . . . [T]he speeding up of Imperial communications by air would be of great benefit, both politically and commercially, to the Empire, and that long-distance aeroplane routes must be built upon a co-operative system with each territory concerned taking its share in their organisation.[394]

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[392] From William Ormsby Gore to Officers Administering the Governments of African and West Indian Colonies, 8 December 1927, 1B/5/77/122, JNA.

[393] For example, Gore said, "[T]he employment of aeroplanes for surveying inaccessible or densely-wooded territories, or for making a series of preliminary reconnaissances over underdeveloped country which it might be desired to open up . . . ." He described the quick arrival of "letters and parcels specially marked for air transmission." He noted, "[T]he Imperial Government could not undertake to provide a regular subsidy for internal services within the Colonies and other Dependencies." Ibid.

[394] Ibid.

Second, he admitted that the development of local airlines was a considerable financial burden. While it was conceivable that the metropolitan government would fund its scheme, Gore firmly advocated against using imperial funds. Instead, colonial governments would have to come together and combine their resources:

> Colonial Governments would have to consider how far civil air development was likely to benefit their respective territories and to what extent their revenues could bear the charge that such development would inevitably place upon them. . . . [I]t should be borne in mind that although isolated air operations may, because of the initial capital outlay required, involve considerable expenditure, it should be possible for substantial reductions in cost to be made if neighbouring Colonies and Dependencies could arrange to pool their requirements and evolve a joint programme of air work.[395]

Two years later, the First West Indies Conference was held in the House of Assembly in Barbados. From January 24 to February 1, 1929, twenty-six representatives from twelve territories met for "the contemplation of the idea of unified action."[396] Several of them had attended the Imperial Conference in 1926 and decided that "questions of common interest" needed further discussion.[397]

Which West Indians did the designations 'unified' and 'common' include and exclude? The boundaries of the British Caribbean were changing. At the conference, some delegates observed that certain West Indian colonies were not represented. A determined advocate for closer association, Edward Davson, who was the chairman of the

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[395] Ibid. For an analysis of British economic policy during the interwar period, including a discussion of imperial funds and colonial development projects, see John Michael Atkin, *British Overseas Investment, 1918-1931* (New York: Arno Press, 1977).

[396] At the conference, the following territories were represented: Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, British Guiana, Jamaica, Leeward Islands (Dominica, St. Kitts-Nevis, Antigua), Trinidad, Windward Islands (Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent).

[397] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Sir William Robertson, "Opening Ceremony Remarks," Speech to Delegates, 24 January 1929, *Report of the First West Indies Conference*, 1929, AVIA 2/299, PRO.

West India Committee and this conference, commented on the absence of British Honduras and the presence of Bermuda:

> On this occasion there is one Colony—I refer to British Honduras—which has been unable to send a Delegate. It is not because British Honduras is not entirely in sympathy with our aims but simply owing to physical difficulties of travel. . . . The island of Bermuda has expressed its desire to join this Conference. . . . [T]his island of Bermuda, not of the West Indies, but standing by itself as an outpost of the Empire in the West Atlantic, still, nevertheless, should have felt that it had sufficient interest in common with us who are further south . . . .[398]

As Bermuda's Colonial Secretary and delegate, Herbert Henniker-Heaton, hinted to the others at the conference, "As the link uniting Canada to the eastern and western groups we consider ourselves specially fortunate. Our interests are to great extent in common, particularly the commercial interests."[399]

At the conference, ideas about communication and transportation frequently overlapped with ideas about unity and common interest. During the opening ceremony, William Robertson, who was the Governor of Barbados, argued that "time has brought with it realization of the practical disadvantages of self-centered isolation." As an example, he observed that the

> development of communications within the past few years has resulted in what is virtually a shrinkage in the size of the world. Nations and communities hitherto strangers to each other except in name, are now in close contact, and there have followed combinations of interest and competition in trade of a nature and intensity beyond anything in our previous experience. From all sides we are met by the complaint of the difficulty in maintaining profitable trade relations and—what is almost more important—efficient communications. . . . Transport is vital to our prosperity.

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[398] Sir Edward Davson, "Opening Ceremony Remarks," Speech to Delegates, 24 January 1929, *Report of the First West Indies Conference*, 1929, AVIA 2/299, PRO.

[399] Sir Herbert Henniker-Heaton, "Opening Ceremony Remarks," Speech to Delegates, 24 January 1929, *Report of the First West Indies Conference*, 1929, AVIA 2/299, PRO.

In his speech, Robertson claimed that West Indians needed to cultivate a community of shared interest and combined efforts. The vitality of the region depended on it.[400]

A desire for improved communication and transportation services was central to Robertson's argument. According to Robertson, inferior devices were threatening trade relations. The development of more efficient means would help strengthen and secure a competitive place for the West Indies in the world. However, the building of new transport technologies was "an expensive matter" and it was "always attended by certain risks." Robertson told delegates that Canada, the "wonderful engine of trade development," had agreed to contribute some funds towards the generation of an efficient transportation system. Bluntly, he concluded, "It depends now largely on us, on our unified effort, whether that enterprise is to be justified, whether the advantage of improved communications is to remain with us."[401]

Days later, delegates discussed the question of airline transport for the West Indies.[402] Five spoke: the Colonial Secretary (Barbados); the Colonial Secretary (Trinidad); the Collector-General (Jamaica); Member of the Executive Council and House of Assembly (Bermuda); the conference chairman.[403] The representatives for Barbados, Trinidad, and Jamaica had "no proposals to put forward."[404] The Colonial

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[400] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid.

[401] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid.

[402] Specifically, the agenda read, "Development of civil aviation and the possibility of establishing inter-communication by air in British Guiana and the West Indies." "Agenda," *Report of the First West Indies Conference*, 1929, AVIA 2/299, PRO.

[403] The names of the five who spoke were D. R. Stewart, the Colonial Secretary for Barbados; A. E. V. Barton, the Collector-General for Jamaica; J. P. Hand, Member of the Executive Council and the House of Assembly in Bermuda; W. E. F. Jackson, the Colonial Secretary for Trinidad; Edward Davson, the conference chairman.

[404] D. R. Stewart, "Civil Aviation," *Report of the First West Indies Conference*, 1929, AVIA 2/299, PRO.

Secretary for Barbados explained, "An effort has been made to interest the general public in the scheme . . . but it has not met success."[405] Pointedly, he added that this was in spite of the "frequent references" sent from Britain.[406] The Colonial Secretary for Trinidad made a similar remark, but he inserted that "such scheme is beyond our present financial resources."[407] Speaking on behalf of a colony that was "in a fairly prosperous condition," the Collector-General for Jamaica felt somewhat differently.[408] He referenced the West Indian Air Transport Committee's report and argued that each island needed to pursue "individual action first of all along the lines of local spheres before we can dream of considering the big project which was in the air."[409]

Protecting British interests and safeguarding the welfare of the empire were themes that dominated during the discussion. The chairman told delegates that airlines were of "vital importance to these islands. In fact it goes much further. It is of vital importance to the British Empire." The chairman was concerned about the empire's "lag behind" countries. He noted that Germany, France, and Russia had advanced air transport industries, while the colonies "do not appreciate the vast importance of this branch of transportation in the future." The chairman also faulted Britain for the lack of adequate air services. He acknowledged, "[T]he financial resources of the British Government are not sufficient," but nonetheless believed that "the British Government

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[405] Ibid.

[406] Ibid.

[407] W. E. F. Jackson, "Civil Aviation," *Report of the First West Indies Conference*, 1929, AVIA 2/299, PRO.

[408] A. G. Nash, "Opening Ceremony Remarks," Speech to Delegates, 24 January 1929, *Report of the First West Indies Conference*, 1929, AVIA 2/299, PRO.

[409] A. E. V. Barton, "Civil Aviation," *Report of the First West Indies Conference*, 1929, AVIA 2/299, PRO.

ought to do more." Concluding, he reminded his colleagues of the "rumours of foreign countries starting aviation in these waters." Without support from the British government, "we shall be compelled to accept them, because civil aviation is linking up all parts of the world, and it would be obviously not to the interest of the West Indies to keep out."[410]

The representative for Bermuda echoed the chairman's opinions. He informed the delegates that several foreign companies have sent "frequent applications . . . for the sole right to operate a passenger flying service from America." He warned that they were "more enterprising than practical," but promised that the government in Bermuda would be "most anxious that if we are to have aeroplane connection with the American Continent it should be under British control." It hoped that Imperial Airways would provide the "very heavy subsidy" needed to start and operate such a service.[411]

At the end of the conference, the delegates approved of the recommendations made in the report of the West Indian Air Transport Committee. They urged the "Imperial and Local Governments" to pay close and on-going attention to the development of an airline industry in the West Indian colonies. That day, the First West Indian Conference resolved to commit to "the establishment of British rather than foreign services in their waters."[412]

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[410] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Sir Edward Davson, "Civil Aviation," *Report of the First West Indies Conference*, 1929, AVIA 2/299, PRO.

[411] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see J. P. Hand, Civil Aviation," *Report of the First West Indies Conference*, 1929, AVIA 2/299, PRO.

[412] "List of Resolutions Passed by the First West Indian Conference," *Report of the First West Indies Conference*, 1929, AVIA 2/299, PRO.

If British officials imagined colonial air services forging an empire air route in the 1920s, the invention of colonial airlines raised questions about ownership and accountability in the 1930s. In the opening years of that decade, local capitalists and officials resident in Jamaica took full advantage of the wide latitude of freedom that Britain's want for an empire air route afforded them. The rhetoric and symbolism the government in Britain used to rally support for the empire air route project were the weapons people in the West Indies used to reopen the question: would Britain ultimately pay for its project?

Caribbean Airways

When the West Indian Air Transport Committee wrote its report in 1927, it recommended "with some reluctance" that the colony of Jamaica not create a local airline service.[413] However, in the 1930s, Jamaica was the site on which metropolitan officials, colonial governors, and local entrepreneurs wrestled with the meaning of 'local' airline services in the West Indies. In June 1930, Archie de Pass, who was a retired Royal Air Force captain, created one of the first local airlines in the British West Indies. Registered in Jamaica, Caribbean Airways was a private British company. de Pass was the managing director and chairman. Six directors, all of whom lived in the West Indies, helped run the airline.

Caribbean Airways survived its first year, but faced a strange financial ruin in its second. In 1931, de Pass announced that the airline was no longer able to "run on private

[413] The committee explained, "The Committee, therefore, with some reluctance, feel that for the purposes of trade alone they cannot at present recommend such a service for Jamaica." WIATC, "Appendix D," "West Indies Service," *Report on the Opportunities for Civil Air Transport in the West Indies*, 28.

Capital."[414] In an attempt to save the company, the directors asked the Jamaican government to apply for an aviation advancement grant through the Colonial Development Fund in Britain.[415] If approved, the British government would administer the funds directly to the Jamaican government. Caribbean Airways would become a government-sponsored airline.

For years, the Jamaican government refused to get involved in aviation matters. Minutes concerning the Caribbean Airways affair indicated, "The attitude of the Government has always been that it would not get mixed up in running flying services."[416] In 1931, the official "attitude" abruptly shifted.[417] That year, the Jamaican government decided to procure imperial money on Caribbean Airways's behalf.

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[414] From Archie de Pass to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 July 1931, 1B/5/77/1931/76, JNA.

[415] In 1929, Parliament promulgated the Colonial Development Act. Under this act, imperial money (in the form of a loan) went to "[g]overnments of any colony or territory . . . for the purpose of aiding or developing . . . and promoting commerce or industry." The Jamaican government could qualify for an aviation advancement grant under section 1b: money for "the improvement of internal transport and communications and the provision of equipment therefore." Colonial Development Act, 20 Geo. 5, c. 5.

[416] W. D. B. to the Colonial Secretary (Jamaica), Minutes, 26 April 1933, 1B/5/79/576, JNA. For other examples that illustrate the government's attitude towards aviation, see questions such as "Why should the Government trouble about a concern such as this when we have an excellent flying service at present at no cost to the Government?" W. D. B. to the Colonial Secretary (Kingston, Jamaica), Minutes, 8 May 1933, 1B/5/79/576, JNA.

[417] To persuade the Jamaican government, directors linked Caribbean Airways to ideas about progress and prosperity, political development and economic growth. For examples of Caribbean Airways enabling progress and prosperity, see comments urging the "application for and by means of loans from the Colonial Development Fund to the Government of Jamaica . . . it is submitted that commercial aviation will make rapid strides during the next few years. Long overseas flights will make cease to be doubtful experiments and become everyday occurrence . . . necessary to the future prosperity of the islands." For examples of the airline propelling political development, see passages Jamaica achieving "the great advantage of being more stable politically that her near neighbours." For references to Caribbean Airways contributing to Jamaica's economic growth, see remarks on "many tourists will care to come to Jamaica." For all passages quoted in the footnote, see From Captain Archie de Pass to the Secretary of State to for the Colonies (Jamaica), 21 July 1931, 1B/5/77/1931/76, JNA.

For examples of official attitude shifting towards support for local air services in Jamaica, see government letter attached to application to the Colonial Development Fund in which the Colonial Secretary described his "pleasure" for Caribbean Airways. From the Colonial Secretary (Jamaica) to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies (London), 21 January 1932, 1B/5/77/1931/76, JNA.

Why did the Jamaican government decide to support Caribbean Airways in 1931? To 'listen' to the debates that erupted when local capitalists, colonial administrators, and imperial officials discussed the airline's future is to 'hear' a great deal of talk about the United States and Pan Am.

From its inception, Pan Am dominated airline operations in the Caribbean. Founded by Juan Trippe in 1927, Pan Am flew from Florida to Cuba on October 19, 1927. It was its first flight. Soon thereafter, the United States government asked Pan Am to establish "an American flag system of air transportation to Latin America" for trade and mail purposes.[418] The Caribbean played a very important role in the construction of this system; for the airline and its government, the chain of islands were ideal 'stepping stones' between the United States and South America. On January 2, 1929, Pan Am opened a scheduled service from Miami to the Bahamas, which was its first operation in the British West Indies. Subsequently, the airline launched a series of services throughout the Americas. By August 1930, Pan Am boasted that it crisscrossed the Caribbean "more than 80,000 miles every week or 4,000,000 miles a year."[419]

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[418] Pan American Airways, "Outline of the History of Latin American Services," n.d. [probably 1945-1946], Box 372/1517.6, PAA.

[419] Pan American Airways, "Our Air Mail Service with Latin America: To Promote the Wider Use of Inter-American Air Communication," August 1931, Box 20/10.06.00, PAA. By winter 1929, Pan Am operated the following routes: Miami-San Juan via Havana, Santiago, Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo (January 9, 1929); Port of Spain, Trinidad to Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana (route extended on September 22-23, 1929); Miami-Cristobal, via Havana, Belize and other points in Central America February 4, 1929); Brownsville-Mexico City, via Tampico (March 10, 1929); to Guatemala City (route extended on September 2, 1929); Cristobal-Canal Zone to Santiago, Chile, via intermediate points, including Guayaquil, Lima and Antofagasta (July 12, 1929); Santiago to Buenos Aires and Montevideo (route extended on October 12, 1929). On June 21, 1929, Pan Am established the first direct air communication system between the United States and Cristobal-Canal Zone to Curacao, Dutch West Indies, via Cartagena and Barranquilla. Pan American Airways, "Outline of the History of Latin American Services," n.d. [probably 1945-1946], Box 372/1517.6, PAA.

In 1930, Pan Am obtained landing-rights at Bumper Hall Airbase in Kingston, Jamaica. The airbase transformed the airline's operations. On December 2, which was six months after Caribbean Airways started, Pan Am began the first direct service from Kingston to Cristobal, Panama. Before the airline acquired landing rights in Jamaica, it flew from Miami to Cristobal, by way of Cuba, British Honduras, and other places in Central America. Flying from Kingston allowed Pan Am to "cut the mileage" from 2,064 to 1,385, which reduced transport time from 56 to 24 hours.[420] Across the Caribbean Sea, 600 miles, travel on the Kingston-Cristobal route was promoted as "the longest non-stop over-water flight regularly operated at the time anywhere in the world."[421]

In Britain, officials worried that Pan Am's operations in the West Indies obstructed the empire air route project.[422] In 1931, the Colonial Office sent Major R. H. Mayo to the West Indies. He was the technical advisor to Imperial Airways. Using British ships and Pan Am flights, he traveled from London to Bermuda, down through the Leeward and Windward Islands, to Trinidad. During his travels, he evaluated if and how the British government should execute the plans outlined in the West Indian Air Transport Committee's report.

Mayo claimed that British-owned air services lacked presence in the Caribbean. Coded, he said that specific "sources" were constraining their development and marked Pan Am as a "factor of outstanding importance." In his final report, he argued that the

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[420] Ibid.

[421] Ibid.

[422] For example, one official said, "It is thought that an American monopoly of our operations combined with their occupation of the base [at Bumper Hall, Kingston] would give the United States interests a stranglehold on any attempt to develop British Civil Aviation in this area." From C. le Bullock (Air Ministry) to the Under Secretary of State (Colonial Office), 27 October 1931, 1B/5/77/1931/76, JNA.

United States had done in the West Indies what Britain had not been able to do in and for its colonies:

> This American organization has been able to do precisely what the West Indian Transportation Committee found to be commercially impracticable for British interests in 1926. It has introduced and maintained regular weekly services which not only link together the principal islands of the West Indies, but also provide through communication between these islands and North, South, and Central America . . . broadly speaking, the Pan American system provides a comprehensive main-line airways system for the whole of the West Indian Group.

Through Pan Am, the United States was penetrating, developing, and dominating the British West Indies. Mayo used language that provoked fears about foreign companies arresting plans to advance British airlines in the Atlantic, and thwarted the vision of imperial unity.[423]

Mayo urged the British government to inveigle Pan Am. He saw it as a way to build up the infrastructure needed to operate adequate airline services in the West Indies, without further depleting an already exhausted imperial fund. There were two parts to his argument: money and politics. First, he declared that Pan Am was "a *fait accompli* . . . the future of British aviation in the West Atlantic must be considered in relation to it" [emphasis in original]. He reminded the government that the West Indian Air Transport Committee had decided that a regional airline was "commercially impracticable," and implored it to align with Pan Am and avoid "subsidization on a very large scale."[424]

Second, Mayo claimed that West Indian interests were ultimately expendable. In his report, he declared, "It seems doubtful whether any political advantage which might

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[423] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Major R. H Mayo, "Report on the Prospects and Air-Port Requirements for British Aviation in the West Atlantic: Printed for the use of the Colonial Office," May 1932, 1B/5/79/606, JNA.

[424] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid.

be gained through such a service could be held to justify the inevitably high cost." Like others before him, he advised Britain to support the development of regional airline services. However, this time, it was recommended that Britain encourage foreign rather than colonial enterprises. As Mayo said,

> [T]here will be scope for local services linking together the various islands . . . I do not see any prospect that such local services could become self-supporting for some years to come, but the establishment of the main-line Pan American Airways may have made it more worth while for the Governments concerned to consider the possibilities of state-aided local services. Those British Colonies which are now being served by Pan American Airways are undoubtedly deriving considerable benefit from the improved communication provided, and if there were a general improvement in trade conditions in the West Indies it might be justifiable to . . . bring the remaining islands into touch with the main-line airway system.[425]

Jamaica was central to Mayo's argument. The West Indian Air Transport Committee had said that Jamaica should not participate in the airline development scheme, but Mayo decided to "pay a short visit to Jamaica, and in view of developments which have been taking place there it appeared desirable to do so." In doing so, he found out that Kingston was a vital node in Pan Am's operations. He advised Britain to oppose all local aviation projects; Jamaica was the only colony for which Mayo argued this point. To support his claim, he declared the island was riddled with natural obstructions and rendered Jamaica unimportant:

> As to Jamaica, it can only be regretted that the geographical situation of this important Colony is not such as to encourage hopes for British commercial aviation . . . nor does there appear to be any reasonable prospect of linking Jamaica directly with other British Colonies in the West Atlantic. . . . [T]he island is very mountainous and densely cultivated.

His argument was far from environmental determinism. Mayo wanted to safeguard Pan Am's stronghold. He wanted to use "American taxpayer" dollars to develop

[425] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid.

communication and transportation services in a British colony, and avoid "the substantial financial burden . . . on Imperial funds" that would accrue if a British airline tried to compete against Pan Am, the chosen instrument of the United States.[426]

If Mayo ultimately aimed to use American money for British interests, his report had to propose that Pan Am maintain a monopoly in Jamaica; a British airline already existed there. In his report, when he described his visit to Jamaica, Mayo mentioned that Caribbean Airways was operating inter-island services to and from Kingston, and cautioned that the company could endanger the Pan Am stronghold. That Mayo conceived of Caribbean Airways as a viable threat was peculiar; Pan Am was an established company backed by the United States government.

The alliance between Caribbean Airways and the Jamaican government concerned Mayo. For example, he forewarned, "[T]hat this company shall in future control all aviation operations at Jamaica on behalf of the Government. This appears to have given rise to a somewhat unfortunate situation in regard to Pan American Airways." Caribbean Airways had recently acquired Bumper Hall Airbase, which was the somewhat unfortunate situation to which Mayo referred; the airbase was Pan Am's hub in Jamaica. Before Mayo arrived, the Jamaican government decided to lease the airbase to Caribbean Airways for "a nominal rent." According to the terms of the lease, Pan Am had to pay all fees for landing rights and petrol used directly to Caribbean Airways. Mayo feared that

[426] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid. Mayo also explained, "The outstanding fact about the present situation is that Jamaica is receiving the benefit of a frequent and efficient air service without any expenditure whatsoever by the Colony. . . . Considering now the possibility of a British service operating on this route, it is obvious that to run such a service in competition with Pan American Airways would require very heavy subsidization . . . . But even if a British service were in a position to operate without competition it would require heavy direct subsidization . . . and would thus impose a substantial financial burden on the Colony or on Imperial Funds. It is hoped, therefore, that Pan American Airways will continue to make Kingston a port of call on their main-line service to South America." Ibid.

Pan Am would relocate to Cuba, leaving Jamaica and thus the British West Indies because of "charges unduly high."[427]

To convince the British government to intervene on Pan Am's behalf, Mayo used language that linked concerns about the development of colonial airlines to concerns about the decline of British prestige. Speaking about Caribbean Airways's growing influence in Jamaica, he hinted that Britain's reputation as a global power was waning when he said,

> It is often stated that British prestige has suffered in the West Indies through the establishment of the Pan American Airways services and failure of the British enterprise to compete in this field. During the course of my tour I came into touch with many responsible people at the various British Colonies, but did not observe any signs that British prestige had suffered except at Jamaica.

Mayo declared that Caribbean Airways was not British. On the one hand, he made statements such as "the British Company known as Caribbean Airways has been established at Kingston." On the other hand, he maintained, "It is of course, regretted, that there is no British air service" in Jamaica. For Mayo, a British colonial company and a British metropolitan company were not equally British. To promote the prestige of the British nation, preserve the money of the imperial government, and obtain the dollars of American taxpayers, Caribbean Airways had to be dissolved.[428]

When de Pass and the Jamaican government applied for the aviation advancement grant, they argued that Caribbean Airways could not compete with Pan Am. On May 2, 1932, W. D. B., who was a member of the Jamaican government and a determined

[427] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid.

[428] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid.

campaigner for the airline, begged the Colonial Secretary to tell the British government that a subsidy would

> avoid us being swamped by Pan American. It is most disappointing and at the same time exceptionally galling that we should have been 'done in the eye' by a foreign corporation—for that is the case. . . . [I]f no help was given to the Company then Pan American must have it pretty well their own way. Their position now is an exceptionally strong one.[429]

According to W. D. B., the Pan Am stronghold shamed and degraded Jamaica and Britain. In other letters, he admitted that from a "practical point of view" Pan Am was "infinitely more efficient" than Caribbean Airways.[430] However, he strongly believed that from a "political point of view" it was "undesirable" to permit an United States company to "control flying services in a British Colony."[431] To persuade administrators of the Colonial Development Fund to rescue Caribbean Airways from financial ruin and save it from insolvency, grant writers argued that Britain was obligated to support the airline "more on political than practical grounds."[432] They applied for "a grant of interest instead of a loan" and asked for £100,000.[433]

While grant writers wrote, Caribbean Airways's directors corresponded with bureaucrats throughout the Americas. In their letters, they described the dire financial situation Pan Am caused. Their letters did two things. First, they rallied support and

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[429] W. D. B. to the Colonial Secretary (Jamaica), Minutes, 2 May 1932, 1B/5/79/557, JNA.

[430] W. D. B. to the Colonial Secretary (Jamaica), Minutes, 28 May 1932, 1B/5/79/557, JNA.

[431] Ibid.

[432] Ibid.

[433] Ibid. For other examples illustrating the tension between the political and the practical, see excerpts from official correspondence that explained, "This Gov't does not wish to drive Pan American Airways out of Jamaica, but at the same time it has refused to be dictated to by a foreign corporation or to deprive a struggling British Company of that protection and help which it has every reason to expect." Draft letter from Mr. Battershill (Jamaica) to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (London), 30 October 1932, 1B/5/79/606, JNA.

demonstrated to grant givers that other colonies and countries were interested in the airline. Second, they advertised that the denial and destruction of a colonial company endorsed and ensured the supremacy of a foreign enterprise. For example, on February 17, 1932, when de Pass wrote to the British Legislation at San Salvador, he announced that his "idea has been to foster British enterprise . . . I have had so many rotten eggs thrown at me for undertaking a purely patriotic work . . . my personal pride don't matter a damn! Let's get a British Base and British service going and let's get it going soon."[434]

For de Pass, the so-called rotten eggs came from Britain. In June 1932, he wrote to the Colonial Office in London and alerted officials to his predicament. It was a matter of "great potential Imperial importance." Citing the circular that Gore sent in 1927, de Pass reminded them that they had begged colonial governments to create local airlines, and he reminded them of the empire air route project. Probing the limits of its imagination, he wondered if the Colonial Office considered "it important to have a British base here [in Jamaica] and a nucleus British Flying Service." Snidely, he questioned, "[D]o they desire to see the B. W. I. [British West Indies] and Bahamas entirely controlled as to Aviation Services by the United States?"[435]

In other letters, de Pass questioned the meaning of empire. He believed that empire protected colonies against foreign penetration. In June 1932, de Pass wrote to his

[434] From Captain Archie de Pass (Jamaica) to Dan (British Legislation, San Salvador), 19 February 1932, 1B/5/79/557, JNA.

[435] From Captain Archie de Pass (Jamaica) to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies (London), 8 June 1932, 1B/5/79/576, JNA. W. D. B. made a similar point when he asked, "There is in reality only one clear out issue in the whole of these protracted negotiations, namely, does the Imperial Government desire to see flying services in Jamaica in the hands of a foreign corporation, or does it not?" W. D. B. to the Colonial Secretary (Jamaica), Minutes, 26 April 1933, 1B/5/79/576, JNA.

father in London. He was a member of the British government. de Pass wanted his father to tell colleagues about the threat Pan Am posed to imperial unity. He explained,

> It looks largely as though the whole world, bar the British Empire, were going bust. Although probably a most unideal practice, it is possible that, since most of the world refuses steadfastly to help itself, and thereby others to regain prosperity, the Empire may be forced to adopt a purely national programme, trading almost entirely within itself. . . . If a strictly national attitude is forced on the Empire, may it not be that a nucleus of Empire flying in a zone unfortunately entirely dominated by Yanks prove very useful? I repeat there is no intention at all of playing David to P. A. A.'s [Pan Am] Goliath. It would need more than 100,000 stones to do that.[436]

For de Pass, colonial airlines were battling the might of a foreign power. From a practical standpoint, his reference to the fact that Caribbean Airways could not compete against Pan Am without £100,000 was crucial; the British government was contemplating aligning with the United States.[437] From a political standpoint, de Pass used religious language to summon the metropolitan fantasy of colonial airlines as vessels of empire. With imperial funds for stones and Caribbean Airways metonymically the empire, foreign giants would fall.[438]

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[436] From Captain Archie de Pass (Jamaica) to Sir Elliot de Pass (London), 8 June 1932, 1B/5/79/557, JNA. For the letter that Sir Elliot de Pass sent to his colleagues, see From Sir Elliot de Pass (London) to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies (London), 21 January 1932, CO 137/795/18, PRO.

[437] Officials in Britain made a point similar to de Pass: "They considered further, on practical grounds, that substantially more than £100,000 would be required to compete successfully with the American company." Forty-Seventh Meeting of Colonial Development Advisory Committee (London), Minutes, 20 April 1932, 1B/5/79/557, JNA.

[438] For additional examples of how colonial officials and airline directors used the language of empire to accrue imperial funds, see comments in the colonial secretary's minutes that read "To sum up I can find no justification – apart from that of patriotism, of wanting a British services in a British colony . . . or for reasons connected with the defence of the Empire." W. D. B. to the Colonial Secretary (Jamaica), Minutes, 8 May 1933, 1B/5/79/576, JNA.

The Making of an Air Route

On April 20, 1932, the Colonial Development Advisory committee met for the forty-seventh time in London. Its members had to decide whether to give the Jamaican government an aviation advancement grant. That day, as the committee rejected the application, practical concerns seemingly outweighed political ones. Collectively, the members "suggest[ed] that the Government of Jamaica should be asked to state from a practical as apart from a political point . . . that would justify the embarking of £100,000 or more of capital."[439] The imagined kinship of empire, and the sense of responsibility and duty supposedly fostered by it, could not convince the imperial government to support a British airline in the colonies.

Fifteen months later, with Caribbean Airways's insolvency secured, Imperial Airways and Pan Am signed an agreement. Advised by Mayo, they agreed to operate all air routes in the West Indies, on a "joint-participation on a fifty-fifty basis."[440] Within a few years, the two airlines launched Bermuda-New York, the first transatlantic commercial air route and alliance between Britain and the United States.

Conclusion

Often, the term 'transatlantic' is used to refer to exchanges that occur between Europe and North America, on an east-west axis. However, New York-Bermuda was the first transatlantic airline route between Britain and the United States. As this chapter has shown, geographically, politically, and symbolically, this transatlantic alliance was also

[439] Forty-Seventh Meeting of Colonial Development Advisory Committee (London), Minutes, 20 April 1932, 1B/5/79/557, JNA. Also, see Colonial Development Fund (London), Minutes, 7 March 1932, CO 137/795/18, PRO.

[440] Note of a Meeting held in the Colonial Office (London), 24 July 1933, DO 35/267/2, PRO.

on a north-south axis.[441] On the one hand, the coalition between Imperial Airways and Pan Am made the route transatlantic. On the other hand, Bermuda's status as a British colony gave historical agents the freedom to define it as transatlantic. Years later, Bermuda-New York helped create other routes. The partnership between the airlines, as well as the acquisition of reciprocal take-off and landing rights, laid the foundation for direct east-west routes across the North Atlantic Ocean.

The Caribbean rarely appears in narratives and memories about the history of Anglo-American aviation. This chapter has demonstrated that the future of transatlantic flight rested on the forced failure of a colonial airline that was both British and Jamaican. It revolved around a moment illustrative of the tight but tense link between commercial and imperial interests. From the perspective of the metropole, the decision to support and align with the United States was practical. From the perspective of a colony, it was political. Britain had acted in national self-interest, but it had acted against the interests of the empire.

Caribbean Airways helped create an air route between a colony and city. In turn, this established a new network of connectivity between Britain and the United States. Airline routes between these nation-states are some of the most significant political and commercial corridors in the world. Their histories begin in the Caribbean.

[441] Matthew Connelly's (2000) work on rethinking the spatial politics of the Cold War and Frederick Cooper's (1996) call for rethinking the temporal origins of decolonization have shaped my thinking here.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESTIGE: THE BRITISH OVERSEAS AIRWAYS CORPORATION

On August 4, 1939, members of Parliament at Westminster promulgated the British Overseas Airways Act.[442] This law merged and dissolved Imperial Airways and British Airways, and created a new national airline called the British Overseas Airways Corporation (hereinafter, BOAC).[443] Explicitly, the act outlined the rights, regulations, and responsibilities of BOAC. Implicitly, it addressed concerns about the relationship between the state, nation, and empire.

The British Overseas Airways Act elided the legal distinction between imperial domain and foreign territory. When the lawmakers decided to call the new airline not Imperial but British Overseas Airways, they signposted the dissociation of the carrier from the empire. In the "interpretation" section of the act, they explained that the term "overseas" referred to "places outside the British Islands," and defined the "British Islands" as "those Islands exclusive of Eire." They also made clear that a "country" was "a Dominion, British India, British Burma, a British colony, a British protectorate, any territory which is under His Majesty's protection or suzerainty, a foreign country . . . ."

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[442] Royal Assent, 4 August 1939, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 350 (1938-39), col. 2852.

[443] A private company, British Airways Ltd. began when three independent British airlines—United Airways, Hillman's Airways, and Spartan Airlines—merged on October 1, 1935. The airline operated only in Europe, mainly between England, France, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden. To develop other European routes, it received a subsidy from the government. For the history of British Airways Ltd, see Davies, *A History of the World's Airlines*, esp. 97-101.

In short, the lawmakers separated metropolitan Britain from its dependencies formally, as they categorized colonies and foreign territories together.[444]

Why did Parliament frame a law about an airline in this particular way? Why did it decide to terminate Imperial Airways, which had been the instrument the state had chosen for fifteen years?[445] This chapter examines these questions by exploring the thinking of lawmakers as they devised the British Overseas Airways Act of 1939. It begins by discussing a debate, which became a fight in the House of Commons. For the most part, the conflict concerned the national identity of Imperial Airways. Consideration of the different opinions expressed during the exchange reveals that an unease about the future of the nation significantly amplified anxieties about whose needs the airline ultimately met. This exploration finds that fears about the imagined future were linked tightly to a foreboding sense that Britain's global power and international reputation were waning.

Then, the second section turns to the outcome of the debate, which was a formal inquiry into the past accomplishments, current operations, and future achievements of Imperial Airways. A discussion of the conceptual work that the committee did during the

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[444] In the act, the full definition of country read, "a Dominion, British India, British Burma, a British colony, a British protectorate, any territory which is under His Majesty's protection or suzerainty, a foreign country, a colony or protectorate of a foreign country and any mandated territory, and in relation to a part of a country which is under both a provincial and a central Government, any reference in this Act of the Government of a country shall be construed as including a reference to either of those Governments." For all passages quoted in the paragraph and the footnote, see British Overseas Airways Act, 1939, 2 & 3 Geo. 6, c. 45.

[445] As chapter three explained, Imperial Airways was widely recognized as "the chosen instrument" of the state since its inception in 1924. For references that described the airline as "Britain's chosen instrument for the development of air routes to the Empire and for the operation of the Empire Air Mail Programme," see Imperial Airways, pamphlet, 1938, F1I-600000-01, NASM. Also, see *Civil Air Transport Subsidies Committee, Report,* Cmd. 1811 (15 February 1923); Captain G. I. Thomson, "Some Facts about Imperial Airways and its Subsidiary and Associated Companies," diary, 1939, Personal Papers of Captain G. I. Thomson: Diaries 1930s, BAAM.

inquiry further analyzes the utility of the airline, and sheds light on a question that aviation experts and government officials faced during their interrogation: had the aims and endeavors of Imperial Airways advanced the colonial empire, but not Britain? The last section takes up this question by suggesting that the committee's recommendations, as well as the lawmakers' implementations, reveal the nightmarish upshot of empire that buttressed the government's decision to end Imperial Airways and begin BOAC: the developed colonial empire set against an underdeveloped Britain.

The argument of this chapter is that the government dissolved Imperial Airways and created BOAC in order to reconstitute the strength of Britain as a global power. However, the conflicting opinions and invariant views that gave rise to the demise of Imperial Airways, as well as the official terms outlined in the British Overseas Airways Act, suggest that lawmakers were beginning to imagine and build-up Britain as a state whose global power could be installed without a formal empire.[446]

The Atlantic and the West Indies shaped the contours of this vision. They were never in the foreground but, at each juncture, they were crucial to the discussions conducted, terms negotiated, plans finalized, and airline created. The last chapter exposed *the* commercial air alliance between Great Britain and the United States as forged in tandem and through the forced failure of local airlines in the Caribbean. This chapter bares the consequences, as some public officials in the metropole now questioned whether partnership with the United States was undercutting and deteriorating the authority of Britain.

[446] I use the word 'install' in two ways. I use it to refer to the act of placing a form in an authoritative position. I also use it to refer to the process of putting a form into position for future use.

Laughter and the Debate

On Wednesday, November 17, 1937, a fight erupted in the House of Commons when, at 3:48 p.m., Mr. Walter Robert Dempster Perkins demanded Viscount Swinton's head on a platter.[447] Perkins, who was a Conservative member of Parliament and a vice president of the British Airline Pilots Association (hereinafter, BALPA), blamed the Secretary of State for Air for bringing "British civil aviation into disrepute."[448] He believed strongly and explained to his colleagues that Swinton had allowed Imperial Airways to turn Britain into a "second class" country.[449] As a result, he asked the House to set up a general public inquiry, which would "shake the Air Ministry into a sense of their responsibilities, and into a realisation of the seriousness of the present position."[450]

The "present position" to which Perkins pointed referred to three areas he found profoundly problematic.[451] One of his more contentious claims concerned subsidies. For nearly two years, the government had financially backed two airlines: Imperial Airways

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[447] As Perkins put it, "Like the daughter of Herodias, I ask the House to-day to give me the head of the Secretary of the State for Air in a charger." Walter Robert Dempster Perkins, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 417.

[448] Ibid., cols. 417-418.

It is possible that Perkins had a personal and professional interest in launching the debate. In his first set of remarks, Perkins alluded to certain rumors; that he thought it necessary to address them provide some clues as to why he might have taken on this topic. His remarks began, "At the outset I ought to explain my own position. There have been rumours circulating to the effect that I am financially interested in the aircraft industry. I have no financial interest whatsoever in any branch of the aircraft industry. There is one possible exception, and that is that I am a director of a company which has received an inquiry and, I believe, an order from the Air Ministry to provide hydrogen plants for filling the balloon barrage around London. Beyond that I have no financial interest whatever . . . ." Ibid., col. 417.

[449] Ibid., col. 421.

[450] Ibid., col. 434.

[451] Actually, Perkins took issue with five areas: funding, the aircraft industry, London aerodromes, municipal airports, and the railway clearing houses. However, given the scope of its argument, the chapter will only consider the first three.

and British Airways. Importantly, each subsidy funded different development projects. The larger of the two, which the government gave to Imperial Airways, supported the advancement of the empire service. The other encouraged the expansion of the European service.[452] Perkins disliked the dual spheres of operation promoted by the scheme, and alleged that the government's inability to invest fully in a single airline was turning Britain into an international joke. Explaining why he was "thoroughly dissatisfied" with the decision to fund two airlines, he observed, "We know that all is not well. We know that we are behind the Americans and the Germans, and we dislike being laughed at by the Americans and Germans, and even the Dutch."[453] Perkins used language that coded multiple subsidies as explicitly anti-British. By drawing attention to the so-called laughable condition of the British commercial aviation industry, he conjured up images of government-supported airlines as enabling the downfall of the British state. His remark suggests that divided interests threatened to tarnish the country's international status.

That the allocation of two government subsidies would cause the United States to laugh was curious. The situation in Britain was not an anomaly. While each European government mentioned by Perkins tended to support the development of a single airline operation, the United States government subsidized several airlines simultaneously.[454] Why, then, was commercial aviation in Britain considered comical? Comments made

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[452] For a description of the subsidy granted to British Airways Ltd, see Air Ministry, *England-Scandinavia Civil Air Transport Services, Accounts and Papers,* Cmd. 5203 (June 1936).

[453] Walter Robert Dempster Perkins, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 417.

[454] For example, Germany advanced Lufthansa and the Netherlands backed KLM Royal Dutch Airlines. The United States government subsidized several private companies, such as Pan Am and Eastern Airlines.

during other parts of his speech indicate that Perkins linked laughter to inadequate airplanes and aerodromes, which were the second and third areas he found problematic. Drawing his colleagues' attention to "several tales," he had heard about the reputation of British planes, Perkins recalled,

> When Messrs. Imperial Airways a few years ago tried to run a night service to Berlin, they sent over a machine, which I am informed, they bought second-hand from the Royal Air Force, and when it landed at Berlin it was the object of a joke; German pilots actually tied a parrot's cage to its tail.[455]

From Perkins's point of view, the British civil aircraft industry was a disgrace, in part because of its close ties to the military. A vociferous advocate for the separation of military and civil aviation, he took issue with the fact that the Air Ministry presided over both domains, and argued that division would force British aircraft manufacturers to produce planes appropriate for commercial air travel. Invoking ideas about neglect and abuse, Perkins employed the rhetoric of kinship to imagine a civil aviation industry thriving under the protection of a department that was willing to nurture and provide for it:

> The fundamental trouble is, I believe, that members of the Air Council who rule the roost have a military outlook and drag along civil aviation in the same way as a mother drags along an unwanted child. Until we can get civil aviation away from the militaristic outlook of the Air Ministry and hand it where it ought to be, to the Ministry of Transport, we shall get fair play for civil aviation in this country.[456]

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[455] Walter Robert Dempster Perkins, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 417.

[456] Ibid., col. 423. During the debate, other representatives supported the idea that the government should divorce civil from military aviation. For example, Lieutenant-Colonel John Moore-Brabazon, who served on the Advisory Committee on Civil Aviation discussed in chapter two, used language similar to Perkins when he argued, "Air transport is nowhere near the state in which it should be. It is not for me to advocate now what I am sure is the right thing, and that is the divorcement of civil aviation from the Air Ministry. I have always been enthusiastic about it, but I appreciate that at present such a separation would be difficult. However, it has got to come. When the whole thing started and went through the growing pains of aviation, it might have been a good thing to have linked these two things up, but we have grown up a good deal since then, and it is high time that we reviewed the position. I think that it should be investigated by an inquiry. Suppose we ran London's transport by the War Office to-day, what sort of machines should we

Observations about a weak civil aviation industry often overlapped concerns in Parliament about the relationship between the lack of commercial aircraft and the disintegration of the empire. Two main themes characterized these doubts. The first was a fear about economic decline. Some representatives worried that Britain's inability to manufacture, sell, and export civil planes to companies and governments in the dominions and colonies would eventually cause the metropole to lose access to the imperial market. For example, Perkins noted that "after years of neglect there is still no civil air-liner of a size suitable to sell." He warned that "[u]nless the Air Ministry wake up to the seriousness of the position we shall lose for all time the whole of the Empire markets for British civil air power." The second was an apprehension about Britain being expelled from 'its' empire. Commenting on the fact that several of the dominions had purchased and were using foreign planes to operate airline services, Perkins argued that the aforementioned loss of markets threatened to decenter Britain in, and undo the Britishness of, the empire:

> It is true of our whole Empire. The new airline which is being opened across Canada is to be equipped entirely with American machines. . . . In the future a traveller wishing to fly around the world will fly by Imperial Airways over the Atlantic and also over the Pacific, and he will fly from Hong Kong home also by Imperial Airways, but when he goes across Canada he will go on a British Air Line which is using American machines. But it is also true of South Africa. South African Airways have recently ordered 22 German machines in order to run services in South Africa, and last, but not least, Australia is beginning to follow suit. Australia has just ordered one machine from America.[457]

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have? A form of bus tank. You cannot expect the Air Ministry to look at civil aviation from any other point of view than what is really their own job, and that is war, and until you divorce it from the control of civil aviation and get the other considerations taken into account, you will never get along the right lines." Lieutenant-Colonel John Moore-Brabazon, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), cols. 438-439.

[457] Perkins also noted that a similar situation was developing on flights between Britain and continental Europe: "British Airways, the chosen instrument of the Government, a short time ago desired to buy more aeroplanes. They searched this country and could not find a suitable aeroplane, and as a result they bought

Like airplanes, aerodromes played an important role in arguments about the bond between a faltering commercial aviation industry and the weakening of metropolitan-state power. Arguing for an increase in the number of aerodromes in London, for example, Perkins claimed that "[w]e are faced with the fact that London, the heart of the world, is left with one adequate aerodrome, and that one is only worthy of a second class Balkan State." The reference to "the heart of the world" and "second class Balkan State" suggests viability in global affairs and vulnerability in Europe as some of the stakes involved in bolstering the infrastructure of aviation in Britain, particularly London. According to Perkins, "[u]nless something is done and done quickly passengers from London to Paris will spend more time on the road than they will spend in the air."[458]

The remark about safeguarding and augmenting air traffic on the London-Paris route, which was the aerial entryway of Britain into Europe, was significant, in part because it tied into one of the most controversial claims made by Perkins. Passionately, he argued that Imperial Airways, "a public utility company . . . heavily subsidised by the taxpayers of this country," had done more for the empire than it had for Britain:

> [A]s far as Imperial Airways are concerned, the European traffic is trivial, and that what they are after is the Empire traffic. That is true, but if one looks at the number of passengers carried on the Empire services and compares it with the number of passengers carried in Europe, one finds that six times as many

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German and American aeroplanes. To-night, when the night mail service goes from Croydon to reach Berlin in the early hours of tomorrow morning it will be carried by British pilots on a German machine." He also stressed that the seemingly dilapidated state of British flying machines caused much laughter, ridicule, and shame: "it does not alter the fact that when I am sitting in some distant aerodrome in Europe in the summer and a kind of Heath Robinson machine descends from the skied and everyone begins to laugh, I feel thoroughly ashamed of British civil aviation." For all passages quoted in the footnote and the paragraph, see Walter Robert Dempster Perkins, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), cols. 417-418; 431.

[458] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid., col. 421.

> passengers are carried by the European services as by the Empire services. . . . Again I say that Imperial Airways are not showing the flag in Europe.[459]

In his speech, Perkins implied that one of the major and longstanding processes through which European states secured wealth, power, and prestige was shifting; the extreme and successful cultivation of commercial endeavors in the empire was now undermining the domestic and international authority of the nation-state. To counteract it, he encouraged his colleagues to mold and advance a fully nationalized airline that would return Britain to older forms of domination.[460] On the one hand, Perkins wanted to prove that "Imperial Airways services in Europe are the laughing-stock of the world . . . that they have done untold harm to British prestige."[461] On the other hand, he was "inspired simply and solely by a desire to see British civil aviation leading the world in just the same way as British shipping leads the world now."[462]

Representatives in the House of Commons reacted differently to the accusation that Imperial Airways had strengthened the empire but weakened Britain. Some rejected it forthrightly. The Conservative representative Colonel Leonard Ropner, for instance, responded with a forty-minute speech on "the magnificent organisation of Imperial Airways," which he considered "the greatest triumph of civil flying in all the world . . . ."

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[459] Ibid., cols. 426; 429; 431.

[460] As Perkins explained, "I cannot help wondering whether nationalisation of out internal air services and our external air services would not be preferable to the present position . . . ." Ibid., col. 422. Based on comments by his colleagues, we know that Perkins defined nationalisation as the transfer of control from private to full state ownership. For example, Muirhead reported, "The hon. Member used a phrase which I frequently used when he spoke of Imperial Airways as being the chosen instrument of the Government. Many hon. Members feel that that chosen instrument should be 100 per cent. perfect, and I concur with them." Lieutenant-Colonel Anthony John Muirhead, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 477.

[461] Walter Robert Dempster Perkins, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 431.

[462] Ibid., 418.

Determined to prove that neither Britain nor its airline were "the laughing-stock of other countries," he argued that Imperial Airways had benefited Britain in several ways. First, he claimed that it had modernized the metropole. Underscoring the link between access to high-speed devices and the deepening of state power, he praised the airline for using flying machines, "which are among the fastest in the world," but warned, "[s]peed is one of the most expensive luxuries of modern times. You can have it if you are prepared to pay for it."[463] For Ropner, payment was time; Britain would reap the rewards of the company's current endeavors later. He explained, "This is a colossal undertaking, costing many millions of pounds and taking months of planning and preparation, and it cannot be wondered that it cannot be brought into operation in a few weeks, or even a few months." Second, Ropner asserted that the airline had safeguarded and advanced the global authority of the nation-state. He maintained that this authority was constituted through empire and believed that the airline should continue to develop its imperial not European services. As he put it, "Imperial Airways runs an extremely efficient, if very slow, Continental service, and in so far as the Empire service is concerned, leads the world."[464]

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[463] Ropner believed that Perkins's accusations were really about speed, and in particular about his want for an increase in speed up: "But the chief burden of his complaint is that machines are out-of-date, particularly with regard to speed. . . . I would say that criticism might be just if the speed of their [Imperial Airways] machines did not equal that of their foreign competitors." Colonel Leonard Ropner, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 455.

[464] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Colonel Leonard Ropner, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), cols. 449-458. Geoffrey Mander, a Liberal member of Parliament and aviation enthusiast, shared views similar to Ropner when he said, "I should like to pay a high tribute to the great services rendered to aviation in this country by Imperial Airways. There is no doubt at all that that they are a great national institution who have developed that side of our national activities with great skill and resolution . . . . The Empire services are magnificent . . . ." Geoffrey Mander, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 460. Also, see remarks by Muirhead, which further illustrate the extent to which many members of Parliament held onto the idea that developing the empire would ultimately benefit Britain: "It is true to say, with regard to Continental services, that

Unlike Ropner, other members of Parliament responded ambiguously to the assertions Perkins made. Some willingly accepted the relatively mediocre state of commercial air services between Britain and continental Europe, but were disinclined to blame Imperial Airways and the empire service for it. For example, Sir Murray Sueter, a well-known pioneer in the field of naval aviation, sympathized with Perkins. Employing similar rhetoric about mimicking maritime power and acquiring overseas markets, he asserted, "We should develop aerial transport not only in this country and in the Empire but throughout the world. We should transport goods by flying boats to every part of the globe, in exactly the same way as me [*sic*] have mastered transport by sea." Like Perkins, Sueter believed that commercial aviation was a conduit to worldwide supremacy, especially with regard to the circulation of capital. At the same time, however, he argued, "We ought to lead the world in civil aviation, but we shall not do it if we get too much destructive criticism. . . . It does harm to British aviation and to British air prestige." Sueter thus commended Imperial Airways and blamed structural reasons, such as economic depressions, for the "backward" condition of Britain's airline industry.[465]

Entangled in ideas about backwardness was trepidation about slowness, the South Atlantic, and the West Indies. Sueter, for instance, had "a little criticism to make of the

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Imperial Airways are behind; it is equally true to say—and I hope this will also receive applause—that with regard to the Empire air route and the trans-atlantic route, Imperial Airways are very well ahead." Lieutenant-Colonel Anthony John Muirhead, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 477.

[465] For examples of how Sueter felt about Imperial Airways, see passages in which he declared, "Imperial Airways have not only had to blaze the trial on these great air routes throughout the Empire, right out to the Far East, but have also been the pioneers of these big passenger-carrying seaplanes and aeroplanes, we must give them credit for that." For all passages quoted in the footnote and the paragraph, see Sir Murray Sueter, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), cols. 444-449.

Air Ministry, and that is that they have been so backward in finding a company to fly the Southern Atlantic." He noted that France and Germany had long since operated there and argued that British airlines needed to "speed up and get their machines across the Southern Atlantic." As evidence, he remembered a letter he received from a naval captain retired in Argentina. In it, the captain observed that "the prestige of this country [Britain] suffers because no British aircraft come with mail across the Southern Atlantic to Argentine. The German machines carry our air mail." For the officer and for Sueter, British planes transporting British mail across the South Atlantic would build up the symbolic status of Britain.[466] However, the development of these air services would also help shore up British influence in the informal empire.[467] For example, Sueter anticipated that Argentina "would be a fine training-ground, exactly as the French and Germans find it . . . ." Perhaps preparing for war, he continued, "[I]n training our pilots in long-distance flying, and the sooner we start that service the better." This sense of urgency about needing to build up the presence and shore up the power of Britain also applied to the West Indies. Keen on protecting the reputation of Imperial Airways, Sueter carefully kept the company out of his argument and warned,

> I do not think that we ought to depend upon Pan American Airways to run our West Indies Service. . . . I suggest to the Under Secretary of State [for Air] that he might look into the whole question of the Southern Atlantic and of the West

[466] Transporting British mail on foreign planes also had financial consequences. In 1937, the Postmaster-General paid French and German companies approximately £100,000 to fly British mails in and across the South Atlantic. For estimates, see Air Ministry, "Other Services" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 7. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

[467] For a survey of informal empire in the South Atlantic, see Rory Miller, "Informal Empire in Latin America," ed. Robin W. Winks, Historiography, vol. 5, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); for an analysis that pays close attention to the political geography, see Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (New York: Palgrave, 2000).

> Indies Service to see whether something can be done to hasten matters as much as possible.[468]

Reluctant and resistant attitudes towards overtly criticizing Imperial Airways must be understood in relation to the powerful symbolism that developed between the airline and the state. For example, Lieutenant-Colonel John Moore-Brabazon, who served on the Advisory Committee on Civil Aviation discussed in chapter two, praised Perkins for launching a

> sustained onslaught . . . it has always been rather looked upon that to criticise the great Imperial Airways was to do, so to speak, something against the Government. They have always had a mysterious connection with the State, and I think that anybody who has the courage to criticise them deserves credit, because they are indeed a powerful organisation. . . . Imperial Airways are always supposed to be the Government, so that very little criticism ever gets out.

As the speech by Moore-Brabazon indicated, accusations against the airline were often seen as charges against the government, and also the state. But which state? Several references in other passages suggest that Moore-Brabazon might have been speaking about England, not Britain. He observed, for example, that "[a]nybody who takes on this great organisation puts on, so to speak, the mantle of St. George attacking the flying dragon, the great modern pterodactyl." Mention of the patron saint of England evoked, perhaps, ideas about Imperial Airways attacking and restraining England; Moore-Brabazon might have conceived of the end of Imperial Airways as an opportunity to advance the interests of England.[469]

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[468] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Sir Murray Sueter, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), cols. 446-447.

[469] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Lieutenant-Colonel John Moore-Brabazon, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), cols. 434-435.

Perkins was well aware of the high stakes involved in any critique of Imperial Airways. Evoking the language of rights, responsibility, and civic duty, and invoking fears about tyranny and the spread of

Moore-Brabazon's vision of how to advance Britain—and possibly England—involved more than a defeated Imperial Airways. In it, he also argued against monopolization and pushed for increased competition, unlike some of his colleagues.[470] He believed that only the "keenest competition" could satisfy "the desire of this country that British aircraft or Imperial Airways should encircle the globe with a service . . . a desire that the would, so to speak, blaze the trail across the earth to the extremes of the Empire . . . ." He stressed that "[t]his great Imperial job is difficult," partly because the nation-state had lost its focus on and in the empire. Playing with images of an abnormal and insane Britain, and through medicalized language, he argued, "We must soon get back to a normal and sane outlook on life, and then the possibility of transport by air will be of paramount importance to this country owing to its separation from the other countries of the Empire."[471] For Moore-Brabazon, the seemingly substandard condition of commercial aviation signaled that imperial relations were awry. The so-called return

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totalitarianism, he asserted, "It has been suggested to me that it is wrong to criticise Imperial Airways. It has been suggested that to do so is unpatriotic, and that by criticising them one undermines British prestige. . . . Surely Members of this House have not only the right but the public duty to subject this company to the most searching criticism and inquiry in order to see that we get value for our money. I rather resent the attempts that have been made to stifle criticism of Imperial Airways. Those attempts savour very unpleasantly of those totalitarian methods which are now so popular in certain countries in Europe and against which this country has been the main bulwark in the past." Walter Robert Dempster Perkins, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 426.

[470] For example, Montague, a member of the Labour Party, insisted, "There must be monopoly in the air; you cannot help it. Even if you try to destroy that monopoly it remains monopolist in character, and because of that and the fact that the air is a service of the character that it is, without boundaries, without any question of private property in the air—all these things make out a case for a public air service." Montague, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 465.

[471] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Lieutenant-Colonel John Moore-Brabazon, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), cols. 434-440.

to normalcy involved the development of a worldwide aerial network, which would bring the other British territories closer to Britain.

The debate ended at 7:30 p.m., nearly four hours after it began. Lieutenant-Colonel Anthony John Muirhead, the Under-Secretary of State for Air, spoke last. Scrutinizing the performance and claims that Perkins made, he observed sardonically, " He certainly executed a lively dance, though it was not in conventional costume." Nonetheless, Muirhead agreed, "[A]ll is not perfect in the realm of civil aviation." Swinton, the Secretary of State for Air, had authorized him to announce that an "inquiry into the charges of inefficiency" would happen and the "findings, with reasons, will be published." Adjourning the debate, he concluded, "If that is not actually the head . . . on a charger, I hope the hon. Member for Stroud [Perkins] will be satisfied that it is the scalp."[472] The inquiry, however, would not be public.[473]

The Cadman Report

By November 24, 1937, which was roughly one week after the debate concluded, Swinton had created the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation. He appointed three men. He asked Lord John Cadman to chair. He also chose Sir Warren Fisher and Sir William Brown. Recently raised to the peerage, Cadman was a Professor of Mining at

[472] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Lieutenant-Colonel Anthony John Muirhead, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), cols. 472-479.

[473] During the debate, there was some discussion about whether or not the inquiry should be private or public. Some members felt that "[a]ir confidence is a very delicate plant indeed" and thus needed safeguarding. Others believed that it did not matter, just as long as an inquiry of some kind happened. Sir Murray Sueter, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 449.

the University of Birmingham and the chairman of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.[474] Fisher was the Permanent Secretary of the Treasury and Head of the Civil Service. Brown was the Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade.

The composition of the committee was extremely contentious. On November 24, 1937, Muirhead, the Under-Secretary of State for Air, stood in the House of Commons and named the men whom Swinton had selected to serve on the committee. When he finished, objections began. Montague, who was the member of the Labour Party who argued for nationalization and monopolization in the first debate, immediately asked, "Does the Minister realise that in every quarter of the House this is regarded as a trick on the part of the Ministry?"[475] Accusing Swinton of deception, Montague demanded to know if the men were experts: "What qualifications have they? " Who are they? Why should they be called upon to deal with questions of this character?"[476] Adamant against the makeup of the committee, he pointed out that Cadman, whose company supplied Imperial Airways with oil, was not impartial, and insisted that the Air Ministry "take immediate steps to withdraw the members at present appointed and substitute personnel of a completely independent kind."[477] Likewise, Clement Richard Attlee, who was also a member of the Labour Party, noted that the committee consisted of "one member who is a Government director [Cadman], another who is a Government official [Fisher], and a

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[474] F. E. Smith, "John Cadman, Baron Cadman, 1877-1941," *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society* vol. 3, no. 10 (December 1941): 915-928.

[475] Fisher's appointment might have caused Montague to react so abrasively? It was the Inter-Departmental Standing Committee on International Air Communication, which Fisher chaired, that successfully encouraged the government to divide its interest and grant British Airways Ltd a subsidy in 1935. Montague, Speech to the House of Commons, 24 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 1219.

[476] Ibid.

[477] Ibid., col. 1247.

third who has been Secretary to the Minister for Air [Brown]."[478] He then asked Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to reassess the appointments, keeping in mind that during the first debate "very strong opinions were expressed that an independent inquiry was desirable, and that that was met by an offer from the Under-Secretary. . . . In the circumstances that is not giving the House a proper independent inquiry."[479] Chamberlain acknowledged that Swinton had not created a "committee of complete impartiality" and promised to ask him to reconsider.[480]

Six days later, on November 30, 1937, Chamberlain returned to the House with an answer. To ensure "competency, impartiality . . . authority," Swinton had agreed to reform the committee.[481] He removed Fisher and Brown. He added J. W. Bowen, T. Harrison Hughes, and Sir Frederick James Marquis.[482] He appointed W. W. Burkett, who worked at the Air Ministry, as secretary. He kept Cadman as the chairman.[483]

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[478] Clement Richard Attlee, Speech to the House of Commons, 24 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 1220.

[479] Ibid., cols. 1219-1220.

[480] Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Speech to the House of Commons, 24 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 1220.

[481] Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Speech to the House of Commons, 30 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 1879.

[482] Sir Frederick James Marquis also served on the advisory committee to the Post Office. He was the chairman of Lewis's department stores and became Minister of Food under Neville Chamberlain (1940). Austin Bradford Hill, "The Earl of Woolton, 1883-1964," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series A (General)* vol. 128, no. 3 (1965): 462-463.

[483] Montague continued to raise objections: "Is the Prime Minister aware that a great deal of the objection to the composition of the committee originally was to its chairman, and will he consider the desirability of changing that chairman for some one who is, shall we say, less compromised politically?" The Prime Minister answered, "A singularly ungracious response." Montague, Speech to the House of Commons, 30 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 1880; Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Speech to the House of Commons, 30 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 1880.

Swinton asked his newly reformed committee to investigate several of the allegations asserted during the debate. Specifically, he wanted the five men to evaluate the "[c]harges of inefficiency" made against Imperial Airways and the Air Ministry, and to examine the existing British civil aviation system, "particularly in Europe."[484] Thus, from December 2, 1937 to February 4, 1938, the members of the committee met thirty times, heard testimony from sixty-eight witnesses, and read the written evidence of thirty-two people.[485] Four days after the last meeting adjourned, they sent an eighty-six-page report to Swinton. In it, the committee outlined its findings and made recommendations.

The report was highly controversial. Chamberlain's government withheld the document, despite promising to circulate it immediately and publicly.[486] For one and one-half months, the appointed officials stalled, and the domestic and foreign press condemned their behavior and remembered them for it.[487] During that time, they went in

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[484] He also asked the committee to review "[t]he system employed by Imperial Airways for dealing with its staff (in supplement to the discussions between the Secretary of State and Government Directors of Imperial Airways" as well as "[o]ther questions not specifically raised during the debate." Specifically excluded from its consideration were the following three areas: "Broad questions of principle on which the policy of the Government has been fully explained to Parliament; Matters dealt with by the Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Maybury on the Development of Civil Aviation in the United Kingdom; As regards Imperial Airways—specific grievances of the staff and of individual pilots." Air Ministry, "The Report" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 5. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

[485] Air Ministry, "List of Witnesses" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 36-38. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

[486] Lieutenant-Colonel Anthony John Muirhead, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 479; Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Speech to the House of Commons, 30 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 1880.

[487] "Cadman Castigation," *Time,* March 21, 1938; *The Times* (London), "The Cadman Report," March 9, 1938.

search of explanations and solutions.[488] Resolved, they decided to release the report in mid-March 1938, except that now it was a three-part document. Third was *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation* (hereinafter, Cadman Report), which was relatively lengthy. A copy of the one-page "Terms of Reference," Swinton, via Under-Secretary Muirhead, set the committee, was second. First was *Observations of His Majesty's Government on The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation* (hereinafter, Observations), which as thirteen-pages long.[489] Why did the report need observing?

The Cadman Report blamed the British government outright for failing to create an airline that met the needs of its subjects in Great Britain. In particular, the committee faulted the Air Ministry and Imperial Airways. The opening pages of the report explained that the committee believed firmly that "a settlement of large issues will automatically cure many matters of less importance." It thus proposed to expose "the major (and closely associated) problems of the policy and organisation of the Air Ministry, the development of the air services and the production of civil aircraft. These transcend in importance . . . ." Afterwards, it promised to interrogate the operation, organisation, and administration of Imperial Airways.[490]

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[488] Some members of the House of Commons asked repeatedly for the report. For examples, see the persistent questions asked of the Prime Minister by Perkins: Walter Robert Dempster Perkins, Speech to the House of Commons, 9 February 1938, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 331 (1937-38), col. 1064; Walter Robert Dempster Perkins, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 February 1938, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 331 (1937-38), col. 1873; Walter Robert Dempster Perkins, Speech to the House of Commons, 24 February 1938, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 332 (1937-38), col. 532.

[489] Air Ministry, *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon, Reports,* Cmd. 5685 (March 1938).

[490] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Air Ministry, "Introduction" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 6. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

The committee often expressed ideas about failure through the language of material progress and national evolution, both of which were concepts that circulated widely in inter-war Britain. Like Perkins during the debate, the authors of the Cadman Report felt "a genuine apprehension that, except on the Empire routes, this country is backward in civil air transport." Imbuing it with utmost importance, they branded this particular issue "[t]he position to-day" and declared it the first of the "Main Problems" to fix. The argument that Britain was thriving in the empire but deteriorating on the domestic and international fronts was linked to fears about the survival and viability of the nation-state, especially since the growing embrace of the principle and practice of self-government ensured that the centrality of Britain in empire was increasingly tenuous. The committee warned, "[T]here is reason for more than apprehension . . . we view with extreme disquiet the position disclosed by our inquiry." Halting and reversing the backwardness of Britain demanded "this country to take a leading place in civil aviation."[491]

Europe played a very important role in the argument about the survival of Britain. Similar to several opinions expressed in the debate, the committee believed that air services between Britain and continental Europe lacked gravely:

> In international civil aviation, considerable effort and expenditure will be required if our position is to be fully secured. We consider that national prestige and the interests of British civil aviation require that first-class air services, financially assisted by the State as necessary, should be established between London and all

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[491] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Air Ministry, "The Position To-day" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 6. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

> the principal capitals of Europe, and that, in particular, a day service to Berlin should be inaugurated with British aircraft as soon as possible.[492]

The suggestion that the reputation of the nation required air services to Europe to be first-class and state-funded pointed to a desire to build-up prestige by creating an airline that closely resembled the other airlines of Europe, most of which were fully nationalized.[493] However, comments about the need to secure the country's position, as well as remarks about the pressing call to create an all-British day service to Berlin, hinted that prestige might mean more that stature; as the report put it, establishing British owned and operated air services between London and the other "principal capitals" of Europe was "a matter of national importance" and had to be done "as soon as possible."[494] Unlike the majority of officials who bantered in the debate, the committee strongly advised the government *not* to take the military concern out of civil aviation. Even though it observed that the Air Ministry had an "extremely heavy task" and urged for its reorganization, it implored, "In our view the problem of the air is one—two sides of a

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[492] Air Ministry, "Air Services" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 13. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

[493] The remark about "first-class" is vague. On the one hand, it might have signaled a desire to build and offer the best. On the other hand, however, it might have been a comment about class. In the debate, Perkins described British Airways Ltd, which operated between London and continental Europe, as "popular," and he observed that the airline "are running to full capacity . . . ." And as R. E. G. Davies noted, British Airways Ltd offered relatively low fares. Thus, the committee's reference to "first-class" might have pointed to a desire to create an entirely upper-class air service. Walter Robert Dempster Perkins, Speech to the House of Commons, 17 November 1937, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 329 (1937-38), col. 425; Davies, *A History of the World's Airlines*.

[494] Air Ministry, "Air Services and Operating Companies" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 32. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

single coin—and the military aspect of aviation cannot fundamentally be separated from the civil aspect."[495]

In brief, in the early months of 1938, the committee anticipated that what it called the "virility" and security of the nation required both branches of aviation to remain bound.[496] Likening the industry to a developing child in need of wisdom and skill in order to grow, it cautioned, "[U]ntil aeronautical technique has emerged from its present embryonic stage, knowledge and experience gained in the development of military and civil equipment must be pooled to solve the problems of each, and the services of research and experimental establishments must be made equally available."[497] The committee set-up and safeguarded conditions to make sure that the knowledge, experience, research, and experiments, which the state airline would acquire and execute on services like the abovementioned 'civil' day services to Berlin, would continue to be shared in the future. In doing so, it revealed a nervousness about, and a need to control, the vulnerability of the nation:

> From the operational aspect, the association of military and civil flying in one Department of State is necessary to ensure the closet co-operation on questions of control, particularly in view of the increased air activity within the United Kingdom. That association is also necessary to secure a maximum co-ordination of the requirements of British military and civil flying at home and abroad.[498]

The themes of control and vulnerability also turned up in passages pertaining to the development of British air services across the Atlantic Ocean and in the West Indies.

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[495] Air Ministry, "Air Ministry Organisation" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 9. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

[496] Ibid., 10.

[497] Ibid., 12.

[498] Ibid.

However, in this context, the committee linked them explicitly to economic concerns.[499] Writing its report amid a major economic depression in Britain, the committee stressed that the Air Ministry had not done enough to protect and stimulate metropolitan interest in the Americas. Paying close attention to the West Indies, it pointed out "severe foreign competition is developing on the North Atlantic air route."[500] Notably, it admonished the government for allowing "the uncontested monopoly of an American company [Pan Am]" to overshadow the region. Underscoring the connections between the supremacy of the nation and the maintenance of the colonial markets, the committee emphasized that "[n]ational prestige and trading considerations alike call for British air services on all the routes."[501] To thwart foreign influence and feed the financial interests of the nation, the report recommended that British air services in the Atlantic be "expedite[d] to the utmost," reminding readers that "[t]he dictum that 'trade follows the flag' will be found to hold good in this new form of transport, as it has in older forms."[502]

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[499] It is important to note that Cadman, who was the chairman of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, had long been interested in the West Indies, particularly in Trinidad and in petroleum. In 1904, he became the Chief Inspector of Mines in Trinidad, and spent much of his time researching crude oil deposits in the asphalt lakes region. It is possible that these interests prompted the committee to look closely at air services in the West Indies.

[500] Air Ministry, "Other Services" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 7. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

[501] Ibid.

[502] Air Ministry, "Air Services" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 13. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO. For other passages illuminating fears about the emergence of the United States as a global power and the decline of British prestige, see recommendations in the report that explained, "We have been informed in evidence that this country is not keeping pace with the United States of America in developments of importance to civil aviation, such as pressure cabins, automatic blind-landing equipment, anti-static electricity devices, aircraft instruments and research into problems concerning the application of wireless to aviation purposes." Air Ministry, "Research" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 20. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

Questions about responsibility and accountability wove through the Cadman Report. Imperial Airways was central to many of the complaints charged. In spite of the warnings surfacing during the first parliamentary debate, the committee openly criticized the company and admitted that it was "profoundly dissatisfied" with the airline.[503] Moreover, it condemned Imperial Airways for the country's "international and Imperial problems."[504] For example, in a section of the report called "Past Policy," the committee explained that the "original purpose of the creation of Imperial Airways in 1924, and of the endowment of that Company with a monopoly of subsidy, was to secure the establishment and progressive development of British air services in Europe."[505] In this passage, the committee used data from the Air Ministry to reconstruct and mobilize a version of history in which Imperial Airways (and not the government) appeared liable for the lack of British air routes into and out of continental Europe; as previous chapters have shown, the airline was always about the empire.[506] In doing so, "[r]esponsibility for

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[503] Air Ministry, "Imperial Airways, Ltd.'s Management" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 14. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

[504] Ibid., 15.

[505] Air Ministry, "Past Policy" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 7. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

[506] However, the committee did remark that it was "surprised to learn that, although the relevant contract with Imperial Airways is due to expire in little more than a year's time, there is as yet no decision by the Air Ministry on the future policy concerning British air services in Europe." Air Ministry, "Past Policy" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 8. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

Importantly, the Air Ministry gave the committee a memorandum on the "Government Policy in Relation to British Air Services in Europe." This was the document the committee used to reconstruct the history of British air services to continental Europe. As it traced the development of these services from the inception of Imperial Airways in 1924 to the writing of the Cadman Report in 1938, the Air Ministry authored a version of history in which the government came across as championing the development international air routes, and Imperial Airways appeared responsible for the "serious falling off in all the major European services." Air Ministry, "Government Policy in Relation to British Air Services in Europe" (11 January

the defects to which we call attention in the course of this Report cannot be attributed solely to the present Administration."[507]

The Cadman Report oscillated liability between Imperial Airways and the Air Ministry. It recommended that the government restructure the Air Ministry and reorganize Imperial Airways. It argued in favor of nationalization. It pushed for the formation a single, fully subsidized British airline. It backed the recommendations of the Maybury Report of 1937, which had shed light on the lack of domestic air services in Britain and advised the Air Ministry to develop some.[508] In short, the Cadman Report informed Imperial Airways that it had some "serious defects" and recommended "immediate reform."[509] And it told the Air Ministry to get "more vigour in initiating policy and foresight in planning."[510]

The recommendations outlined in the report faulted both the Air Ministry and Imperial Airways for the seemingly deplorable state of commercial aviation in Britain. However, Chamberlain's government made and attached Observations to the top of the document, which sought to shift the entire weight of responsibility away from the

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1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), Appendix B. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

[507] Air Ministry, "Past Policy" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 7. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO. The committee explained that it turned to the historical past because it wanted to use the "brief historical review of British air services to the Continent, furnished to us by the Air Ministry (Appendix B), enables the circumstances of the origin and development of these services to be seen in proper perspective." Ibid.

[508] For the Maybury Report, see Air Ministry, *The Report of the Committee to Consider the Development of Civil Aviation in the United Kingdom, Accounts and Papers,* Cmd. 5351 (January 1937).

[509] Air Ministry, "Summary of Main Recommendations" (8 February 1938), *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), 33. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

[510] Ibid., 31.

Ministry and towards the airline and the empire. For instance, one observation explained that the government had "deliberately adopted a policy of concentrating on the development of Empire routes" because it believed it was in "the common interest of all." This remark reveals the government trying to justify its past actions by invoking a definition of empire in which the territories strengthen rather than subvert the metropole. As an example of these seemingly widespread advantages, it explained, "Empire Governments and companies became associated with this development. This exploitation of Empire air routes led to the conception of the Empire Air scheme, a development which was unique in the air services of the world." The idea that exploiting the empire advanced the nation was hardly new. However, the officials continued to observe, "[T]his concentration has meant that relatively little money was available to assist other services." Read in the context of the concerns raised during the first debate and in the Cadman Report, these so-called "other services" metonymically stood in for international services to continental Europe and domestic services within the British Isles itself.[511] Said differently, by the late 1930s, Britain and the rest of Europe had become 'the other' in and to the empire.

Long Standing Evils and Another Debate

On March 16, 1938, at 4:10 p.m., Prime Minister Chamberlain introduced the Cadman Report into the House of Commons, but asked the members of Parliament to approve only the Observations: "I beg to move, 'That this House approves the

[511] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Air Ministry, "Observations of His Majesty's Government on The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation," *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), ii-iii. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO.

Observations of His Majesty's Government on the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation'."[512] He began his speech by praising the committee for having "performed their task without fear or favour."[513] He then explained that the overarching and unifying goal of the committee, his government, and the two subsidised airlines was rejuvenation for the

> prestige of the country . . . . British-owned civil aeroplanes, whether they are flying on Imperial routes or to any other country, should be such as to convince everybody who travels them, that they take a leading place among the planes of the world for speed, for safety, for comfort, and in the completeness and modern character of their equipment.

Chamberlain identified speed, safety, comfort, completeness, and the modern character as markers of prestige. Immediately afterwards, he told the House, "There are evidently great advantages to be gained . . . indirect advantages in the general advancement of British prestige throughout the world . . . ." He mentioned that some advantage would be "direct," but stressed that most would not. What were the advantages? Why were they indirect, and for whom?[514]

This set of questions sparked a debate in the House of Commons, which lasted two days. Similar to the Observations that members of his government made and attached to the report, Chamberlain believed that commercial aviation helped the colonies and dominions directly; Britain reaped the rewards indirectly. Before anyone else spoke, Chamberlain launched into long comments about "the importance of maintaining and

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[512] Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 433.

[513] Taunting the opposition, Chamberlain continued mockingly, "I must emphasise that because I cannot help recollecting that at the time when the committee was appointed some derogatory, and I think unworthy, reflections were made from the Front Bench opposite . . . ." Ibid.

[514] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid., cols. 433-441.

developing air communications within the Empire" and insisted, "the maintenance of these Empire routes should and must be made the first charge upon any money which may be available in future from the Exchequer." To encourage the House to "increase the expenditure of public money on these services," he highlighted what he saw as two of the advantages enjoyed indirectly by Britain: communications and labor. For example, justifying the services offered by Imperial Airways, ninety percent of which were on the empire routes, he explained,

> [W]e have, through its agency, established now a network of air communications which connect up the Empire and which have reduced the time of postal and personal communication by air from weeks to days. There is a twice-weekly service to South Africa, a twice-weekly service to Singapore, and a four-times-weekly service to India, and all these are carrying mails without extra charge, and with a gain in speed, which I think, will be very valuable for social and commercial intercourse.

Chamberlain identified airmail as an advantage. Advancing the empire route had allowed Imperial Airways to fly British mail cheaply; perhaps Chamberlain was trying to address and calm concerns about the lack of British services forcing the government to pay foreign companies to fly the mail.[515] He also defined speed up and the increased frequency that came from flying the mail faster as an advantage. Firmly, he believed that moving more mail quickly across the empire would sustain imperial connections, constrict imperial bonds, and enable faster commercial transactions. Like his father, Chamberlain tried to foster 'indirect' channels through which to tighten and secure

[515] For example, as Chamberlain continued to describe the advantages of air mail, he noted, "There are plans, as the House knows, for bringing these services during the present year to Australia, Hong Kong, and New Zealand, and at the same time preparations are being made to bridge the Atlantic through Canada and the United States . . . . Finally, steps are being taken to connect up the West African Colonies by a new air route down the West coast of Africa, which may subsequently be expected to cross the Atlantic to South America." Ibid., 439.

political and commercial ties between Britain and its territories, which were increasingly shifting away from direct rule and towards the demands of self-government.[516]

Colonial and dominion labor was another advantage stressed by Chamberlain. Linking work to physical death and the absorption of time, he reminded his colleagues, "It is only fair to do justice to those who, in this great development of joining the various parts of the Empire have given a great deal of their time and labour, and, indeed, in many cases, have risked their lives." Chamberlain described this as an "achievement" for the country, as men and women elsewhere in the empire worked and sometimes died to build a globe-spanning British aviation industry.[517]

Several members of Parliament resented the fact that Britain had to receive the advantages of commercial aviation indirectly through the empire. Not surprisingly, one of the most adamant champions of this point was Attlee, a longtime advocate of progressive decolonization rather than passive self-government. Condemning Chamberlain for delivering "a most unBritish speech," he accused the Prime Minister and his government of "Ministerial neglect," "flagrant neglect," "gross inefficiency," and "the state of inertia."[518] Firm in his opposition to the first committee Swinton appointed,

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[516] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see ibid., 437-439.

For an example of Chamberlain's views toward empire, see a letter he wrote to his wife in which he reported, "We discussed what he could say next Thursday and I expounded my ideas of a speech beginning with an attack on the Government for their handling of unemployment and then going on to an exposition of world economic conditions leading to the conclusion that in the idea of Imperial unity alone could salvation come." Neville Chamberlain to Ida, 17 November 1929, in *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters: The Heir Apparent, 1928-1933,* vol. 3, ed. Robert Self (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 164. Also, see Robert Self, *Neville Chamberlain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), esp. 138-151.

[517] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 439.

[518] From the start of the debate, Attlee expressed disdain for the current state of commercial aviation and for Chamberlain's government. Scathingly, for example, his speech began, "I beg to move, in line I, to leave out from the word 'That' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof: 'in view of the

Attlee praised the second Cadman committee for not succumbing to the status of "Yes men" and for presenting a report of the "most scathing nature . . . a vindication." Given the tone and content of the report, Attlee challenged both the Observations and Chamberlain's summation of them, remarking, "I have never known such complacency."[519]

Attlee defined un-Britishness in two ways. First and most straightforwardly, he linked it to unabashed pride; conversely, he defined Britishness as reserved. For instance, Attlee called Chamberlain "unBritish" because he celebrated the "achievements" of the nation rather than taking into account its "shortcomings."[520] Second and slightly obliquely, he paired un-Britishness with absolution and the lack of accountability; on the contrary, he aligned Britishness with liability and responsibility. For example, Attlee argued that commercial aviation's "evils are of long standing. They have not welled up in a moment" in Britain. Perhaps latching onto the language of the Cadman Report, he invoked the image of a trial and charged,

> [T]his report amounts to a court martial, the prisoner has been found guilty. . . . The duty of the Government is to place the responsibility where it belongs, on the

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disclosures of the long-standing Ministerial neglect and of gross inefficiency in the management of a heavily subsidised company, the explanations and proposals of His Majesty's Government cannot be regarded as adequate to allay public concern." Recall, Chamberlain began, "I beg to move, 'That this House approves the Observations of His Majesty's Government on the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation'." For Attlee's speech, see Clement Richard Attlee, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 441; for Chamberlain's opening remarks, see Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 433.

[519] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Clement Richard Attlee, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 441-442.

[520] Ironically, it was Chamberlain who first said, "We in this country have a habit of concentrating upon our shortcomings and overlooking our achievements, and there might be a good deal to be said for that point of view . . . ." Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 439.

> Minister. It is no good saying that officials, systems or officers can be made responsible. The responsibility is on the Government and on the Minister.

For Attlee, it was the longstanding empire-oriented state and not quite the nation-state that was to blame, as he hoped for a "Government which will put national interests first and private profit after, which will see to it that the development of civil aviation shall be built up as a civilian industry, and eventually serve the cause of peace rather than to add to the causes of war."[521]

Rearmament and allusions to war played an extremely important role in exposing the potential dangers of a weak civil air industry. Paragraph three of the Observations had argued that the Air Ministry was unable to concentrate on civil concerns because it needed to focus on the country's rearmament program.[522] Chamberlain further expressed this sentiment when he explained in his opening remarks,

> [W]hilst the Government are not anxious to deny that there have been shortcomings in the development of civil aviation, we cannot leave out of account the urgent necessity and the prime duty of the Secretary of the State [Swinton], while he has been in office these last three years, to push along, with the utmost diligence and speed and determination, the military programme. Had he in any way neglected his duty in that respect he would not readily have been forgiven by the country.[523]

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[521] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Clement Richard Attlee, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 441-449.

[522] Responding to the Cadman Report, it read, "The unprecedented effort which the Air Ministry and the aircraft industry have recently had to make in the military sphere has necessarily created the impression, and to some extent produced the result, that civil aviation has received less attention than is right. Nothing could have been allowed to come in front of the prime duty of the Ministry to carry out the re-armament programme as fully and rapidly as possible. But the Government feel that it is now possible to make further efforts to assist civil aviation and substantially to improve its organisation." Air Ministry, "Observations of His Majesty's Government on The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation," *The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Civil Aviation and the Observations of the H. M. Government Thereon*, Cmd. 5685 (March 1938), i. CO 323/1563/9, at the PRO. For a rethinking of the relationship between the rearmament program and Chamberlain's attitude towards the longevity of empire, see John Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament: Pride, Prejudice, and Politics* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999).

[523] Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 435.

That pressing military needs allowed the government to neglect civil affairs only went so far as a justification. For example, Attlee noted that "grave events are proceeding" in the background and acknowledged that Swinton could not focus on civil needs because he was "obliged to give his whole attention to the question of military aviation."[524] But, he also felt that "long before rearmament started they [the problems] were there and have been increasing ever since."[525] Thus, he claimed that paragraph three was "disingenuous" and maintained that the government needed to manage military and civil aviation affairs separately: "The right way out of this muddle and mess is to deal with civil aviation as a civil service and not as a military service at all."[526]

Attlee was not alone in his profound distrust of the relationship between military and civil aviation. A Conservative member of Parliament, Mavis Constance Tate reminded her colleagues that Imperial Airways had been flying old and obsolete airplanes long before the launch of the rearmament program in 1936. Publicly criticizing her Party, she asked, "What is the use of making that wholly false excuse?"[527] Contrarily, she suggested that technological advances made in civil aviation ultimately enhanced and advanced belligerent flight. She faulted the government for failing to put civil before

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[524] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Clement Richard Attlee, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), cols. 442-443.

[525] Ibid., col. 444.

[526] Ibid., cols. 444; 448.

[527] Mavis Constance Tate, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 467. Indeed, earlier in her speech, she pointedly remarked, "What we want to know is whether, in the policy of the Government in future, there is to be a new spirit with regard to civil aviation." Ibid., col. 464.

military interests, emphasizing that particular blunder as the main reason why Britain was lagging behind other countries:

> I am not really confident that the Government are going to put civil aviation where it ought to be. I do not think the expansion of civil aviation is merely a matter of prestige. I believe that to-day we should not have a quarter of the anxiety that we feel about our military aviation if we had developed civil aviation properly in the past. Germany has built up the whole of her military aviation from civil aviation. America has built up her export trade with the world in civil machines through civil aviation, and not military. The improvements in military aviation—the variable pitch propeller, the streamlined body, the all-metal construction, the wing flaps and the wing slots—are all developments, not of military aviation but of civil aviation. They were developed in civil aviation and adopted for military machines. Therefore, I say that we shall not be able to defend ourselves from the military standpoint if we continue to neglect civil aviation as it has been neglected in this country in the past.[528]

In her speech, Tate revealed that she was deeply skeptical about the government's intentions. Describing herself as "very much disquieted" when Chamberlain alleged that the demands of the military unavoidably required civil neglect, she strategically employed technical language, claimed expertise, and aligned the consequences of disregard with the defenselessness of Britain in wartime.[529]

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[528] Ibid., cols. 467-468.

[529] As Tate put it, "I was very much disquieted when the Prime Minister said that the neglect of civil aviation had been due to the development of military aviation, because no one can deny, what has been said from the Front Bench, that there is greater need for the expansion of military aviation to-day than there has ever been before. When we are discussing the Cadman Committee Report we cannot, because of an appointment or two, think that all is well when we know that the reason which has been given for the neglect of civil aviation is a reason which could better be argued to-day than at any time during the last few years. Is there to be a development of civil aviation with military aviation, or are we going to be told that the Government intended to implement the Cadman Report, but unfortunately owing to the increase in military aviation they are not able to do so?" Ibid., cols. 464-465.

Tate was not the only one to suggest that the existing empire services lacked, and thus was weaken Britain's reputation abroad. Speaking to the dire and urgent state of things, H. Holdsworth pointed out, "Ministers are taking a miserable, narrow, parochial view of these questions. To use an old phrase, they are fiddling while Rome is burning . . . . Do you want to provide for a national emergency? If so, stop your niggling, enlarge your views, and act as if you believe that this great country is the centre of a great Empire and cannot afford to be second to any country in the world in the development of civil aviation." H. Holdsworth, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), cols. 460-461.

Tate's interest in civil aviation was deeply rooted in a desire to accelerate speed and increase trade on the empire routes. Abandoning all references to the military and war, she urged her listeners, "If there is to be this concentration on Empire communications, let them be in the vanguard of civil aviation, where they are by no means to-day." Tate wanted the government to focus on actualizing "the speeded-up service." Imagining a map expanding outward from London, she described Imperial Airways carrying "us to Calcutta in six days, Singapore in eight days, Brisbane in 12 days, and Sydney in 13 days." Her later warnings about the Dutch flying to Calcutta in three and one-half days and Singapore in five suggested that Tate might have only worried about prestige. But her questions about the South American, West Indian, and Pacific routes revealed that trade was at the center of her argument. She asked Chamberlain,

> Is it [the empire] to receive any further attention and any speeding up? When are we to have even the much too slow service which is promised to us? May we have a definite assurance . . . for our trade interests, that is, a service to South America and the West Indies across to the Pacific? . . . [E]ssential if our prestige and trade interests are to be safeguarded?[530]

At 7:30 p.m., nearly three and one-half hours after Chamberlain presented the Motion, the House agreed to postpone the proceedings. That night, the final comments concerned the South Atlantic and the transatlantic. They arose when the Under-Secretary of State for Air was speaking. Muirhead was talking about the Ministry and the management of civil aviation when Tate interrupted him, and insisted that he answer her

[530] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Mavis Constance Tate, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), cols. 465-466.

earlier questions about the South Atlantic.[531] Responding, Muirhead remarked that service through that particular region was "one we wish to push on with as quickly as we can . . . but I would not like to be tied to a specific date."[532] As he continued, Muirhead was unknowingly prophetic:

> Trans-Atlantic services for example occupy the smallest paragraph in the report. It is quite easy in these days of publicity to get a headline but to get the Trans-Atlantic services reduced to the status of one small paragraph in this report is to my mind a triumph.[533]

The transatlantic that Muirhead mentioned mapped an imagined air link between Britain and territories in the South—and not the nations in the North—Atlantic. His comment about the monumental, but fleeting appearance of the transatlantic was correct; as the second section of this chapter illustrated, both the north transatlantic route to Canada and the United States and the south transatlantic route to South America and the West Indies came into view quickly, in a few short sentences.

Twelve days later, on March 28, 1938, the House resumed the adjourned debate. It lasted for approximately four hours, from 8:50 p.m. to 12:44 a.m. During those four hours, both forms of the transatlantic were captured only once and by one man. Towards the end of the discussion, in seven sentences, Sir Murray Sueter hoped that the Air Ministry would "press on" with the North and South Atlantic air services. Sueter, who had sided with Perkins in the initial debate, anticipated that an all-British travel service

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[531] Tate also asked Muirhead to answer another question. She said, "I am very sorry to interrupt the hon. Member, as he has answered one of my questions, but could I have an answer to the question I put, as to when we were to have a service across the South Atlantic, which is specifically recommended in the Cadman Report; and whether it is the Government's policy to continue to fly that vast stretch of water with land planes and to use our flying boats on a land route over France and Italy?" Ibid., col. 485.

[532] Lieutenant-Colonel Anthony John Muirhead, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 485.

[533] Ibid.

across the North Atlantic could halt "a good deal of American competition in the near future." He believed that building an all-British air travel network in and across the South Atlantic would show the region that Britain had not become "a decadent nation." Echoing earlier points, he also stressed that such services would allow Britain to fly its own mail; the country could stop paying German and French companies £100,000 to fly British mails.[534]

Conversations about the construction of domestic routes and international lines dominated the resumed debate. Mostly, they contained other conversations about the protection, preservation, and development of Britain's status as a world power. Often, they also included comments and panic about the growing power of the United States. For example, Labour politician Morgan Jones feared that "[w]hen these difficult times have passed, we shall still be left with the problem of organising civil aviation in this country."[535] Envisioning a postwar future, he saw "the great Continent of America" and declared, "[T]he time has come when we should register a grim determination to develop our civil aviation so that the twentieth century in England shall not be unlike the twentieth century in the most progressive countries in the world."[536] Likewise, J. R. Robinson worried about the future mentality of ordinary men and women in Britain when he announced,

> I am also dissatisfied as to the position of British internal airways. This is just as important as lines operating to the Continent and foreign countries. One useful purpose of internal airways is to make our public air-minded. How can you

[534] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Sir Murray Sueter, Speech to the House of Commons, 28 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), cols. 1796-1797.

[535] Morgan Jones, Speech to the House of Commons, 28 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 1761.

[536] Ibid.

> expect British citizens to fly on British subsidized lines abroad if they never have the chance of flying at home?[537]

Frequently, when mentions and speeches about the empire cropped-up in the debate, they appeared in the context of broader discussions about the need to invest in building British air services to continental Europe. For instance, W. L. Everard said, "We have to realise that some Imperial company, acting on behalf of the people of Great Britain, has to organise a world-wide transport air service from Great Britain to our Overseas Dominions and Colonies, spreading over a quarter of the world's surface." Continuing to prioritize the needs of subjects in the nation, he cautioned, "[W]e are very far behind the Americans . . . . But in regard to the Continental side of this problem it seems to me that we in this country are up against two difficulties." For Everard, the two difficulties involved cost and the state's triadic desire to maintain a nation, an empire, and the international: "You cannot have the luxury of having an Empire, with far-flung communications, and get off cheaply. That is our problem. We have to spend a large amount of money on our Imperial airlines and at the same time we have to show the flag on the Continent."[538]

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[537] J. R. Robinson, Speech to the House of Commons, 28 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 1777. Robinson was not the only representative to rally for more domestic services. In the previous debate, N. J. Hulbert expressed a similar view when he expressed concerns about the gap between air-mindedness in the city and air-mindedness in the country. Highlighting the connection between spatial geography, temporality, and the modernization of the public mentality, he argued, "The subsidising or the encouragement of internal airlines would do a great deal to make this country more air-minded. It is all right for people living in the vicinity of London and certain big cities, for they have the opportunity of seeing modern air liners operating with almost clockwork regularity, but the people in the smaller towns have no such opportunity." N. J. Hulbert, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), col. 463.

[538] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see W. L. Everard, Speech to the House of Commons, 28 March 1938, *Parliamentary Debates,* Commons, 5th ser., vol. 333 (1938), cols. 1730-1731.

Outcomes

When the debate ended, the Question about the Observations was put. 196 members voted, 129 of them selected yes and 67 of them chose no. After the House approved the Observations, the government began implementing several of the recommendations it had made. It decided to amalgamate Imperial Airways and British Airways. It agreed to build more aerodromes throughout England. It chose to strengthen the Air Ministry by appointing a Permanent Under Secretary for Air, a Director-General of Civil Aviation, and a Director of Civil Research and Production. It doubled the annual subsidy set aside for air transport.[539] It restructured Imperial Airways and British Airways. At first, it let Imperial Airways keep the empire service and gave the majority of the continental routes to British Airways; to minimize competition, it decided that an amalgamation of the two companies would operate the crucial London-Paris route. It also required Imperial Airways to appoint a full-time chairman and one or two full-time directors. Within months, however, it had resolved to merge the airline fully and form BOAC, a public corporation.

In the press, articles about the Cadman Report and its outcomes highlighted the weakness and relative frailty of national, rather than imperial, British aviation. For instance, in one article, the *Times* described the industry as a "deplorable inferiority," the "laughing-stock" of Europe, and the "Cinderella of the Air Ministry."[540] It called for a "modernized and encouraged" form of civil flying, demanding that the government invest

[539] The annual subsidy increased from £1,500,000 to £3,000,000.

[540] *The Times* (London), "The Cadman Report," March 9, 1938.

in the "restoration of British prestige."[541] In another article, the *Times* printed large sections of the Cadman Report verbatim, but enlarged in bold face phrases such as "Extreme Disquiet," "Nobody's Baby," "Defects of Policy," and "National Prestige."[542] Articles in the *Telegraph* captured similar sentiments when they declared that Imperial Airways had "failed" the nation.[543]

In most newspaper articles about the debates, the Cadman Report, the Observations, the decisions, references to the empire were few. Mentions of the different Atlantics barely appeared. Those that papers printed tended to involve rants about the developed empire and a forgotten nation. For example, one man writing from Manchester to the editor of the *Times* called the long-term objectives of the government into question when he used highly charged language to ask, "Are these the methods of democracy? If so I must confess to having been grievously misled as to the difference between democratic and totalitarian Government."[544] Another man writing from London lamented to the editor of the *Times* about the "extinction, and irreparable damage" being done to civil aviation in England.[545]

Overall and in the context of a country on the brink of another world war, hardly any remarks were made about the empire. Fewer were made about the Atlantics. Even less were made about the West Indies. What matters, however, is that they were said.

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[541] Ibid.

[542] *The Times* (London), "The Committee's Report," March 9, 1938. LH 15/3/120, at the LHCMA.

[543] *The Telegraph* (London), "Big Changes in Civil Aviation," March 9, 1938. LH 15/3/120, at the LHCMA.

[544] Alan Goodfellow, letter to the editor, *The Times* (London), March 16, 1938.

[545] Whitney Straight, letter to the editor, *The Times* (London), March 21, 1938.

Conclusion

This chapter explored why the British government decided to nationalize the airline industry. In the late 1930s, members of Parliament debated whether Imperial Airways had advanced the empire but not the nation. They were concerned that the airline had failed to develop adequate domestic and foreign services, particularly those to continental Europe. The South Atlantic and the West Indies also shaped the debate and the decision to turn Imperial Airways into BOAC. The lack of British air services in the region troubled some members. They believed that airlines from other nations were threatening the commercial and political interests of Britain. This concern was linked to fears about the country's international stature. Officials worried that Britain's status as a world power was waning. As they debated this point, some members suggested that the maintenance of international prestige required attention beyond the nation's imperial role. When it came to aviation, Britain and the rest of Europe had become 'the other' in and to the empire.

CHAPTER SIX

FOLDING: CONCLUSIONS AND TRAJECTORIES

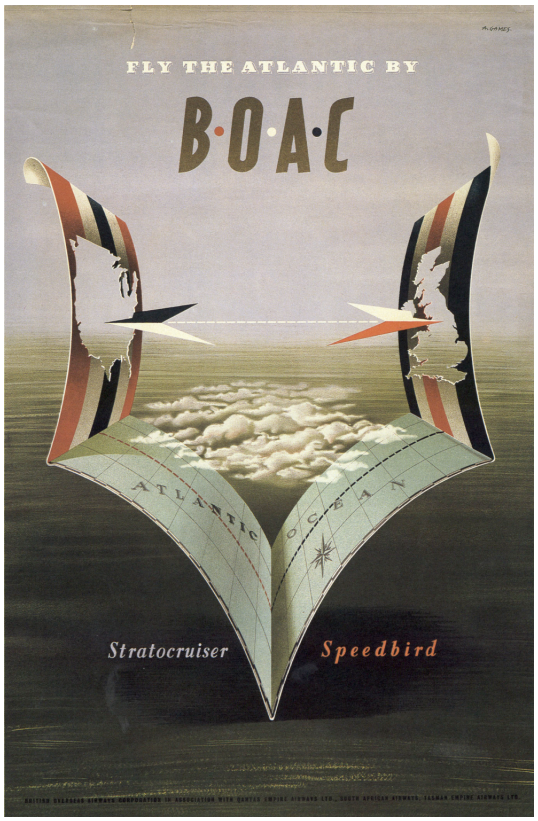

Fig 6.1. BOAC, *Fly the Atlantic*, 1949.
Reproduction courtesy of the British Airways
Archive and Museum.

In 1949, Abram Games, the famous graphic design artist, illustrated a poster for BOAC. It was called "Fly the Atlantic" (see fig. 6.1). It advertised the airline's new

Stratocruiser Speedbird service.[546] Notably, no airplanes appeared on the poster. Instead, the scene showed two company logos flying. One speedbird soared right to Britain. The other went left to the United States. A single white line connected them.

The scene opened above water, in the sky. A map of the Atlantic Ocean was in the center. The speedbirds were forcing it to fold inwards. As the map closed, two of its sides elevated upwards. Its compass said that one side was west and the other was east. The west was red, white, and blue; the east was blue, white, and red. Together, they represented altitude and symbolized the national colors of the United States and Britain. In each side, a silhouette of a nation-state was carved. Conspicuously, the territories were empty spaces. If the speedbirds manage to close the map completely, at least five things will happen. The United States and Britain will blend into each other. Through them, speedbirds will penetrate. Distance will disappear. Clock time will become instantaneous time. South Atlantics will vanish and the North Atlantic will prevail.

For Imperial Airways, BOAC and "Fly the Atlantic" was its future. For British Airways, all three of them are its past. In this dissertation, I have tried to expose how this past and its future were made. I have argued that empire was central to the development of airline travel, and the development of airline travel transformed how people viewed and experienced the empire. These transformations clustered around four themes: speed, perception, routes, and prestige. In each area, relations between people and places underwent dramatic changes. The advent of the airplane opened-up the third dimension. In doing so, it altered speed. Literally, speed became speed up. As it metamorphosed, its sense of slowness was forgotten and its sense of fastness triumphed. Simultaneously, the

[546] Transatlantic Stratocruiser Speedbird passenger services began in December 1949.

relative boundary-less geography of air allowed for uninterrupted straight-line travel through space. In Britain and its colonies, government officials were acutely aware of the alleged advantages that straight-line, high-speed travel would afford them. They saw airline transport as a way to reduce travel times, obliterate distances, and reconfigure the geography of a fractured empire. Travel in air avoided transshipment, accelerated communication, and tightened administrative bonds.

Movement through the third dimension changed perception. In the air, perspective shifted from horizontal to vertical. The first generation of airline travelers experienced the ground differently. Some enjoyed being suspended above seemingly ordinary crowds and everyday life, while others preferred to inspect the topography below them. On the empire air routes, above the colonies, travelers tended to focus on what they saw outside of the airplane's windows. Some passengers reflected on wildlife and natural vistas, while others used racialized language and orientalist tropes to describe what it was like to watch colonized people from an elevated distance. On long-haul above water flights, travelers tended to concentrate on the different entertainments offered onboard and inside of the aircraft. Some described their experience as remarkable, while others said that it was ordinary.

Published in the *Imperial Airways Gazette*, the firsthand accounts of passengers helped cultivate air mindedness in Britain. Along with advertisements and other guides in the magazine, air travel narratives helped teach readers how to fly. They explained how to send mail and freight by air. They helped promote airline travel as mundane and astonishing. This dualism helped normalize air transport. It helped establish air as a

domain, a space and place of empire. In a culture where maritime and imperial power bound together intimately, it also helped create a national identity for Imperial Airways.

A route and a colonial airline raised questions about that identity. In 1937, the first transatlantic air route between Britain and the United States opened. It was from Bermuda to New York. Its history reveals that routes are more than set courses and points on maps. They are political choices, which tell stories about the past. Bermuda-New York aligned Britain and the United States; years later, that route will help give rise to one of the most powerful and profitable air corridors in the world, New York-London.

Part of the history of the alliance was in the West Indies. For the first transatlantic air route between the United States and Britain to happen, an airline in the West Indies had to fail. A British colonial enterprise, Caribbean Airways was one of the first air transport companies in the West Indies. The moment when the British imperial government decided to bankrupt Caribbean Airways and align with the United States revealed the power that colonies had to topple international alliances. In spite of insurmountable odds and an unfortunate outcome, people in the West Indies nonetheless forced Britain to listen and act. Telling the history of Anglo-American aviation from the vantage point of the colonies encourages us to reopen the broad spectrum of possibilities available to historical agents at a time when they did not know which routes would flourish and which ones would falter. The question is not why did Caribbean Airways 'fail.' Rather, why was it necessary for western powers to shut Caribbean Airways down? What was so threatening about a West Indian airline?

Britain's failure to support a British enterprise was linked to concerns about national prestige. A few years after the transatlantic route between Bermuda and New

York opened, the British government decided to terminate Imperial Airways and create a fully nationalized airline called BOAC. On the one hand, it feared that Imperial Airways had done more for the colonies than it had done for the country. On the other hand, the government worried about Britain's status as an imperial nation; airlines such as Pan Am were growing and securing the global reach of the United States. In newspapers and official discourse about the disquiet, some remarks were about the lack of British airlines in the southern Atlantic. The West Indies edged those observations and their outcomes.

Utopia

Themes that were at the heart of empire continue to shape the commercial aviation industry in Britain and in the emancipated West Indies. On June 10, 1997, British Airways launched a new corporate identity campaign. Scheduled to end at the millennium, the campaign was a three-year scheme. It cost approximately £500 million and it was called Utopia, meaning 'not place.' That day, at 12:00 GMT, approximately 30,000 people in sixty-three countries on six continents congregated. Together they watched Bob Ayling, the airline's chief executive, unveil the new British Airways; simultaneously, thirteen satellites broadcasted the ceremony live from the BBC's grandstand studio in London.[547]

Utopia's theme was world citizenship. With a misdirected nod towards Diogenes, British Airways declared itself "a citizen of the world." For the airline, world citizenship meant two things. On the one hand, it meant a commitment to the oneness of people and the interconnectedness of places. In this sense, the airline claimed universalism and made three promises. It was "passionately committed to serving customers." It was

[547] British Airways Press Office, "New Advertising Campaign Supports the New Look," June 11, 1997.

"connecting the different communities of the world." It was enabling "global alliances."[548]

On the other hand, world citizenship meant the penetration of others. The Utopia campaign conjured older notions of Britishness. It used the language of entitlement and declared that British Airways was "not simply a British airline with an increasingly global reach . . . but an airline of and for the world which was born and is still based in Britain."[549]

The airline thought Utopia would be a success. Before the campaign launched, British Airways conducted one of the most expensive research studies recorded in airline history. It learned that most of its customers were not British citizens. To meet their alleged needs, the airline decided to "blend the best of traditional British values with the best of today's Britain—diverse . . . and cosmopolitan in outlook . . . open and responsive to change."[550]

On June 11, 1997, British Airways unleashed Utopia. On television, it broadcasted a forty-second commercial showing hot weather in Africa, rain in Europe, enthusiastic Americans at a baseball game, and other stereotypical images. The narrator explained, "The world is closer than you think." On the radio, British Airways aired a new version of Delibes's *Flower Duet*, which was its well-known theme song. The sixty-second commercial featured musicians playing a cello, bouzouki, pungi, trumpet, piano, sitar, violin, and pan pipes.

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[548] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see British Airways, Utopia Campaign Brochure, 1997.

[549] Ibid.

[550] Ibid.

The Utopia initiative included a sub-campaign called World Images. British Airways commissioned fifteen artists from around the world to paint the aircraft livery. It wanted to "access a truly universal language."[551] To achieve this, the airline removed the traditional Union Jack flag from aircraft tailfins, installing international artwork in its place.

In Britain, the new tailfins caused a media furor. Some people thought the tailfins were too "ethnic" and too "modernistic."[552] Others believed they made the British Airways look like "a third world airline."[553] Famously, when Margaret Thatcher saw a model of a new tailfin design, she draped a handkerchief over it and declared, "We fly the British flag, not these awful things you are putting on tails."[554]

Ideas about Britishness and the legacy of empire were at the core of the controversy. When Ayling responded to complaints, he asserted that it was time for the country to "lose some of our old-fashioned Britishness and take on board some of the new British traits." The BBC observed that the airline was doing "something more modern." It praised British Airways for attempting "to create a cosmopolitan feeling airline, not one trading on past glories of the Empire."[555]

In Jamaica and Barbados, the campaign also proved controversial. Some said British Airways "needed to pay attention to international and to incorporate global

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[551] Ibid.

[552] "BA to Fly the Flag Again," *BBC News*, June 6, 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/362203.stm.

[553] "BA Turns Tail on Colours," *BBC News*, May 11, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/1324788.stm.

[554] "Are Thatcher's Views Still Relevant," *BBC News*, October 21, 1998, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/198004.stm

[555] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see "R.I.P. British Airways' Funky Tailfins," *BBC News*, May 11, 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/1325127.stm.

flavour." Others believed Utopia was "meant to represent cultures from around the world. It is meant to represent regions." Some proclaimed, "British Airways had given up on its Britishness." Others stressed, "British Airways will always be British. It will always be the Best of Britain."[556]

On both sides of the Atlantic, Utopia was contentious. However, the concerns were not new. From its inception as Imperial Airways, the airline's identity has vexed the nation and the empire. For decades, people have struggled to define it. Twice, the airline changed its name. Throughout, the question remained. What was British about British Airways?

[556] For all passages quoted in the paragraph, see Airline executive, in discussion with author, October 2000.

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