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Aeromobile Bodies: Political Subjectivity in Contemporary Air Travel

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Aeromobile Bodies:
Political Subjectivity in Contemporary Air Travel

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Introduction
Life In Flight

*“ between our arrivals and our
Departures, it is a strangely
guiltless territory*

- Marne L. Kilates

“...Do clouds, for instance, discharge their burdens in relief, or do they, in their secret hearts, dream of the fallen? And which is the life we regret, what was left behind or the one to which we hurl at 800 km/h? Only at such giddy velocities might we savour the wonder of stasis, how the earth's rotation keeps us easily in place. Just as, if we knew the true evanescence of a second, it would stop us in our tracks – with indecision, if not physics. Yes, even in seat 34A, risking thrombosis, with barely enough room to clap, there's time to ponder unseen forces, the invisible lift beneath all our wings, only the first human century in history with this luxury of boredom. If the flight were any longer we'd resort to art. Plot new routes to godhood....”

-Excerpt from “In Transit,” by Alvin Pang

Sometimes the inspiration for a yearlong project is sparked by a single book. In my case, it was an anthology. During January 2017 I visited a local book shop called BooksActually, a rather quaint but modern store nestled among the winding, gently shaded roads of Tiong Bahru, east of downtown Singapore. After browsing some titles I realized that many of the works on display were exclusively published by the store, which publishes a wide range of Singaporean and Southeast Asian contemporary writers, neglected and underrepresented by the mainstream publishing outlets. I decided to indulge on a purchase, but among towering shelves packed with

a myriad of provoking, eye-catching, colorful, books, the biggest challenge was deciding on which one to get.

It was not long before I found one that caught my eye: *In Transit: An Anthology from Singapore on Airports and Air Travel*.

It wasn't the Instagram-worthy cover design or the fact that the anthology represented a large number of Singapore's most popular writers, though those helped. I couldn't put my finger on it directly, but something about the book's subject resonated deeply with me. Perhaps it was the fact that I was traveling, and came to Singapore from Chicago by way of San Francisco, Seoul, Phnom Penh, and Kuala Lumpur (in other words, spending a lot of time in transit). Or perhaps it was the particular relevance that this theme had for Singapore, a country that I was spending time in and wanted to know more about. The island nation, the anthology notes, is "home to two of the 'world's best: Changi Airport and Singapore Airlines." The city-state is so small that to leave requires a flight out through Changi, an airport with no domestic departures and with few exceptions including a bridge to Malaysia, serves as the exclusive port of entry and exit for the entire island nation. Noting the proliferation of literature on the topic but the lack of intertextual dialogue, co-editor Zhang Ruihe concluded that the phenomenon was "pointing to something deeply ingrained in the Singaporean psyche....it was a theme crying out for an anthology."

Or perhaps, beyond all of this, it was the pure fascination I personally have with flight, travel, coming, going, connecting, departing, and arriving again. Ruihe, in her introduction, sums it up:

Above all, flight and the mythos we have built up around it remain powerful symbols of the longings and aspirations that have assailed the human heart throughout history, and that connect us in such primal, visceral ways despite differences of place, culture, and time. The desire for freedom and the longing for home, the movements between these two conflicting impulses, the

physical and psychological spaces preserved and breached in these transitions: these are tropes common to every human story since the earliest creation myths. The stories and poems in this anthology locate these tropes in the recognisable, concrete world of airports, aircrafts, and the spaces surrounding them, fleshing out ambivalences, ambiguities, and nuances enacted in the give-and-take of human relationships, the ebb-and-flow of personal and national histories....the characters and speakers who people these pieces are often standing at a crossroads, suspended and waiting in mid-flight between one world and another. *In transit*, in other words- a descriptor that is arguably applicable to the universal human condition, anytime, anywhere.

We live in a world that flight makes possible. Every year, millions of people are shuttled around the world and back at dizzying pace. International commodities and cultures permeate the farthest corners of the world. Air travel supports entire national economies and in some cultures serves as the structural basis for shared social life. It is a realm that visualizes our abstract ideas of the nation, the state, the citizen, the public, and which questions the very logics of space and time that otherwise structure our everyday lives. Today, life is in flight, referring both to the global reliance on air travel to connect, generate, and reproduce social life, and also to the particular objects of air travel: men, women, children, bodies- in a word, life itself.

Air travel, in a word, moves us. I term this unique form of movement *aeromobility*, to distinguish it ontologically from other forms of mobility while recognizing its essential nature as a technology of physical movement. 'Aeromobility' is a particular type of mobility, allowing bodies to transcend distances our ancestors could have never imagined, connecting centers of the world and theoretically freeing man from the ultimate confines of gravity. Aeromobility involves movement not just across, but above. Yet mobility by air is also highly regulated, ordered, and institutionalized, both by political entities (i.e. states and cities) and economic structures, dominant forms of knowledge, and cultural norms. To understand the fundamental nature of this condition of aeromobility, this paper aims to ask one central question: how does air travel move us?

Often times academic discourses around air travel answer this question by interpreting aeromobility is a physical condition. In other words, these lines of research inquire as to why and how people are physically moved by air travel: through achievements in engineering and design, technical advancements and computerized logistics management, through security regimes and legalistic protocols, through architectural forms and social arrangements, and through economic structures that presupposed and organize travel. All of these features, and more, have been discussed in the academic literature on flight and aviation.

But what if we asked “how does air travel move us?” with the question ‘how’ referring not to air travel, but to us? What if instead of asking how we are *physically*, moved in flight, we asked how we are *personally* and *politically* moved as well? The process of air travel gets at core questions about who we are and who we are becoming when we travel: citizens, foreigners, tourists, workers, migrants, adventurers, family, friends are all labels that are blurred and shifted in flight. At the same time, they are not understood neutrally; the process of understanding yourself in a certain socio-political context is a highly governed, political domain. These questions, concerned with *who* people are and *how* they understand themselves to be identified as such are questions that are fundamentally concerned with political *subjectivities*, or our understanding of ourselves in relations to others.

Prevailing Theories: Aeromobility as Individual Experiences and a Global Infrastructure

This is not the first paper to argue that aeromobility is a fundamentally political condition, and it is situated within a range of scholarship dealing with the political nature of air travel. In this section I characterize two broad approaches to analyzing air travel politically and present the unique perspective offered in this thesis relating to embodiment. First, some of these

studies look at airports and air travel, both the phenomenology of air travel and airports as concrete units, in totalizing, global terms. These studies often arrive at more explicitly political arguments and situate air travel more squarely within lively political conversations regarding sovereignty, mobility, capitalism, and digitization. Discussing airports in broad terms, this work looks at aeromobility as a global infrastructure of capitalism, sovereignty, mobility, and order, turning towards the realm of air travel to answer globally relevant political questions. However, because of the broad approach it offers, these analyses risk homogenizing the experience of air travel and drawing large-scale conclusions based on narrowly applicable phenomena.

For instance, some scholars study the airport as a *space*, by looking at the role of its design and architecture in structuring the experience of travel. Marc Auge's (1995) famous presentation of the airport as an anthropological non-space of "supermodernity," a garish modern contrast to the anthropological places that are connected with familiar rhythms and patterns of life, contain histories and retain identities. Less philosophical but nonetheless descriptive is Alastair Gordon's (2004) comprehensive exposition of "the world's most revolutionary structure" over the 20th century. He considers fundamental experiences of travel and the design and layout of airports, and how their structuring influence over passenger experiences can be interpreted in political terms.

More explicitly, Mark B. Salter (2007) draws on Foucauldian frameworks to understand "governmentalities of an airport" by focusing on the essential nature airport spaces. He conceptualizes the airport as a Foucauldian "heterotopia" or space comprised of other contradictory and overlapping spaces which are "capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several places, several sites that are in themselves incompatible." (Foucault 1986:26). In the

context of airports, Salter points out that “the national, international, and the non-national spaces of transit area all proximate if not coterminous in the space of the terminal,” and reminds us, drawing on Adey, that “the airport is both separated from its own proximate urban space and connected to distant urban spaces.” (52). This has important implications not only for the operationalization of governance in this context but also the understanding of relations between subject and state that are rendered in these unstable, dynamic and contingent spaces, owing to the unique status of airports as a sort of threshold between political entities.

Other scholars have offered political engagements of air travel as a practice of mobility. Some such as Mike Crang (2002) and Tim Cresswell (2001, 2007) have situated the practice of air travel within a larger politics of mobility as “an entanglement of movement, representation, and practice” (Cresswell 2007) and seeks to deepen discussions of mobility politically beyond simple questions of ‘mobility vs. immobility’ and towards historical considerations and perspectives on direction, connections, and flows¹. Cresswell draws particular attention to how specific spaces can condition experiences of mobility, including, of course, the spaces of air travel- airports, airplanes, transit lounges, security queues. Justine Lloyd (2003) analyses airport architecture in relation to passenger experiences and explains why “contemporary technospaces work toward a new experience of waiting as pleasurable. This hybrid and remixed modernity invites a different kind of engagement between technology and travel that affects our ways of being in place.” In a similar vein, Dodge and Kitchin (2003) see air travel as encompassing “passage through ‘code/space’” that include “websites, check-in, security checkpoints...which

¹ This is closely related to Castells’ concepts of ‘space of flows’ which he understands as preceding its opposite, a ‘space of places,’ in an age where capitalism is rendered increasingly mobile due to new infrastructural and information technologies. He understands the emergence of a space of flows as “the deployment of the functional logic of power-holding organizations in asymmetrical networks of exchanges which do not depend on the characteristics of any specific locale for the fulfillment of their fundamental goals. (348).

together form assemblages that define the practices and experiences of air travel.” Synthesizing these perspectives in the realm of political subjectivity Adey (2010) offers a unique phenomenological approach that is similar to the one undertaken here, but which nonetheless remains oriented towards discussing air travel in broad, general and global terms.

Similarly, scholars have drawn attention to practices and logics of security, ordering, disciplining, surveilling-activities which Foucault might broadly characterize as ‘governing’ as an experiential phenomenon that is built in to the ontology of the airport. Adey (2004) in other articles connects the role of surveillance in airports to the broader political operation of mobility as a technology of ordering and ‘sorting’ privileges of mobility based on hierarchies of power. In his later work, Adey’s discussion of security focuses even more explicitly on bodies as the object of security and the way in which affect and biological processes have been incorporated as objects to be screened in the airport security assemblage. Wilcox (2015) similarly discusses how biometric security screening technologies have given rise to a particular association of bodies with information to be gathered and rationally evaluated in processes of security.

In all of these cases, the focus of the analysis is air travel in broad, global terms. Aeromobility, whether as a phenomenological experience or a politically produced condition, is understood in general terms which allows for application across diverse global contexts but which risks homogenizing narratives of travel and rendering the experience universal and apolitical.

A second group of existing airport scholarship tends to be focused less on air travel in broad political terms and more with respect to specific contexts and individual subjects. Often times this work does not explicitly situate itself within the domain of political theory and instead

details the lived experience of air travel in more specific terms, for a particular individual in a particular place at a particular time. This work, usually in film, art, and literature, is often focused on specific individual experiences rather than situating itself squarely within larger political discourses.

David Pascoe, for one, analyses the spaces of travel and their histories, politics, events, representations, and aesthetics in a comprehensive analysis focused on discrete spaces of air travel- what he terms *airspace*. He focuses his analysis on specific cases, events, and airports, rarely making explicitly political arguments. Christopher Schaberg, in his more recent account, provides an especially timely reflection of “the nature of flight” from departure to arrival, illustrating a uniquely subjective first-person perspective of the contemporary air travel experience. The anthology *In Transit* from Singapore and Pico Iyer’s article “Where Worlds Collide,” both of which I use in the case studies, are similarly rich in detail about the experiences of particular individuals in particular contexts, but which are not explicitly political and in some cases are actively apolitical.

Arriving In-Between: Embodied Subjectivity and Abstraction

This paper arrives at a new way of understanding the role of airports and air travel in the broad processes of producing the subjects and spaces of late capitalism, bridging both research focused on context-specific political processes and focused on global conditions of contemporary capitalism. In other words, this paper offers an intervention that combines a global interpretation of aeromobility and a micropolitical analysis focused on the ways governance varies and is dependent upon particular political contexts. Specifically, I compare

two distinct political contexts, Singapore and Los Angeles, to illustrate ways in which technologies of governance produce particular political subjects in each place.

But in this process, a central question emerges: if technologies of governance operate to produce political subjects in specific contextual situations, how are they also be connected to each other in a single unified system of late capitalism? While globalized late capitalism is far from homogenous, it nevertheless connects political entities that have very different political and cultural priorities, such as Singapore and Los Angeles. How, on the level of subjectivity, are these two aeromobilities reconciled? To answer this question, we must first understand how subjects are produced in each context, and I discuss these in Singapore in Chapter 2 and Los Angeles in Chapter 3. I approach the analysis by interpreting aeromobility as a fundamentally *embodied* condition. Specifically, I focus this paper on the subjectivities of traveling individuals as embodied subjects, or what I term broadly “aeromobile bodies.” Although present in this paper, this analysis does not focus on the myriad of additional subjective relationships and understandings produced at the airport, say of workers or local residents; instead I focus on those transient subjects who never stay in airports for too long, always on a journey towards some final destination. I do this not with the intention of being reductive or simplistic, but in the hopes of drawing larger conclusions about the political nature of flight on those who use the technology for international travel, and for focusing on the group of subjects towards whom dominant discourses of air travel are typically directed.

When we recognize the role of bodies in governance at the airport, we also recognize processes of *abstraction* that occur as subject go through the process of becoming aeromobile. I specifically refer to the abstraction of bodies that takes place at the airport. By abstraction, I

refer to the process by which bodies are constituted as ontologically separate from ‘consciousness,’ differentiating subjects from their bodies and producing a Cartesian notion of subjectivity. As Bray and Colebrook (1998) note, “the concepts of ‘disembodiment’ and ‘embodiment’ function dichotomously such that ‘disembodiment’ is frequently coded as a phallogocentric fantasy articulated through a dualist and peculiar representational economy that finds its most perfect expression in the cartesian cogito....Disembodiment is also strongly aligned with aientation: phallogocentric representations set up an alienating distance between the body and mind (Grosz 1994b, 188)” (47-48). At the airport, technologies continuously produce representations of the human body- in computers, on security scanners, on passports- that allow the body to become alienated from subjects. I argue that this abstraction of bodies, a practice that plays out through the airport and produces disembodied subjects, produces feelings of freedom and mobility even amidst confinement and disorientation in flight, ‘in between’ destinations. This process of disembodiment holds the key for understanding not only context-specific techniques of governance at the airport but also the way air travel operates in the larger global system of late capitalism. It allows airports across the world to produce different subjectivities with different technologies of governance and still integrate them into a singular, uniform technology of globalized late capitalism.

To summarize, this paper offers both a micropolitical perspective of air travel in particular contexts and a macropolitical interpretation of the larger role of air travel in late capitalism vis-a-vis the abstraction of bodies in flight. This abstraction allows aeromobile bodies to move between subjective contexts seamlessly and allows the realm of air travel to be thought of in neutral, apolitical, apathetic, or else metaphysical and dreamlike terms. The structures of

domination and subject-production forced upon aeromobile bodies becomes abstract along with the notion of the self as embodied in the dreamy state of travel. By approaching air travel as an embodied condition of subjectivity, and by analysing this condition at the micropolitical level, I arrive at the conclusion that airports around the world operate by similar logics of abstracting bodies, disembodying subjects and carrying political implications about governing aeromobility. This also further situates air travel squarely within the global structures and operating logics of late capitalism.

Political Implications

Politicizing and theorizing air travel is an important task because air travel is closely related to contemporary political issues relating to capitalism, nations, borders, migration, and identity. However, air travel is also often overlooked as an apparatus of political power. Bestowing upon air travel this warranted level of political significance allows us to more thoroughly understand its role in shaping and reproducing contemporary life, and with it, the power dynamics embedded within structures of late capitalism.

What gives this particular mode of transportation such a significant political potential as compared to other institutions like train or auto travel? Is it simply state of being mobile that endows air travel with political power, or is it something more? Travel, in broad terms, already has the power to be transformative. It brings subjects face-to-face with difference, newness, and engenders experiences that cannot be easily tied down to a specific place. Travel in this way can be disorienting, destabilizing, and can completely change the way subjects perceive themselves in relation to others. Travel can thus define subjects, and indeed much of the dichotomous opposition between the Eurocentric 'self' and the geographically distant 'Other' has been

constructed in terms of ‘traveling cultures,’ whereby European cultures are seen as worldly, traveling, and outwardly-focused while the ‘Others’ they mind are seen as ‘native,’ tied to land and history, immobile, static, preserved in time and space (Clifford 1992). Indeed, perhaps air travel is only politically relevant insofar as it is a *type* of travel.

However, as we can see by analysing the material basis of late capitalism and the cultural structure it has produced, we see that air travel is no ordinary mode of mobility. It is global in scope, immaterial by nature, and encompassing a massive, ever-changing, and transnational population of subjects. Its global extent renders it an exceptional space, its material significance renders it in need of constant security and protection, and it is able to reproduce aspects of late capitalist culture to a global extent (Pascoe 2001). Moreover, air travel is a unique in that it encompasses both local political entities as well as an integrated system of late-capitalism at a global level. Similarly, aeromobility is a condition that applies to a wide and diverse array of political subjects from around the world, but it is also an exclusive condition that only a fraction of the human population ever experiences. Understanding the politics of this exclusive and exceptional realm therefore carries important implications not only about *how* late-capitalism produces political subjects but also *who* these subjects are. It seems clear that the political significance of aeromobility extends beyond simply the realm of mobility politics.

In more general terms, I undertake this analysis because airports themselves viscerally embody the aesthetics, cultures and logics of late-capitalism, and therefore can be exceptionally informative at illustrating the otherwise hidden ways people are governed by this penetrating system. Governance of aeromobility, in other words, can be a sort of instrument to understand governance under late capitalism. At the airport, the intrusive eye of the state watches all action

and governs backed by the hidden threat of violence; the imaged spectacle of consumer-commodities is so commonplace it is an almost uniform feature of airports; borders are made visible, sovereign territories given a face, and biometric data on subjects normalized and institutionalized. What better way to palpably illustrate the concept of class consciousness than that long march of economy-class passengers through first class on their way to their rightful place in the back of the plane? Recognizing the political significance of air travel focuses our attention in general terms to the operationalization of techniques of governance that are similarly deployed in the realm of everyday life under capitalism.

Theoretical Approach & Limitations

As other scholars have demonstrated, political concepts can be productively applied to global air travel to understand local characteristics of political governance and subjectivity and to situate air travel in a larger, late-capitalist context. Not only does air travel *replicate* broader logics, relations, and techniques of power and governance in its ordering and structure, a fact that will be demonstrated through examples later; but also, as a key infrastructure of global capitalism, it also actively (re)*produces* it. This fact has only been reinforced over the last few decades as the volume of people who partake in this practice has grown, deepening and broadening to ever-greater corners of the world.

I characterize my theoretical approach as one that is both illuminating and limiting. Theoretical approaches to these sorts of questions are often less context-specific and further removed from local political struggles and questions than more applied, empirical, or ethnographic approaches might advocate. In exchange for these shortcomings, however, are the broader insights and conclusions generated by theory that can be applied to numerous

context-specific political efforts. Instead of analysing the specific nature of political structures, struggles, and trends at a given airport, say LAX, this paper hopes to illuminate characteristics of power and subjectivity in air travel as a whole, providing broader insights that can be applied to multiple situations.

Other scholars, namely Robert Cox, have characterized this approach as contrasting critical theory with problem-solving theory. Whereas problem-solving theory is seen as more concerned with addressing specific empirical phenomena and observable, context-specific political challenges, critical theory, according to Cox, “does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing....[it] is directed to the social and political complex as a whole rather than to the separate parts.” (129). In this paper I apply a critical but nuanced approach to describing aeromobile subjectivity, highlighting in broad terms common characteristics of aeromobile subjectivities while also recognizing and specifying variation in these subjective traits based on differences in embodied experiences.

Once we begin to look at air travel in this way, we can recognize how my subjective experience of travel, one characterized by freedom and newness, of mobility, consumption, and a dreamlike aura of transcending earthly limits, is not the shared by everyone. The abstracted image of travel and abstracted memories I have about travel obscure the realities of governance at the airport that does not treat all bodies equally and, to the contrary, orders and excludes those outside the frame of the abstracted aeromobile body. This abstracted body is not so far off from myself, a white-passing, male, American, middle-class individual. I, as a subject, have been

conditioned to think about flight as an apolitical, abstract and disembodied experience; perhaps this is why I resonate so much with Ruihe's introduction.

Indeed in most popular, conventional engagements with air travel, flight remains something special, magical, even beautiful in the human imaginary, a supernatural practice that is frequently romanticized in almost metaphysical terms, reflecting a very particular and curated experience of global mobility indeed. Yet what I hope to focus on in this paper is the space where this dreamlike aura of flight very quickly meets the mundane and constricting realities that make it possible. Perhaps this intersection is where the impressive power of air travel as a political technology will begin to emerge. By viewing air travel as transcendental and humanistic, a testament of how far humanity has come, a marvel of technology and a symbol of global progress and unity, it can be all too easy to overlook the political functions of normalization, violence, and subjugation present in late-capitalist air travel. And, recognizing the large-scale abstraction of bodies that takes place in flight and makes the entire system possible, As air travel continues to grow in significance in global society, moving ever-increasingly large masses of bodies across space, the need to theorize the implications of a new era of life in air become paramount.

“In law, we are all subjects- not necessarily subjects *of* the signifier, but at least subject *to* Knowledge, Power, Money. But the shares in this kind of subjectivity are in fact radically different, depending on whether one is a child, a member of a primitive society, a woman, poor, mad, and so on...the slightest manifestation of an I-ego is over-determined by a whole set of social stratifications, hierarchical positions and power relations.”

-Felix Guattari, *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*

The airport is unlike any other space on Earth. It is an exceptional space, appearing to stand outside the realms of time, space, sovereignty, territory, law, history, and culture- and of course, laws of biology and physics. At the same time, it is a highly standardized space, evoking a similar sense of familiarity across the world and operated by a certain hegemonic form of knowledge and structure of power. It is both highly individualized, making us aware of ourselves as singular, embodied ‘selves,’ and yet can evoke a profound sense of shared cultural experience, through stories, humor, and retelling of experience. It is a launch-pad which propels us through space (and through time, in a way), always moving its subjects towards a destination, a *becoming*, something *new*, and yet the physical process of travel is somehow always familiar (at least for the returning traveler); it reminds us of our own historicity. It is a space where we voluntarily submit ourselves to confinement, discomfort, and control at the direct hands of the State, and yet the airport is frequently viewed as a technology of freedom, reveled in discourse as a utopian vehicle for mobility and prosperity.

The airport, in other words, is full of contradiction and paradoxes. And why should we expect anything else, given how fundamental it is in an apparatus of global capitalism that is similarly contradiction-prone? Few places on earth embody contemporary life so viscerally as the airport. Perhaps this is due to the crucial role of airports as conduits, core nodes, in global labor

and capital flows. At present, the only large-scale mechanism available to the global economic system of 'late capitalism' for moving human bodies to worldwide outlets is air travel. Yet the process by which it does so is not neutral nor apolitical. Through their significant material role in late capitalism, airports make their mark on the subjects who travel by air, shaping contemporary culture and normalized understandings of subjectivity and power. In a word, airports are transformative, at once a microcosm of contemporary society and home to a practice- air travel- that shapes it every day.

The ability to shape people's subjectivities, or their understandings of themselves as individuals both as independent 'selves' and also in relation to 'others,' is a powerful tool which has the ability to shape culture, politics, and even knowledge on a large scale (Ellis and Flaherty 1992). This thesis analyses the forces that shape aeromobile subjectivities, hoping to make sense out of the various contradictory impulses present in the ontology of the contemporary airport. Specifically, this paper intervenes in existing literature on air travel and politics by focusing on the embodied experience of flight, drawing attention to the way bodies are produced as subjects and abstracted, de-produced, dis-embodied in order to connect political spaces and obscure the political nature of flight. By focusing on human bodies, both the central object of air travel and the only way subjects are able to experience 'reality,' we can undertake an analysis that is both phenomenological, dealing with the consciously-lived experience of aeromobile subjects, and also primarily concerned with air travel as a technology of embodied mobility. The relation between bodies and 'subjectivity' is not as theoretically simple as it may seem and will be elaborated upon later.

In addition to offering a corporeal response to the question of *how* airports achieve this power to influence subjects, this essay further intervenes in current conversations on air travel by proposing an answer to the question of *what* airports, or more specifically, the governing technologies underlying their operation, do with that power. It will examine the types of subjectivities produced by this power and how these differ across global contexts, and in doing so will illustrate the necessary processes of abstraction that takes place in the process of air travel. In this sense, aeromobility is more than simply a physical state of being, that of simply being able to move across great distance by air. By treating airports as the political instruments they are, we see that it takes a lot of things to get to that stage of being physically aeromobile—things like time, money, knowledge, biological verification, security clearance, and state approval. I wish to use ‘aeromobility’ to refer to the holistic process through which embodied subjectivities, or “Aeromobile Bodies,” are produced. This paper is concerned with that corporeal process and the subjectivities that are produced as a result.

Aeromobility is closely related to subjectivities of late capitalism not only in that it is *constituted by* its role as a physical infrastructure of global production and circulation, but also in the fact that it is *constitutive* of particular subjectivities that are necessarily late-capitalist in nature. The exclusivity of the airport as a space produces a select class of aeromobile bodies, further enhancing its political function as the subjective conditions it seeks to engender only apply to a select few subjects. Aeromobility is inseparable from broader elements of subjectivity under late-capitalism, just as the airport is inseparable from the material geographies of globalization.

Embodying Globalization: Air Travel as an Infrastructure of Late Capitalism

Air travel today cannot be analysed separately from its function in a larger late-capitalist system, a relation that is a product of historical conditions that have shaped the trajectory of commercial aviation since the first commercial flight in 1919, still less than a century ago (Dierikx 2008). How did this relatively new technology rise to such prominence over the last century, embedding itself within a broader infrastructure of late capitalism that had been advancing since the industrial age? What conditions led to the prominence of this technology in the infrastructures of *everyday life*, both representational (in art, newspapers, media, movies, books, and other aspects of mediated popular culture) as well as materially, a now-ordinary, standard fixture of modern life (Schaberg 2017)? And flowing from this prominence, how has it evolved (or has it always been this way?) to become a technology of *political* governance that is so critical for understanding subjectivity in contemporary global capitalism?

This paper hopes to answer these questions. Air travel embodies late-capitalist culture and reproduces it, both on a local global scale, in the embodied subjectivities of those who are aeromobile. From a purely ontological standpoint, flight is premised on the movement of human *bodies* (as opposed to capital or ideas) through space, a practice that is both emblematic and constitutive of the criss-crossing flows that characterize global capitalism. Without air travel, contemporary life as we know it today would look- and feel- very different. Materially, air travel enables ultra-fast global shipping, access to global destinations in a standardized system of tourism, the internationalization of markets and political entities, new possibilities for moving workers and capital, and the global integration of distant circuits of information, people, and things. Yet we also feel the effects of air travel *immaterially*, or in the ways it conditions our feeling and understanding of the world in particular ways. It naturalizes and reinforces a global

system of political territories and nation-states, bases its ordering logic on liberal economic systems, orients us to an objective, Cartesian way of ‘viewing from above,’² and shapes our understanding of ‘society’ and ‘public’ spaces in a world that appears to be increasingly privatized.

Although this paper draws on history, it is fundamentally concerned with the present, in understanding how historical processes shape our experience of the here and now. For the purposes of this topic, the here and now of contemporary air travel is firmly within a global system of exchange, goods circulation, informationalization, and geopolitical precarity. Broadly speaking, scholars understand the present-day epoch through the broad term ‘postmodernism,’ the era characterized by its contrasting position to the knowledges and structures of modernism. As both an intellectual movement and an interdisciplinary signifier of new social realities coming into being around the turn of the twentieth century, postmodernism has been defined in a myriad of ways. Among the most notable includes Fredric Jameson’s understanding of postmodernism as a “cultural logic of late capitalism.” This characterization draws attention to ways that an *economic* system of production, a system concerned with material resources, ends up having a profound *cultural* impact, shaping the ways subjects interpret their everyday lives (Jameson 1991). This is not unlike Marx’s core understanding of the cultural, social realm of a society as having its structural origins in the way its economic system of production is organized.

Jameson credits the Frankfurt school for initiating the common use of the term ‘late capitalism,’ but argues that in its applications today, its deployment of power and order is less state-centric, marked by “a vision of a world capitalist system fundamentally distinct from the

² For more, see Schwarzer (2004) and Haffner (2013).

older imperialism,” which was a framework focused on rivalries between colonial states. There are a variety of features of late capitalism that Jameson goes on to note, many of them international in nature: transnational businesses, financial networks and flows, a new international division of labor, global economic restructuring, global gentrification, and technological advances. The internationalization of these phenomena was only made possible through a pronounced process of capitalist globalization, a process in which air travel had an essential material role as the main technology for physically moving people across the world. Jameson further attempt to understand late capitalism by focusing on its structural distinction from a more conventionally-defined capitalism (xviii-xix), a task that will be helpful for our purposes of understanding the origins of air travel ‘here and now.’

The transition from capitalism to late capitalism, Jameson argues, should be seen not as a dramatic rupture or break but rather as an ontological continuity in the trajectory of the capitalist system. While there is much debate over whether this new iteration of capitalism is compatible with Marxist theories designed for earlier versions of ‘Industrial capitalism,’ Jameson seems to follow Mandel’s proposition that the new stage is “a purer stage of capitalism than any of the moments that preceded it.” (Jameson 1991: 3). To historically delineate when capitalism became late capitalism, he offers three points in history: the development of the *infrastructures* of capitalism, the *superstructures* of capitalism, and the moment of the “Freudian *Nachträglichkeit*, or retroactivity: people become aware of the dynamics of some new system, in which they are themselves seized, only later on and gradually.” (xix). He argues that the infrastructures-international institutions, the globalization of economic production, and processes of decolonization- were laid just after World War II. The superstructures, or cultural preconditions,

are found in “the enormous social and psychological transformations of the 1960s which swept so much of tradition away on the level of *mentalités*.” Finally, Jameson sees 1973 as the pivotal year when these structural transformations crystallized into public view, embodied in further decolonization, oil shocks, and the movement away from the gold standard. (xx-xxi).

Despite the American focus of Jameson’s genealogy (which is formed by drawing on a number of other theorists including Mandel) and the debatable rigidity of his specifically defined moments of structural transition, Jameson’s account is a helpful foundation for us to base our understanding of ‘late capitalism.’ But the contemporary context has evolved even further since the 1970s, and the version of late(r?) capitalism that I would like to focus on needs additional specification. I therefore rely on Jameson’s genealogy of ‘late-capitalism’ in broad terms, but with a few important additions and caveats.

Drawing on a number of contemporary theorists writing about more recent developments to the political and economic systems that govern everyday life, I argue that on a large-scale, macro-level, we are begging to see an increasing international stratification of the capital outlets and markets, and a more fundamental restructuring of its mechanisms of value-creation from material *production* to global *circulation* and exchange in expanding global markets. Meanwhile, alongside new infrastructural developments at the turn of the 21st-century new contemporary social norms and cultures, or what Marx would call superstructures, of late-capitalism have emerged. In recent decades, these have been characterized by rapid technological changes that has enabled global connections of information and media. The growing ‘spectacle’ of imaged reproduction under late capitalism has been described in various

terms as simulated, imaged, and hyperreal, and has given rise to new analytical frames focused on performance, affect, and lived experience.

First, on the infrastructural level, these transformations can be understood in broad term as capitalist “globalization,” where new contemporary technologies of communication and transportation are increasing the rate and volume of global economic and cultural flows, closely integrating circuits of the world and shrinking distances across time and space. The internet, container shipping, and the shift in air travel from a luxury novelty to a commercial necessity have expanded capital market and, concurrently, facilitated the rise of the US as a global Empire, charged with defending and expanding this system ideologically and militarily (Hardt and Negri 2004). The global division of labor thus gives rise to the hegemony of immaterial labor and cultures of consumerism, individualism, and economic rationalism both in the US as a global hegemon and in emerging markets around the world.

Much of this transition has been realized through the sectoral shift in capitalism’s foundational basis from production to circulation, mirroring changes in late-capitalist labor becoming increasingly immaterial. Joshua Clover (2016) calls this “the period of ‘hegemony unraveling’ at the end of the United States’ long twentieth century,” during “the autumn of empire known variously by the terms *late capitalism*, *financialization*, *post-Fordism*.” (17, emphasis orig.). Drawing on Arrighi, Clover explains that periods of capital production must always be accompanied by periods of expanded capital circulation to realize surplus values (17-18). While historically circulation and production expanded in conjunction, “our current phase of circulation lacks much evidence of such systemic counterbalance... the spiraling reach of long centuries may have run out of room to expand,” notes Clover, arguing that “capital finds itself in

a phase of circulation not being met by rising production elsewhere.”³ (20-21). He points out empirical data on GDP growth supporting this premise.

Drawing on Marx, he goes on to point out that “circulation...can never itself be the source of new value for capital as a whole” and therefore “the current phase in our cycle of accumulation is defined by the collapse of value production at the core of the world-system; it is for this reason that capital’s center of gravity shifts toward circulation.” (20-21). As we are beginning to see this situation manifest in our present postmodern world, Clover concludes that “capital, faced with greatly diminished returns in the traditionally productive sectors, goes looking for profit beyond the confines of the factory- in the FIRE sector (Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate), along the lanes laid out by global logistics networks- yet finds there no ongoing solution to the crisis that pushed it from production in the first place.” (24) Air travel, similarly an industry based not on the production of goods but the movement of them globally, is never itself a producer of goods of value. However, it retains an essential role in global late-capitalist society partially, at least, due to the preoccupation society places on the surplus ‘exchange value’ over material tangible ‘use value’ or the value of something in itself, not in relation to others. It also stays relevant due to its role as an essential infrastructure and component of the referenced ‘global logistics networks’ that have an important role in shaping the geographies of global late-capitalist development.

Infrastructures aside, on a more subjective level, many have characterized the shift in life under capitalism as a turn from ideology towards affect, or the way subjective emotions,

³ Geographer David Harvey conceptualizes this development as “crises of accumulation” of capital and labor which can be absorbed by spatial or temporal displacement (that is, investment or the circulation of capital to new markets). However, “Contradictions arise, because new dynamic spaces of capital accumulation ultimately generate surpluses and have to absorb them through geographical expansions.”(67)

thoughts, and feelings are (politically) conditioned and expressed. Other scholars have discussed the subjective condition as being bombarded with images and other symbolic representations in every facet of life, leading to states of ‘hyperreal’ experience and subjective ‘schizophrenia.’⁴ When thinking of these conditions in the context of air travel, with its disorienting spatial movements and reordering of temporal perception, with its stimulating and bombarding visual content combined with restrictions on bodily movement, and with its unique ability to condition life in the present, passing through ephemerally, it seems like a true embodiment of the structural logics of late capitalism on both the global and subjective level.

In reality, the ‘infrastructure’ and ‘superstructure’ or material and cultural conditions of air travel are not so clean-cut and dichotomized; to the contrary, they go hand in hand (Mitchell et. al. 2011). Globalized late capitalism provides a rationale and material basis for consumptive systems of long-distance mobility. On a cultural level, it offers an ordering logic for how the life in its domain should be governed. We see the symbiotic relation at play on a large scale, as the ever-increasing expansion of air routes are connecting new flows of people, commodities, and cultures, and increasing the depth and interconnectedness of existing flows. In the process, travelers incorporated in the global practice, an exclusive group of privileged bodies, experience new spatial orientations, structures of governance, and connections with each other that are mediated through the body; it is these experiences that are the focus of this paper.

These transitions in both infrastructural and cultural realms of late-capitalism are often explained by a recognition of the increasing immateriality of contemporary life under capitalism. The infrastructural shift to capital circulation, itself giving rise to new surpluses of labor and

⁴ For more, see Baudrillard’s (1994) discussions of hyperreality.

global crises of accumulations, is most clearly exemplified by greater amounts of labor being redirected to sectors that support the circulation rather than the production of capital⁵. Those whose bodies are not simply neglected as superfluous ‘surplus’ and do work nowadays most often do so in sectors involved not with the production of products, but the production of *immaterial* goods- things like information, logistics, creativity, knowledge, and feelings, giving rise to a culture or superstructure rooted in immaterial experience (Hardt and Negri 2004). We see this at play at the airport, which not only facilitates immaterial *production*, but also produces an immaterial ‘product’ of *consumption*- a product makes international tourism, global conferences, and transnational negotiations possible. I speak, of course of aerial mobility.

As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri note, “in the final decades of the twentieth century, industrial labor lost its hegemony and in its stead emerged ‘immaterial labor,’ that is, labor which creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response.”⁶ (2008) A key component of immaterial labor is known as ‘affective labor.’ As they go on to describe, “unlike emotions, which are mental phenomena, affects refer equally to the body and mind. In fact, affect, such as joy or sadness, reveal the present state of life in the entire organism, expressing a certain state of the body along with a certain mode of thinking.” (108). This twin shift in the capitalist development paradigm- to a

⁵ Clover makes an important point that, at least in the US context, this surplus of labor is highly racialized (an insight that can easily be expanded globally to denote the various racial, economic, gendered, and postcolonial contours of power that characterize productive activity today). It takes the form of higher relative unemployment among blacks and a prisoner-industrial complex used to manage it, in a “process of racialization [which] is itself intimately engaged with the production of surplus populations.” (27)

⁶ Hardt and Negri elsewhere call this shift “a process of economic *postmodernization*, or rather, *informatization*,” (89) and explains that “whereas the processes of modernization were indicated by a migration of labor from agriculture and mining (the primary sector) to industry (the secondary), the processes of postmodernization or informatization are recognized through the migration from industry to service jobs (the tertiary), a shift that has taken place in the dominant capitalist countries, and particularly the United States, since the 1970s.” (91).

circulation economy at a infrastructural level, and immateriality at the cultural level- is how I conceptualize the contemporary situation of late capitalism for the purposes of this analysis.

Interestingly, the emergence of late capitalism towards the later half of the twentieth century and the immaterial circulatory iteration of it at the start of the twenty-first closely mirrors the trajectory of air travel internationally (Dierikx 2008). The invention of the airplane was followed by early versions that exploited its potential in warfare; alongside other modern methods of fighting such as the tank and machine gun, the airplane was an important technological component of military strategies during World War I and, to an even greater extent, World War II. During the postwar years commercial aviation began to take off and soon became a staple of modern society. Throughout most of the 20th century, commercial aviation remained less of a mass mode of transportation and more of a novelty that could be enjoyed by the rich (Gordon 2008). As the impetus to globalize (and the means to do so) continued to develop through the later half of the 20th century, air travel grew in prominence and practical importance. Air travel gradually became more accessible to consumers (and had to be, if it was going to play any serious part in a new system of global interconnectivity) due to a fortunate mix of corporate consolidations, new technologies such as larger, more efficient and longer-range jets, and a cheap global supply of oil (Dierikx 2008). Yet the transition of air travel from a luxury item of consumption for the wealthy to a fundamental mode of transport for the masses took place starting in the late 1970s. Institutional changes- specifically the corporate deregulation of the US aviation section- joined the mix of forces already at play and began to lower the cost of air travel dramatically (Ibid). Allowed to expand like any other liberated industry, air travel soon became a staple of global contemporary life. Today, it constantly governs over a massive

population of aeromobile bodies, endowing the realm of air travel itself with a unique political significance not seen in many other realms of contemporary life.

Political subjectivity & regimes of governance

This paper conceptualizes ‘governance’ and ‘relations of power’ as being political in broad terms. It understands the realm of the ‘political’ as one that structures subjective experience and understanding not only through *formal* characteristics- such as through laws, legal norms, institutions, convention, prevailing practice, and common logic- but also through the informal, material, everyday interactions and characteristics. Indeed, this paper fundamentally views relations of power and governance as something that is all around us, at work in the way we structure, experience, and comprehend everyday life- in our language, gestures, looks and affects, thoughts, ideas, and preferences. Perhaps formally, the law treats all people as equal subjects, and a democratic form of governance, at least on paper, gives these equal subjects self-determination, or the ability to shape the priorities and structure of the government. In practice, however, we see divergent and uneven relations of power and control that appear in all realms of everyday life- and especially at the airport. In spite of an egalitarian constitution, we can clearly see how bodies are divided, sorted, and differentially treated throughout the lived experience of air travel.

As discussed above, this paper offers a political analysis of air travel by focusing on the consequent condition of aeromobily *subjectivity*. Studies of subjectivity are concerned with “human lived experience, and physical, political, and historical context of that experience.” (Ellis and Flaherty). Subjectivity is concerned with any element that has a role in conditioning and shaping human experience. Political subjectivity focuses on the way relations of power are

conditioned by the subjective experiences of everyday life, and how subjective understandings of the world condition political relationships of governing power. The topic of subjectivity is therefore one that cannot be easily measured in objective terms and analysed quantitatively; instead, what is attempted here is a holistic analysis of the subjective experience of air travel, situating these analyses in prevailing political theories on power and subjectivity.

The production of subjectivity, essential to any social organizing structure, is understood here as an ongoing process that structures an understanding of identity and relation of power between the ruler and the ruled. In other words, it is a dynamic process of production and reproduction, a governing technology concerned with cultivating social agents who are particularly suited to the logics, flows, power dynamics, and ordering technologies of a given political structure. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1980) I interpret subjectivity not as a static, preordained and ‘given’ condition, but rather something that is shaped by the lived experience of subjects in the world. This world is in turn organized by particular hierarchies of power. Because of this relation, analyses such as this that focus on processes of subject-formation in everyday life are fundamentally concerned with structures of power in global late capitalism that govern our everyday life experiences and inform our understandings of who we are.

Discussing the production of subjectivity in our present time, Jameson argues that “the fundamental ideological task of [postmodernism] must remain that of coordinating new forms of practice and social and mental habits...with the new forms of economic production and organization thrown up by the modification of capitalism- the new global division of labor- in recent years,” and that this coordination “is to be seen as the production of postmodern people capable of functioning in a very peculiar socioeconomic world indeed.” (xiv-xv). As a central

nexus of economic and cultural flows and occupying a central place in larger late capitalist structures, air travel functions as an effective organizing technology that results in the production of these 'postmodern people.' (Jameson 1991).

Marxism, the school of thought following the works of Karl Marx to which Jameson is a part, conceptualizes the political-economic system of a society, or the system charged with controlling the production and distribution of material goods that satisfy human (bodily) needs, as the fundamental "base" upon which elements of culture and society are established. Marxism not only draws attention to materiality as a basis of culture and society, and forms of social organization as being derived from economic processes, but also seeks to understand how these cultures and social structures *reproduce* the very systems of material production and circulation that influence them in the first place.

One scholar who was particularly interested in how the political-economic system of late capitalism informed subjectivity was Althusser. The Marxist approach bases its analysis on the economic system of production as the primary structural element of social relations, and that these economic systems produce certain subjectivities which in turn reproduce the social conditions necessary for capitalism to function. The infrastructures of capitalism give rise to social superstructures, which in Althusserian terms are comprised both of repressive elements of the contemporary state, but also ideological apparatuses that shape subjectivities in the logic of capital. These apparatuses, for Althusser, are essential components of subject-formation. He argues that "ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it...'transforms' the individuals into subjects...by that very precise operation of what I have called *interpellation* or hailing and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing:

‘Hey, you there!’” (1971). Although Althusser, as a structuralist, dichotomizes the role of economic production and social or cultural re-production, his formulation of subject-formation by way of ideological interpellation is useful here. This paper follows a similar formula that departs from Althusser by arguing that a whole range of elements, not just the hailing or calling forth of individuals, are at play.

The process of subject production is also central to the work of political philosopher and critic Michel Foucault. Indeed, while he is often most commonly recognized for his theories on power, Foucault himself, towards the final years of his career, orients this analytic project around the subject as a unit. In a 1983 interview, he asserts that “it is not power but the subject which is the general theme of my research. It is true that I became quite involved with the question of power. It soon appeared to me that, while the human subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations which are very complex.” (Foucault 1983). Thus, especially in his later work, Foucault began to acknowledge that a study of subjectivity could become a useful lense through which broader relations of power can be understood.

There are a number of critiques to the Marxist understanding of subjectivity, but Foucault's perspective can help reconcile some of the conceptual shortcomings of the orthodox Marxist perspective. As Lois McNay points out, feminist theories in particular take issue with two Marxist conceptualizations of subjectivity as contributing to the ongoing marginalization of women. First is the dualism set between a material base and an ideological ‘superstructure,’ one the mirrors the problematic mind/body dualism at the heart of Enlightenment perspectives on subjectivity, which as the consequence of “rendering] women peripheral unless they are engaged

in productive wage labor.” (24). Secondly, “women’s oppression is reduced to an ideological effect,” (ibid) in a conceptualization of society as having the origins of its power structures in material production.

This is perhaps even truer today than just a few decades ago when these feminist critics were writing, due to the increasing fluidity and inseparability of spheres of material, economic production and immaterial, ideological, cultural life. As Mitchell, Marston and Katz put it in a special edition of *Antipode*, “The inseparability of production and reproduction should make clear the undialectical artifice of distinguishing base from superstructure. Neither capitalism nor life’s work is so neat.” (Mitchell et. al. 2011) This call to question the distinction between productive and reproductive spheres is similarly extended on a spatial level. As they go on to note, “in order to understand how and why life’s work is changing in the contemporary era, we must know more about the ways in which individuals make and understand themselves as workers, consumers, students, parents, migrants, and lovers, and how these subject positions are constituted and entrenched spatially through discourses and material social practices. (3).

McNay argues that Foucault's perspective can help overcome the problems of the Marxist view while maintaining attention on human bodies as the units through which subjectivity is conditioned and experienced. “The appeal of Foucault's theory of the body for feminists,” she notes, “is that it is formulated around a notion of discursive practice rather than around an ideology/material distinction. Foucault reject theories of ideology,” in favor of a model that views knowledge and understandings of ‘truth’ as constructed by power relations: “The production of knowledge is always bound up with historically specific regimes of power and, therefore, every society produces its own truths which have a normalizing and regulatory

function.” He is thus able to overcome a dichotomy between materiality and ideology by concentrating on ‘discourse’ and structures of power as influencing subjects through practices of knowledge and the realm of material life simultaneously.

In other work, Foucault describes this power more specifically. He looks to real-life examples (such as the prison system, medical system, and notions of sexuality) to describe how certain societal mechanisms, discourses, and structural conditions cultivate particular subjectivities along lines of power. Another well-known topic he introduces is his *dispositif*, or apparatus, which he describes as “a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions- in short, the said as much as the unsaid. The apparatus [*dispositif*] itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.” (Foucault & Gordon 1980: 194). The *dispositif* is a more concrete (though still highly conceptual) collection of various influences and effects that together work to shape subjectivity. Airports, in this sense, could be considered as kind of Foucauldian *dispositif*, or apparatus, of governmental control.

Following Foucault’s work in the 1970s a variety of post-structural theorists began to offer conceptualizations of subjectivity at the ontological level, or at the level of what it even means to *be* a subject. A prominent scholar who I focus on here is Gilles Deleuze whose work, often with Felix Guattari, challenges our very understanding of the differences between ‘self’ ‘other’ and open up entirely new possibilities for understanding the way subjectivity is formed, reproduced, and experienced. This mirrors the approach they take for understanding situational ontologies not in static and secure terms, but rather as dynamic and constantly in flux.

At the most substantive level, *dispositif* is conceptualized as an object, a structure of social ordering and control; assemblage, on the other hand, is a process (Wise 2005). Moreover, as DeLanda notes, assemblages are distinct from other synthesized totalities comprised of heterogeneous parts (such as Hegelian dialectics) in that “a whole process of synthetic or emergent properties does not preclude the possibility of analysis,” allowing us to historicise the synthetic process of various component parts, freeing us from “an ontological commitment to the existence of essences.” (DeLanda 2006). As a result, the concept of assemblage gives rise to ontological conceptions of ‘subjectivity’ in relation to the larger assemblage as not a static ‘state’ of being, but rather a dynamic process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization within the assemblage, as subjects shift, move, and ultimately embark on paths of “becoming-.”

As Rosi Braidotti (describes, the notion of becoming “is adapted from Nietzsche, and is deeply anti Hegelian. Becoming is neither the dynamic confrontation of opposites, nor the unfolding of an essence in a teleologically ordained process leading to a synthesising identity. The Deleuzian becoming is the affirmation of the positivity of difference, meant as a multiple and constant process of transformation.” (44). She goes on to point out that “the emphasis on processes, dynamic interaction and fluid boundaries is a materialist, high-tech brand of vitalism, which makes Deleuze’s though highly relevant to the analysis of late industrialist patriarchal culture we inhabit.” (44). Not only is the process of becoming relevant in the present temporal moment, but also in the context of contemporary air travel. In this context, subjects inhabit ever-shifting, fluid and changing positions on a journey through the airport, onto a plane, and back through again, constantly moving *towards* a destination, literally de- and re-territorializing

space, and ultimately *becoming* something new, occupying new spaces in the airport travel assemblage and in wider assemblages of late capitalism.

As Elizabeth Grosz (1994) discusses, although Deleuze and Guattari have not received a great amount of critical engagement with feminist scholars, there are clear fundamental underlying parallels between their work that challenge us to think of subjectivity in terms of lived experience, embodiment, the present, and what Deleuze calls *becoming* or the dynamic relation of a subject forming and changing, rather than existing in a static state as a static, removed being. She goes on to demonstrate that a Deleuzian perspective to subjectivity can be a useful lens through which we can analyse Feminist concepts of subjectivity. This ultimately finds its basis in Deleuze and Guattari's unique approach to understanding ontological difference "in and of itself," rather than as compared to a particular norm or relation of representation: of "identity, opposition, analogy, and resemblance." This conceptualization, Grosz argues, "invoke notions of becoming and of multiplicities beyond the mere doubling or proliferation of signfular, unified subjectivities." (164). Through their framework, Deleuze and Guattari "provide an altogether different way of understanding the body in its connections with other bodies, both human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate, linking organs and biological processes to material objects and social practices while refusing to subordinate the body to a unity or a homogeneity of the kind provided by the body's subordination to consciousness or to biological organization [as in conventional theory]." (164-165). In spite of numerous critiques that Grosz points out about their theory, ultimately she recognizes the significance of their reconceptualization of difference and calls this, "a rare, affirmative understanding of the body." (165).

The Deleuzian conceptualizations of subjectivity presented here is not only methodologically useful for understanding the components of air travel in more nuanced terms; it is also an understanding of difference and ontology that itself carries political implications. Understanding air travel in terms of an ‘assemblage’ and subjectivity as existing not in a stable state but in a constant process of movement and ‘becoming’ open up new spaces of possibility for resistance and what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘flight’ from the existing order. Theories of subjectivity as a ‘state of being’ within a ‘structure’ instead of a ‘state of becoming’ within an assemblage omit any possibility for resistance and agential movement within the subject’s experiential context. This is especially significant for our topic of study, as air travel is such a crucial object of study precisely due to this unique ontological positioning at the nexus of large-scale, significant global infrastructures and as a mediator of the subjective experiences of aeromobile bodies.

From Foucault to Butler: Embodied subjectivity

Most political conceptions of subjectivity interpret it as something distinct and external from the physical bodies subject occupy. These conventional notions of subjectivity are rooted primarily in European Enlightenment conceptualizations of self, body, and difference. One of the main dualisms underlying this mode of thought, and the most relevant for our purposes, is the ‘mind/body’ dualism which conceives of the ‘mind’ or ‘soul’ as the conscious agent of lived experience and the body as an ontologically distinct ‘object’ over which it has control. This perspective is derived in large part from the French philosopher Descartes⁷. But air travel is a practice distinguishable from most precisely because of its reliance on bodies as both an object

⁷ For more, see Bray and Colebrook (1998)

of governance and a medium of subject-production. Moreover, as numerous feminist theorists have pointed out, by homogenizing bodies such understandings obscure and normalize extra-legal inequalities propagated on corporeal bases. Such Cartesian conceptualizations are inappropriate for this analysis; instead, I interpret subjectivity as embodied- as inseparable from, informed by and productive of particular notions of the human body.

This conceptualization has a number of political consequences, but significant among them is the understanding of subjectivity in unitary, objective terms that serves as the basis for liberal political and legal thought. As Nancy Duncan, drawing on Iris Marion Young, suggests, “the ideals of liberal political theory such as formal equality and universal rationality and impartiality express ‘what Theodor Adorno calls a logic of identity that denies and represses difference.’ This repression, [Young] argues, relies on: ‘an opposition between public and private dimensions of human life, which corresponds to an opposition between reason, on the one hand, and the body, affectivity, and desire on the other’ (1987: 63)” (2). Grosz, rejecting such categorical and dualistic conceptions of subjectivity, takes “a model that I have come across in reading the work of Lacan, where he likens the subject to a Mobius strip, the inverted three-dimensional figure eight...bodies and minds are not two distinct substances or two kinds of attributes of a single substance, but somewhere in between these two alternatives.” (xxii). Experience is generated by the phenomenological interplay (and interpretation) of bodily and mental sensations, sensations that are mutually constitutive and constituting. It is thus not only conceptually problematic to reduce understandings of subjectivity to mental or ‘disembodied’ phenomena exclusively, but even on a more general level, to also reduce understandings of subjectivity along such dualist or categorical lines in the first place.

Another concern with conventional understandings of subjectivity in political theory is the passivity ascribed to bodies, as if they were bodies are merely passive ‘objects’ of subjectivity rather than essential elements that actively shape and influence subjectivity. They are conceived as fleshy materials that mediates subjective experience rather than a core element and constructive component of that experience. As Lauren Wilcox discusses in relation to International Relations theory in particular, “in [conventional] IR, human bodies are implicitly theorized as organisms that are exogenously determined- they are relevant to politics only as they live or die. Such bodies are inert objects: they exist to be manipulated, possess no agency, and are only driven by the motivations of agents.” (2). Grosz argues that the contemporary notion of the human body is “colonized through the discursive practices of the natural sciences, particularly the discourses of biology and medicine. It has generally remained mired in presumptions regarding its naturalness, its fundamentally biological and pre cultural status, its immunity to cultural, social, and historical factors, its brute status as a *gen*, unchangeable, inert, and passive, manipulable under scientifically regulated conditions.” (x).

The conspicuous omission of close attention to bodies as political elements of subjectivity within the realm of political theory is not simply a conceptual oversight; it is itself a political statement on the nature of power as it relates to understandings of subjectivity and the ‘self’ as embodied. Most immediately, conceptualizations of subjectivity as originating with the ‘mind’ or ‘soul,’ or some other disembodied agent who merely ‘controls’ a passive body have the effect of obscuring difference, especially sexual difference. As Grosz points out, “the subject, recognized as a corporeal being, can no longer readily succumb to the neutralizing and neutering of its specificity which has occurred to women as a consequence of women’s submersion under

male definition.” (ix). The erasure of bodily difference is essential to the functioning of liberalism as an ‘objective’ and disinterested, unbiased form of governance that appears at first glance to treat all subjects as ‘equal’ but which, upon critical reflection, instead erases considerations of corporeal reality and instead envisions a conceptual or imaginary subject of society. This creates a ‘normal’ subject against which ‘deviations’ can be noted and categorized— as male, female, black, white, handicapped, abled, and so-on— along lines that are far from natural, but instead *cultural* and ultimately *political*. (Butler 2011) As Duncan adds, “Those market by differences deriving from their sex, skin colour, old age, sexuality, physical incapacities or other variations from the posited ‘norm’ do not qualify for full participation in the liberal democratic model. (2). Redirecting attention to bodies is thus not only a methodological choice, but a political move in and of itself, one that rejects conventional European enlightenment models of mind/body separation and subjectivity as a disembodied condition that only uses bodies as passive objects.

The corporal, embodied perspective on political subjectivity I employ here has its basis in critical Feminist scholarship, in gendered critiques of conventional understandings of subjectivity. Wilcox (2015) credits their scholarship remarking that “feminists have been at the forefront of questioning the relationships between embodiment, power, and violence in order to challenge the legitimization of women’s subordination through social and scientific discourses which contend that female physiology is the source of women’s inferior social, economic, and political status.” (7). Indeed, although Foucault’s conceptions of subjectivity have been enormously influential for feminist scholars, he nonetheless shies away from making explicitly gendered statements about subjectivity in his investigations. As McNay, drawing on Braidotti,

notes, “sexual difference simply does not play a role in the Foucauldian universe, where the technology of subjectivity refers to a desexualized and general ‘human’ subject’ (Braidotti 1991:87) For many feminists, Foucault's indifferent to sexual difference, albeit unintended, reproduces a sexism endemic in supposedly gender-neutral social theory.” (11) This paper will hope to avoid this reproduction by incorporating a gendered perspective that does not selectively appropriate feminist methodological insights of embodiment, but rather takes these insights as key products of a larger critique of the oppression of women through a discursive omission of bodies and thus the negation of the physiological origins of women’s marginalization.

For the purposes of this analysis, I combine the perspectives of ontology and difference offered by Deleuze and Guattari, perspectives that conceive of ontological units such as the practice of air travel in terms of a dynamic ‘assemblage’ or relation between heterogeneous components rather than as a static and singular ‘unit,’ with conceptualizations of subjectivity not as a state of being, but as an experience of becoming. Aeromobility, which refers to the ability to move one’s body across great distance through air travel, is not a static state of subjectivity, of simply *being* on the move; rather it is constant journey of departures and arrivals, of movement, of *becoming* aeromobile and ultimately arriving somewhere new. At the airport, these ‘aeromobile bodies’ are thrust into a disorienting and disembodied space that embodies the aesthetics and logics of late capitalism; they are examined and ordered by the State; they negotiate relations and positionality through performed affective interaction in a very interesting ‘public’ sphere; and are ultimately rendered (im)mobile and ontologically meaningful by the structures of governance at

play. By focusing on bodies we can better understand the conditions of subjectivity at work in this apparatus and ways it differs across different global contexts.

Aside from the unique perspective embodiment can offer about subjective states under contemporary capitalism, there are a variety of additional reasons that justify this approach to analysing political subjectivity at the airport. I discuss four in particular: intuition, methodology, materiality, and relevance to other political theories. First, and most immediately, embodied subjectivity is a rather intuitive approach to a phenomenon such as global air travel. It appears as an almost natural fit for a topic that is experienced as corporeally on an individual and collective basis as air travel. The physical effects of this practice on the body are well-known and characterize its practice, with effects ranging from jet lag to altitude sickness, and like these ailments often originate from the disorienting and ‘unnatural’ spatial and temporal conditions of being imposed on bodies in transit. Moreover, air travel has a close ontological relationship with human bodies. It is an industry premised not on the global movement of goods, information, or finance, but on human bodies, bodies which to the day-to-day operation of the air travel assemblage never gets to know quite well beyond their fleshy immediacy. Bodies are the objects of air travel, in other words, and embodied subjects stand-in as the object-targets of political techniques of governance at the airport and in other sites of air travel.

The second reason I use a framework of embodied subjectivity is methodological. This approach explicitly focuses on the relation between a subject-producing assemblage that targets bodies and subjects themselves as inseparable from the bodies they occupy, an approach that is absent in most conventional political theories. Moreover, a focus on embodiment is able to address many of the components that affect the experiences of air travel

while overcoming problematic notions of difference as dualistic or finite. Finally, as Grosz goes on to point out “all the significant facets and complexities of subjects can be adequately explained using the subjects corporeality as a framework as it would be using consciousness or the unconscious. All the effects of depth and interiority can be explained in terms of the inscriptions and transformations of the subject’s corporeal surface.” (vii). Embodied subjectivity has a lot to say about experiences of air travel and the consequences of these experiences on human subjectivity.

A third reason for focusing on embodied subjectivity is that it grounds the analysis materially. Although this paper moves away from Marxist notions of structure and difference, it draws heavily from the Marxist methodology of materialism, considering the material realities and geographies in which these embodied subjects are situated. Embodiment forces us to consider both the influences of a material base or infrastructure of late-capitalism, and rather than separating these realms neatly, embodiment draws attention to how these structures operate simultaneously and in overlapping ways at the site of the human body (Mitchell et. al. 2011). Moreover, embodiment is material at the level of subjects themselves. It draws our attention to bodily difference in the face of discursive abstraction, rather than discussing travel in more universalist terms. By focusing on bodies of subjects who actually partake in the practice of air travel we are forced to confront not only the *presence* of a wider range of embodied subjects that a more narrowly abstracted conceptualization of subjectivity might envision, but also the dangerous erasure that takes place when we conceptualize the subjects of air travel more abstractly.

Finally, a grounding of the analysis on subjectivity as embodied fits nicely with other key conceptualizations in critical political theory, including concepts that have been deployed with increasing frequency in order to describe problems and conditions of a ‘late capitalist’ political-economic, ‘postmodern’ socio-cultural reality. These conceptualizations include the subjective influences of materially lived experience from Lefebvre, Soja, and Jameson; biopolitics, and ‘apparatuses’ of governance from Althusser and Foucault; and theories of affect and performativity from Butler and Berlant. Indeed, it is the wide applicability of embodied subjectivity to political phenomena that makes it an especially useful lens to study air travel as a political process.

Being more specific, a focus on embodied subjectivity draws our attention to phenomenological considerations relating to the body. These include an understanding of *space* as experienced conceptually and materially through the body; understandings of *bodies* as object-targets of state governance and practices of security; and the way *social* relations are expressed, reproduced, and experienced *affectively*, or emotionally, viscerally, and non-discursive, as an immediate bodily sensation rather than a through representational symbols in thought or language. Through the process of travel and processes of ‘becoming’ aeromobile, subjects experience some or all of these embodied conditions in the practice of air travel, which in turn reflect logics and structures of the context in which a particular airport is situated. I structure my discussion of case studies in Chapters 2 and 3 along these phenomenological dimensions.

A framework on embodiment is itself a political choice that draws attention to broader philosophical questions of ontology, difference, definition, and epistemology. Perspectives of embodiment have their origins in the feminist critiques of Enlightenment, liberal understandings

of subjectivity as dichotomized, disembodied, and therefore promoting (even unintentionally) patriarchal and dominating social structures. Drawing on these broader implications of the critiques of disembodiment, what emerges is a range of radical conceptualizations of ‘air travel’ and ‘subjectivity’ itself. I turn to these broader implications and novel understandings in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Abstracted Aeromobilities

When focusing on embodiment, we are dissuaded from embarking on analyses of air travel as a large-scale, all-encompassing and homogeneous system as other theorists have treated it, making important but nonetheless generalized conclusions about air travel ‘as a whole.’ As we have seen, air travel is far from homogenous, universal, or productive of a ‘standard’ experience; instead, as the framework of embodiment shows, experience of travel are highly differential, contingent, and context-specific. This study offers a comparison of air travel in two different contexts in order to illustrate differences of subjectivity production at two sites across the world from each other: Changi Airport in Singapore and Los Angeles International in the United States. At the same time, however, these two sites are connected by similar practices of abstraction that take place as subjects move through the airport, allowing subjects to treat travel as apolitical and ultimately arrive seamlessly in new subjective contexts.

Each of the following chapters examines embodied subjectivity in air travel by closely scrutinizing the components of subjective experience described above. First, each chapter describes the way subjects understand and experience the ‘lived space’ of airports as a simultaneously conceptual and material space, one that becomes visible upon arrival at the site of the airport and amidst preparations for travel. Secondly, each chapter describes relations

between subjects and sovereign state power as aeromobile bodies are directly confronted, examined, and actively managed through contemporary practices of security within air travel. Third, each chapter describes affective and hyperreal conditions of subject-production in the 'interior' or 'airside' realm of the airport. Finally, each chapter considers the experience of subjectivity as *becoming*, a dynamic and ongoing process that opens new radical potential for resistance and change that static conceptions of subjectivity cannot similarly account for. In short, the journey of subjects through the airport assemblage: from check-in, to security, to the transit lounge, to the arrivals hall- is ripe for theoretical analysis by thinking about *space*, state *governance*, experiences of *affect*, and the ontology of *becoming*, respectively.

Chapter 2 employs this framework to examine one of the 'world's best' airports, the massive, efficient, and luxurious complex known as Changi in Singapore. I attempt to illustrate how the unique geographical conditions of Singapore and the socio-political conditions of Singapore's historical context has given rise to an airport seen as the ideal model airport to be replicated around the world. This airport is particularly adept at producing subjects who are rendered transnationally mobile along hierarchical lines, ordering subjects corporeally and hierarchically delineating privileges of mobility. Through space, state governance, and affective experience mobility is used as a tool of governance, as a way of forming, ordering, and (re)producing particular subjectivities in the context of a globally integrated, multicultural city state in a rapidly-developing and integrating geopolitical context.

Chapter 3 focuses on air travel in the American context, one which forms subjectivity and structures power relations slightly differently from Singapore. I focus on Los Angeles as the quintessential example of a postmodern, American airport (Soja 1996). Governance in this

context is deployed in less direct ways as Singapore. Rather than directly, visibly, and materially ordering the transnational mobility of traveling subject as a technique of governance, LAX shapes its subjects in more subtle ways. It does not draw on the direct ordering of transnational mobility in the airport assemblage; instead, it governs through the operationalization of subjects' self-governance by informing thoughts, feelings, and ideas. I argue that LAX has a fundamental role in (re)producing neoliberal subjectivity in the form of *homo economicus* or the entrepreneurial subject. Through its 'postmodern' spatiality, a post-9/11 security context, and an immaterial, affective experience in a quasi-public sphere, subjects are rendered individual, calculating, rational, and entrepreneurial. Through this, subjects are integrated into economic systems of consumption and production, interpellated as biopolitical subjects, and 'optimized.'

Chapter 4 concludes the thesis by providing a summary of each chapter and an overview of the similarities and differences in subjectivity in the two cases studies analysed. In simplified terms, Singapore produces and orders privileges of mobility (and with it, notions of subjective mobility itself); LAX, on the other hand, governs by operationalizing Anglo-American knowledges and logics of neoliberal rationality and individual responsibility. However, apparent at each site are processes of abstraction that simultaneously occur as subjects move through the airport, becoming aeromobile. Based on these findings, I offer conclusions about the relationship between air travel and a whole and the broader system of late capitalism in which it is situated, informed by the abstracted nature of aeromobility.

Chapter 2

Singapore: Plato's Dream of Airports

Ordering Transnational Mobility

(redacted for copyright reasons)

-Christine Chia, "Plato's Dream of Airports."

In most popular, conventional engagements with air travel, flight remains something special, magical, even beautiful, an almost supernatural practice that is frequently romanticized in metaphysical terms, reflecting a very particular and curated experience of global mobility. This dreamlike aura of flight very quickly meets the mundane and constricting realities that make it possible. Perhaps this intersection is where the impressive power of air travel as a political technology emerges. By viewing air travel as transcendental and humanistic, a testament of how far humanity has come, a marvel of technology and a symbol of global progress and unity, it can be all too easy to overlook the political functions of air travel in a late-capitalist society.

Chia's poem, "Plato's Dreams of Airports," captures this tension beautifully. As you pass through the airport, 'clinically opulent' carpets 'removing the dirt from your too-human shoes,'

you are free to sit back, relax, and pay no mind to the bodily realities that air travel deliberately entices you to forget. You enter into a realm that is other-worldly, miles above the dirt on your ‘too-human shoes.’ There, you can finally realize ‘clean dreams/of freedom like a form/without a body.’” And yet, something about Chia’s poem resonates as empty, hollow, somehow incomplete. Indeed, this romantic picture is nothing like the realities of travel, never ‘without a body,’ far from dreamlike, and farther still from free.

It is important that this picture of flight, as buried as we wish to push it in our idealized imaginaries, is afforded the critical questions it deserves, in spite of the processes of abstraction and disembodiment that render air travel as apolitical, either mundane and forgettable or unnaturally freeing. Singapore is a unique place to start, as it involves processes of subjective abstraction as it prepares subjects for flight yet also seeks to position itself as a global icon, an unforgettable destination in itself. In this chapter, I examine aeromobility at Changi Airport in Singapore, one of the ‘world’s best.’ I discuss the characteristics of aeromobile subjectivity produced at Changi, which I argue involves transnational flexibility and mobility but also logics of hierarchical ordering. I then trace a typical journey through the airport to show how these characteristics are produced, focusing on the subjective experiences in the realms of space, the body, and affect as subjects move through check-in, past security, and into the airside part of the terminal. Changi’s techniques of governance are shaped by the political, cultural, and historical context of Singapore as a postcolonial city-state, a global multicultural hub in a rapidly-developing and integrating region. However, these forms of governance are obscured from public view through technical discourses and practices aimed at constructing Changi as an apolitical, unifying and iconic space.

Through this investigation, I hope to demonstrate the problems with conceptualizing subjectivity in conventional, Cartesian terms. Specifically, this investigation problematizes two conceptual characteristics of subjectivity that have been frequently cited by Feminist scholars: first, the tendency to separate and categorize the ontological notions of ‘mind’ and ‘body,’ rather than considering them as fundamentally interconnected; and secondly, the conceptual treatment of the body as a passive object, a mere ‘vehicle’ controlled by an otherwise autonomous ‘subject’ or an object that acts as a medium of power rather than a mediator (Bray and Colebrook 1998; Duncan 1996; Grosz 1992). In the following investigation, I discuss the ways in which governance operates not only *on* bodies, but also *through* bodies, suggesting that the body itself has power to shape subjectivity, a source of potential energy that can be directed politically.

Interestingly, it seems that in practice, an abstracted, apolitical understanding of air travel closely pairs with abstracted, disembodied approaches to subjectivity. Indeed, at the same time as the subject is ordered corporeally as they move through the airport, technologies of ordering also work to ultimately produce sensations of *disembodiment* at the subjective level, allowing subjects to individualize the traveling experience and regard it as apolitical. Technologies of governance thus aim to produce subjects who are both aware of their bodies at a conceptual level and yet relatively indifferent to their bodies at a material level. This abstraction functions to inscribe subjects with certain understandings of identity while at the same time normalizing the governing logics of air travel and reproducing a discourse of travel as freeing, dreamlike, and an escape from the mundane routines of everyday, as I discuss in the concluding section.

Mobilizing Transnational Subjects, Ordering Aeromobile Bodies

In an age and cultural context where mobility, a global presence, strong national identity and orderly, efficient institutional structures are not only valued but rendered necessary for survival under capital, Changi delivers by (re)producing aeromobile subjectivities of ordered transnational mobility. In this section I introduce the type of aeromobile subject that Singapore aims to produce through its particular structures and technologies of governance. This transnationally mobile figure is, in other words, the ‘ideal’ subject, towards which the tools of subject-production at the airport are oriented. Specifically, I focus on three characteristics of subjectivity that technologies of governance at Changi aim to produce. Through embodied experience First, this is a subject who is characterized by what Aihwa Ong calls “flexible citizenship,” or a notion of citizenship that transcends conventional ideas of national sovereignty to encompass other geographic locales that may be closely integrated economically (Ong 1999); secondly, a physically *mobile* subject; and finally, a subject whose privileges of mobility is closely *ordered* by prevailing discourses, norms, and hierarchies of power.

First, the logics of air travel as a practice in the Singapore are oriented at producing individuals who are transnational, agile, and able to transcend national boundaries in pursuit of economic ends. Borrowing from Ong, I understand this subject as being defined fundamentally by a sort of ‘flexible citizenship,’ or mode of citizenship which transcends conventional framework of the nation state under contemporary trends in global late-capitalism. This mode of citizenship is characterized by subjects responding “fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions,” according to Ong. “In their quest to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena, subjects emphasize, and are regulated by, practices favoring

flexibility, mobility, and repositioning in relation to markets, governments, and cultural regimes. These logics and practices are produced within particular structures of meaning about family, gender, nationality, class mobility, and social power.” (1999: 6). Within the context of global capitalism, international access across borders and the ability to flexibly criss-cross political lines (like capital itself) becomes paramount.

In Singapore’s context, part of this identification with flexible citizenship or transnational access stems from the particular geographic characteristics of the country. As an island city-state, Changi Airport’s curbside terminal serves as the main port of entry and exit to the country, and all trips out of Changi are bound for other countries. The aeromobile bodies in the space are rendered mobile on an international scale, able to traverse not just physical distance but territorial boundaries as well. On the flip side, as the main port of entry for any visitor and all Singaporean citizens returning home, the airport takes on cultural significance as a symbol of Singapore itself. Changi thus embodies Singapore, but at the same time, the subjective understanding of what it means to be ‘Singaporean’ is closely linked to its international airport. As Ruihe argues, “thanks to our history and geography, Singapore’s veru identity is tied up with its status, whether aspiring or otherwise, as a global hub for everything under the sun.” (16)

Secondly, and closely related to the framework of ‘flexible’ citizenship is the (uneven) production of transnational mobility in aeromobile subjectivities at the airport. Increasingly, as Ong notes, increasingly the dominant figure of valorization in contemporary Asian culture is the “multiple passport holder,” a transnationally mobile subject able to transcend significance bestowed upon those who are able to transcend spatial boundaries easily. Beyond pure privileges of mobility, this figure literally embodying the concept of the ‘flexible citizen’ stands in a unique

relationship to prevailing logics of governance at the level of the nation-state. “He or she embodies the split between state-imposed identity and personal identity caused by political upheavals, migration, and changing global markets,” (2) Ong points out. The degrees of flexible, transnational citizenship, in other words, is closely associated with capacities of global mobility.

The political importance of mobility is evident on the opposite end of the spectrum as well, used not to enable citizenship but discipline it. The rise of low-cost carriers in the Asia-Pacific region and the transition in flows of migrant labor on buses and ferries to flight, described by Hirsch (2016), demonstrates the emphasis on bodily mobility as an essential component of subjectivity. Along with this transition has been a shift in technologies of governing institutions to realize capacities of mobility differentially. Tim Cresswell calls this broadly a “politics of mobility,” and remarks that “regulation of mobility, to use Virilio’s (2006) term, is increasingly dromological. Dromology is the regulation of differing capacities to move. It concerns the power to stop and put into motion, to incarcerate and accelerate objects and people.” (28). Mobility in our present era goes hand-in-hand with political technologies that regulate it.

This takes us to our third characteristic of subjectivity that I focus on in Chang’s context: their subjugation to a logic of ordering. Subjective degrees of mobility and flexibility are highly ordered and structured according to prevailing discourses and structures of power. Although the breadth of the traveling public in the Southeast Asia has grown along with larger patterns of regional and global economic integration, this expansion of the traveling public has been accompanied with strict ordering techniques, shaping differential travel experiences for migrant workers, students, middle-class workers, and global business executives. While airports

aim to symbolically convey notions of transnational mobility and free movement, its spatial arrangements hierarchically subjugates based on bodies. Often times, as a number of scholars have pointed out, this follows similar patterns of power as earlier colonial governing structures. Today, this is evident in the discursive and practical inseparability of flexible, mobile paradigms of citizenship and orderly, hierarchical modes of governance. In Singapore's context Hirsh argues that "there is a perilous disconnect between the valorization of cross-border mobility and regional economic integration...and the aesthetic goals of urban planners, who are keen to mobilize the symbolic value of airports as evidence of their cities' global connectivity and cosmopolitan stature yet are loath to acknowledge the increasingly plebeian nature of the airport's clientele that has resulted from the liberalization of cross-border transportation and migration regimes." (107) Airports, in other words, are constructed for a particular subject, one that is wealthy, mobile, an experienced traveler, likely male and professionally employed. It then uses structures of ordering to designate bodies as either acceptable or unacceptable in such spaces of mobility and designates privileges of flexible citizenship accordingly.

To summarize, I focus on three characteristics of aeromobile subjectivity that I argue is produced at Changi airport: flexible citizenship, transnational mobility, and hierarchical ordering. These particular characteristics of subjectivity are the result of historical, geographical, and political conditions of Singapore. In the next section, I discuss the specific ways this subjectivity (re)produced, by focusing on embodied experience in the respective dimensions of space, the body, and affect as subjects become-aeromobile through check-in, security, and waiting to board.

In Transit at Changi: Producing Mobile, Flexible, and Ordered Subjects

The story of Singapore's Changi Airport is in many ways the story of the country of Singapore itself. After a tumultuous period of British colonization, occupation during World War II, Constitutional self-governance following the war and later uniting with Malaysia, Singapore was rejected from the rest of Malaysia in 1965, establishing itself as an independent republic. Since then, the country has been exemplified as one of four 'Asian tigers' touted as models of successful and industrious economic growth leading to national prosperity today. In the years following independence, Singapore's government concentrated efforts towards economic development and social welfare, and internationally (in?)famous for its utilitarian approach to governance, one that substantially limits political freedom but aims to offset it through a satisfied and well-off population. Today, it is widely seen as an extraordinary example of rapid economic growth in urban centers across the Asia-Pacific region, as well as an emblem of the globalization that has characterized much of late-capitalism since the 1970s .

While the origins of Singapore's economic success are still up for debate- indeed, Singapore's unique geography has historically placed it in an advantageous position in terms of trade, labor, and capital flows- it is clear that Singapore's embrace of globalization and its geographic comparative advantage in the contemporary context has been fundamental in the development of its economic and cultural identity. Today it is one of the wealthiest nations in the world per capita, home to a thriving financial sector and to some of the busiest trading ports on Earth. Its embrace of global integration is likewise reflected in its multilingual, multiethnic population, its orientation towards tourism and the substantial and growing migrant population

who call Singapore home (Wilson 2011). At the same time, it is known for its rather conservative social relations and politics, and its strict rules of conduct and order (Ibid). These characteristics of the country, as we will see, are embodied at the site of the airport which aims to produce subjectivities well-suited to its framework of governance.

Construction of Changi began in the late 1970s on the eastern side of Singapore on man-made land reclamations. The new port of entry to Singapore would be connected to the rest of the country by the East Coast Parkway. After less than two decades of national independence, Changi's opening in 1981 was a momentous moment in Singapore's history, representing the emergence of Singapore as a modern, globalized international hub. Yu-Mei Balasingamchow was present at a preview visit of Changi's brand new control tower just before the airport opened. Reflecting on her experience, she remarks that "It loomed up as we came down the equally new extension of the East Coast Parkway, and if the tower looked out of place on the landscape, no one questioned or ridiculed it, because it was also the totem of a new Singapore. It was the dawn of the 1980s, independent Singapore had beaten back political uncertainty, unemployment and the oil crisis, and we were about to unveil a shiny new airport to prove it." (21)

In the next sections, I trace a subject's journey through Singapore, which directs our attention to three dimensions of contemporary air travel. First, the realm of spatial extension, or the way in which the State organizes airport space, and therefore the embodied experience of travel, politically. Second, the realm of the body, or the way in which the State directly targets the embodied subject (as opposed to governing through spatial organization). Thirdly, I examine the realm of affect, or that which is internal to the body but which is nonetheless a social and

cultural (re)action, and focus on ways particular subjectivities are further produced in the ‘mental space’ of consciousness. Although I emphasize that they are all essential aspects of lived experience that operate simultaneously, I dichotomize these dimensions for conceptual clarity. I then describe how subjects are governed primarily through space upon arrival and at check-in; governed as bodies through the State security and population management apparatus; and governed through the realm of affect in the quasi-public, performative, affective sphere of the airside terminal. In these descriptions, I also demonstrate how this three-stage process involves not only governance *on* bodies, but also *through* them, by way of abstraction, and in the next section I discuss the implications this has for the political constitution of subjectivity.

Checking in: Governing Aeromobilities through Space

Changi Airport as a space is constructed to be an international icon, an efficient and orderly hub of flexible citizenship, where both transnational mobility as well as corporeal mobility within the airport itself is tightly regulated. The space of air travel plays an especially important role in this subjective constitution; indeed, Changi has a familiar and pivotal role in Singaporean culture, politics, and the economy. Both the unique geography of Singapore and the cultural relevance of its transport hub work to produce subjects who are particularly mobile and well-conditioned to the global practice of international travel.

First, subjects are constituted as holding ‘flexible citizenship’ based on the physical and imagined geographies of Changi. Constructed to be an international destination as well as an iconic symbol of Singapore, the association of the airport with central understandings of national identity and the extension of the national realm (everything except territorial sovereignty) across global, multinational space. By embracing the globally uniform nature of spaces like malls with

global brands, food courts with international offerings, multi-lingual announcements and universal signs, Singapore constructs itself as a standardized, national space. At the same time, however, it tries as hard as it can to avoid being what Marc Auge (1995) terms a “non-place” or a place which due to the transience and present-ness of its inhabitants is never able to establish history, culture, or identity; the archetypal modern airport being one example. To avoid becoming just another non-place, it is not enough for Changi to simply rely on its unique geographic situation; instead, it must actively work towards creating landmarks, icons, and unique amenities for which it is internationally recognized. One clear example is the construction of Changi’s newest building, “The Jewel,” a giant shopping mall and indoor garden which is being billed as “the heart of the airport experience, where Singapore and the world will meet.” It serves few functional purposes for the practical task of moving bodies and luggage, but anchors the entire Changi experience and identity around a symbol of international connection, trade, movement, and consumption: the compolitian shopping mall.

Second, Changi’s spatialities produces subjects who are constituted as transnationally mobile. Perhaps this is most clear at the check-in hall upon arriving at the airport, the space which greets travelers and evokes the transition from conceptualizing travel to living it. The inherent biopolitical emphasis of air travel, a practice premised on the secure movement of bodies, means that the apparatus carefully manages and accounts for these aeromobile subjects. However, the process of checking in at the same time tries to engender in them a false sense of freedom, immateriality, and agency through the ritualistic processes of dropping off bags and being rendered free to move about the airport. This renders bodies themselves as internationally

mobile, but also elevates international mobility as a core component of subjective identity, national culture, and political and economic citizenship.

While Singapore as a space conditions bodily mobility within its spaces and regulates mobility to and from its borders, it is also a sort of conceptual entity that has become increasingly mobile and internationally recognized as an iconic, model airport. Perhaps the most visible example is the establishment of the Changi airport group, an airport management and consulting firm with clients from across Asia and beyond. Capitalizing on its status as the ‘world’s best’ Changi has replicated itself immaterially, in the form of knowledges, practices, and expertise, and has embedded these features into the structure and design of other airports around the world (Bok 2015).

Finally, the production of subjective notions of mobility and flexibility in Changi’s spaces is accompanied by an emphasis on order and structure. This is not only apparent in the physical and visible design of Changi, but is also evident in subjective understandings of how subjects should feel *about* spaces on a more conceptual, conceived level. In particular, Singapore’s development since its founding in 1965 has, as a number of postcolonial scholars have pointed out, followed a pattern of development that maintains and reproduces colonial ways of categorizing and ordering bodies. As Watson (2011) argues, “for the Singaporean, Taiwanese, and South Korean postcolonial states, the British and Japanese colonial ‘wiring’ has been both reused and elaborated. The colonial practice of ethnic categorization and museumization are vigorously retained, for example, in Singapore’s neat tripartite breakdown of the population into Chinese Malay and Indian....” (172). Elsewhere, she points out the importance of infrastructural development as a tool of sovereignty of these regimes., alluding that “...the obsession with

infrastructure may be one way of understanding certain Asian versus African postcolonial modalities of sovereignty....in these Asia Pacific sites...the solidarity-perhaps the hardness- of the built environment replaces the need for such a vocabulary of masculinist power [characterized by extravagant proof of authority in African contexts],” (169). Though simplistic, such a contrast suggests that sovereign techniques of governing bodies are not uniform, and in Asian postcolonial contexts are characterized by their embeddedness in the built environment. Together, Wilson suggests that for Lee Kuan Yew, authoritarianism should be understood as originating from the belief that “control and care of national space, from the presidential mansion down to the roundabouts, is intimately tied to the nation’s success...no opulent mansions, red carpets, or cheetahs, but a national order literally built on the rational and efficient order of its structures.” (181).

This has implications for our understanding of the spatial ordering logics at Changi. This impetus towards development, and a very particular, neocolonial and Westernized form of ‘development,’ is itself a tool of ordering subjectivities by conditioning certain conceptions of who ‘belongs’ and does not belong in a space. As Fannon alludes to in *Black Skin, White Masks*, spatial characteristics of settler-colonial built environments are designed to comfort certain subjects implicate others. “The settler’s town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown, and hardly thought about....the settler’s town is a town of white people, of foreigners.” (38-39). By making the airport, the very space of mobility and transnational flexibility, a neocolonial space of order, Changi produces aeromobile subjects who

are used to being ordered and understand a particular logic of ordering to be natural and necessary.

Even beyond the case of Singapore specifically, airports function as highly ordered spaces on an even more fundamental level. There are few airports around the world that have successfully escaped the logic of ordering spaces and degrees of bodily comfort hierarchically. In spite of utopian imaginaries of air travel as a practice assembling a wide and democratic public, Crang (2002) and Rossler (1998) are quick to point out that “far from being spaces of mixture or openness these are heavily hierarchical spaces.” (572). This is indicated in everything from transit lounges to queues to cabin classes. Performing such distinctions becomes an essential component of embodied subjectivity, where Crang notes that exclusive spaces of travel, “enclaves of the global elite, are places where people do not cross cultural boundaries or experience alterity in interaction.” (ibid).

In sum, I argue that the spaces of Changi airport condition particular subjectivities where citizens understand themselves to be flexible workers, globally mobile, and situated within larger conceptual logics of ordering and subjugation. This occurs through the arrival and check-in process as subjects are ushered into the space of travel; the cultivation of mobility both within and across space; and the operationalization of colonial systems of hierarchy, knowledge, and power when ordering bodies through the built environment.

Yet it is not only governance *on* bodies in the space of Changi airport that governs subjects politically; rejecting the Cartesian notions of bodies as passive and irrelevant, I argue that bodies form an integral part of the technologies of governance that are used to produce notions of subjectivity. Specifically, I argue that the role of bodies is, paradoxically, their

abstraction, a process which I explain in further detail in the concluding section. In the realm of space, we find that Singapore orders mobile bodies not only in physical space, but in virtual spaces as well, where subjects are likewise (re)constituted as flexible, ordered citizens. Subjects, upon arriving at the airport, are prompted to release their bags, abstracting mobility on the material level as subjects no longer have to worry about their material possessions nor labor to carry them on their journey.

Abstraction in the check-in spaces of the airport takes other forms as well. Today, the ritualistic practice of ‘checking-in’ has been accompanied by a virtual one where travelers ‘check-in’ or register their location and activity at that particular moment to their friend network. Thus the material practice of checking-in is paired with an abstracted, digital counterpart as subjects socially assert their capacities of mobile subjectivity (on a global platform). Often times this takes the form of subjects posing in front of Changi’s huge destination board displaying the myriad international locations accessible by walking only a few hundred meters. The boards serve as icons, and posing in front of them photographically authenticates capacities for embodied mobility as well as visualizes a form of flexible citizenship: namely, that the photographed flexible subject is characterized by their ability to move to these places.

Of course, these images in popular and social media only reflect particular visualizations of mobile subjectivity, ones that are disproportionately glorified, optimistic, and privileged. The global mobility rendered by capitalist globalization, economic development and cheap tickets is a phenomenon to be celebrated and applauded, recognized for its role in promoting and physically facilitating multinationalism in Singaporean society. However, not all images of global mobility are so glorious, and plenty of subjects are rendered mobile without such visible celebrations of

that subjective condition. Workers, migrants, and other less-visible travelers are rendered just as internationally mobile in their interpellation at Changi, but it often has very different implications than such realities have for the backpacker or budget tourist. Even in abstracted cases, subjects are hierarchically ordered. In both cases, involving real material bodies and virtual represented ones, the journey begins in the site of the check-in hall.

Secured Mobilities: Governing Aeromobile Bodies

The production of flexibility, mobility, and ordering in aeromobility is not only fostered through spatial arrangements and understandings. In this section, I investigate the ways in which these subjective characteristics are reproduced at the level of the body, which I argue is most clear and viscerally experienced through what I broadly term the “security apparatus” which encompasses a wide variety of governing technologies on the body. I content in this section that the convergence of a range of technologies of governance at airport security, technologies which are inherently *biopolitical*, including security, border management, and biomedical screening, serves to differentially mobilize and interpellate subjects according to differences in corporeal characteristics (Foucault 2003). At the same time, processes of uniformity and standardization work to render bodies as abstract, irrelevant, and uniform in the eyes of the state. This process ontologically couples practices of transnational mobility with institutionalized order and normative violence, and works to reproduce particular conceptions of the mobile body.

Airport security apparatuses have grown in prominence within the air travel assemblage as high-profile terror events justify the need for security and a heightened sense of vigilance in a more integrated, though insecure, global system. In response, states secure the practice of air

travel- and by extension, their own airspace, their monopoly over legitimate violence, and the global mobility of their population freed from risk of corporeal harm. At the same time as the airport security apparatus seeks the security of bodies from non-sanctioned violence, border crossing checkpoints and biomedical scanners present new added 'criteria' by which bodies are governed, shaped, and rendered (im)mobile (Wilcox 2015).

First, subjects are constructed as holding 'flexible' citizenship through processes of identity verification and migration management. At Changi, passengers leaving through security checkpoint must also pass through Singapore's immigration service which further interpellates subjects in relation to the state and to prevailing notions of self and identity. The increasing use of photography, facial recognition software, and biometric technologies such as fingerprint and iris scanners once again thrust the body into the forefront as the focal point of technologies of governance, but rather than searching for signs of biological threats it aims for the verification of the relationship between subject and body. Not only is this relation presumed before bodies encounter the border management apparatus, but it is one that is reinforced through the ontological coupling by official representations in the form of records, documents, and crucially passports- the material metonymy of sovereign subjects, making up for its lack of fleshy substance with key statistics, information, and visualization of the bearer's body.

The heavy presence of security not only at Changi but at airports around the world express another message regarding flexible citizenship: that flexible citizenship necessarily involves intense securitization and requires subjects to completely submit to the demands and ordering logics of the state in exchange for capacities of aeromobility. In Foucauldian terms, we could say that the logic of biopower and biopolitics, originally applied to the context of the

nation-state, is at play at airports as well. Biopolitics is a technology of political governance where the central unit of concern is both individuals and the larger *population*. Whereas in previous eras sovereign power was understood to be destructive and transcendent, under biopolitics power is productive and contingent; in Foucauldian terms, it not “the right to take life or let live,” but “the power to ‘make’ live and ‘let’ die.” (2003: 241). In the case of the modern state, management of the population through statistical information, social welfare programs, and investments ‘human capital’ through education have been made necessary due to the reorganization of productive life under capitalism and the need for healthy, productive human labor. Yet biopolitics is implemented in more indirect ways as well, relating to social conceptions, ideology, and knowledge; in short, the shared understanding of reality and truth. Subjects can thus regulate themselves and work to maximize their own productivity thanks to an understanding of reality that emphasizes production and accumulation.

The assemblage of various technologies of corporeal screening, measurement, and identification is based on the logic of biopolitics, which has as its top priority the protection of all life from risk of harm or death. Logics of policing and welfare at the level of nation-state thus serve this common end, and similar logics are at work to mobilize flexible citizens at Changi, by combining security techniques with biological scanners to watch for dangers that are not only man-made but biological as well, and which could hence spread around the world at rapid pace. Biopolitical techniques of guaranteeing flexible citizenship aim to protect this citizenry from dangers, while migration apparatuses that render subjects mobile act as a sort of ‘positive’ intervention; after all, how else to ‘make life’ for a flexible subject than to render them flexible? In other words, Changi’s constellation of security technologies works to render subjects safe and

mobile, and despite the unconventional nature of its body politic as mobile, changing, and outside the nation-state, the same technologies of biopolitics apply.

Second, Chang's security apparatuses, especially those around migration management, aim to render bodies as globally (im)mobile. Indeed, the technical mobility that air travel makes possible is irrelevant in the face of more immaterial political, economic, legal, and cultural arrangements between nation-states that prevent, or at least restrict, the presence of particular bodies in certain territories. The conceptual restrictions (or lack thereof) are manifest at the site of the border crossing. In Singapore's case, what is materialized at the site of border crossings is often a representation of greater mobility, not less of it. Singapore's passport is widely considered the most 'powerful' in the world, which in more materialist language translates into Singaporean bodies (i.e. passport-holders) having the most global mobility afforded to them by virtue of the sovereign state of which they are a citizen.

Part of this effort by the Singaporean state to render its citizens ever-greater and easier mobility has been its role in establishing what is regarded as one of the most successful international political blocs, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN. Like other similar supranational arrangements in other regions of the world, a major component of ASEAN has been a reduction in the significance of territorial distinctions in ordering economic and political activity, including the movement of bodies across the borders of its member states. At the level of the airport, this is most clearly reflected in the separate shorter queues for ASEAN subjects, bodies which are identified in passports and state databases as having privileged access to destinations worldwide. I argue that this does not only expand the notion of 'citizenship,' to encapsulate global mobility, but significantly alters it as involving not just one

singular nation but as incorporating and encompassing various rights of mobility. It is a benefit to the bodies of subjects that is likewise only conferred through technologies of identity verification, when the state can verify *true* body-subject constitution.

At the level of the site, these institutions therefore function as more than just representative of mobility, but as actually and materially constituting mobility even at the practical level, at the site of the airport. Numerous bodily restrictions that would be decried as dictatorial in alternative contexts are temporarily enforced, accepted by travelers, and justified by regimes of knowledge that demand their presence for secure traveling populations and secure skies more broadly. Shorter queues at ASEAN-designated booths, then, render subjects as accustomed to mobility not only as it relates to the potential destinations they can go to but also as it relates to the practice of travel relative to those who do not have such privileges of citizenship.

Finally, in addition to being rendered as ‘flexible citizens’ and differentially (im)mobile based on global infrastructures of citizenship and security, the constellation of security technologies work on the body to produce as *ordered subjectivities* as well. The security apparatus functions to produce particular notions and understandings of ‘order,’ defined as the complete security of bodies from biopolitical risk, the maintenance of existing hegemonic hierarchies and understandings of embodiment, and the deployment of techniques of racism to designate certain bodies as ‘within’ and others outside the logic of biopolitics. Together technologies of ordering work on the body to produce certain understandings of subjectivity and security.

The airport security apparatus operates on the basis of a close scrutinization of bodies that generates knowledge for the state on potential threats and risks based on visible

characteristics of the body. The existence of such apparatuses, as Wilcox notes, arises with the realization by states that the catastrophic risks (both material and representational) are too great to be managed with conventional techniques of biopolitics, and require “precautionary and ‘zero risk’ techniques in which people are presumptively assumed to be dangerous” and must prove harmlessness (105). Moreover, processes of security and order serve to reproduce particular understandings of normative ‘order.’ This involves not only security from violence but security from other perceived threats to the body politic as well, such as drugs and other contrabands. As Balasingamchow describes, “unlike most airports, Changi is [] where many drug busts go down and where, since 9/11, young national servicemen bearing assault weapons have conspicuously patrolled its departure and arrival halls...it welcomes the world with technological marvels that are also used to screen individuals and keep certain types of people, things, or substances at bay.” (24-25). The stringent hierarchies of order are itself part of a new global ‘order’ of air travel ushered in since 9/11.

In addition to these practices of subject-production on the body, security apparatuses envelope bodies themselves as a technology of governance with the aim of abstracting notions of embodied subjectivity. During the process of examination bodies are subjected to the gaze of the state and are re-constituted in their raw materiality. As a result, in the eyes of the state the heterogeneous flow of subjects is reduced to a set of identical bodies to be examined for signs of deviancy. This both elevates the significance of bodies but also, in the process, abstracts them; corporeal characteristics are no longer significant, having been ‘cleared’ by the state security apparatus. The process of security renders uniform and passive the bodies under examination, reducing their ontology to mere bits of information to be collected and ordered, and when it’s

over conceptualizes all secured subjects as occupying docile and abstracted bodies (Wilcox 2015). What this practice has achieved is not a level of equity among all aeromobile bodies; quite to the contrary, this practice is far from equal and involves uneven methods of screening. Instead, abstraction simply renders these uneven tactics of governance as necessary, natural, or justified on a neutral, legalistic, abstract basis. Even the ‘objective’ tactics of security, then, are used to target particular bodies while technical discourses about uniform bodies undermines understandings of security as involving differential treatment and normative violence.

To summarize, Changi’s security apparatus vividly illustrates the production of mobile, flexible, and ordered subjectivities on bodies. Rather than acting in tension, these impulses of securitization and mobilization reinforce each other by associating transnational mobility and flexibility with a heightened sense of security. This constellation of security apparatuses at Changi function as naturalizing an ontological link between flexible citizenship and security, of global mobility and transnational integration with the need for state control, constant vigilance, and an elimination of corporeal risk. In Singapore, we see this reflected in the layered and visible presence of security mechanisms, and yet simultaneously the desire to make travel more accessible, easier, and to customers’ satisfaction.

Affective Aeromobility: Commodification, Desire, and Performativity

Airport designers typically focus much of their attention to the airside space that immediately greets passengers after the security checkpoint. The transition here can be thought of in a number of terms: it is indeed a spatial transition from one distinct space to another, one which symbolically marks passage across borders and into an exclusive, secure, and dynamic supranational assemblage of people, knowledge, and technology that facilitates global air travel.

Exiting the space of security and border checkpoints and entering the transit space also has a profound effect on the body, and therefore on subjectivity. No longer an object of an external gaze and examination, the body is now immediately thrust front and center into a world of spectacular excess ready to satisfy any desire on a whim.

I contend that the space of the airside terminal, the space where transiting passengers wait, eat, shop, and find other ways to ‘kill-time’ under late-capitalism, is a space where bodies are almost completely abstracted, characterized by feelings of *disembodiment*. In this space, interpersonal *affect*, or involuntary, reactionary emotional sensations such as desire, function as techniques of subject-production. According to Hardt and Negri (2004), “unlike emotions, which are mental phenomena, affects refer equally to the body and mind. In fact, affect, such as joy or sadness, reveal the present state of life in the entire organism, expressing a certain state of the body along with a certain mode of thinking.” (108). Anderson goes on to discuss how under late-capitalism, “affective relations and capacities are object-targets for discipline, biopolitics, security and environmentality; affective life is the *outside* through which new ways of living may emerge; and specific collective affects...are part of the *conditions* for the birth of forms of biopower.”⁸

In this section, I argue that in the quasi-public sphere of the airside terminal, elements of commodification and spectacle produce affective responses that further (re)produce characteristics of ordered, flexible transnational subjectivity. These techniques, including constructions of desire for international commodities and destinations, the use of affective and

⁸ In his essay Anderson engages closely with notions of security, contributing to understandings of Hardt and Negri’s discussion of security. According to Anderson, “apparatuses of security function, then, to *enable* the circulations that define the personal and commercial ‘freedoms’ of liberal-democratic life,” explaining that securitization enables not only capitalist social relations in increasingly immaterial ways, but also control over affective life itself.

gendered labor to designate spaces of public/private, and techniques of performativity are operationalized to order and regulate mobility within the airport itself. Taken together, subjective characteristics of flexible citizenship, mobility, and accustomization to ordering are reproduced in the realm of the airside terminal not through governing bodies or shaping space, but by conditioning particular disembodied affects.

First, notions of ‘flexible citizenship’ are reproduced in subjects through the affective constructions of *desire* for the global that is produced in the terminal space. This includes not only global *things* - food, brands, commodities- but also global *bodies* in the form of eroticized, voyeuristic gazing and global *destinations* in the very purpose of the airside space: to facilitate the ‘consumption’ of new experiences (Gottdiener 2001). Subjective notions of belonging to a citizenry that extends across multiple national territories is materially constructed in Changi’s design. Changi organizes departure areas partly based on destination region, immediately orienting and organizing bodies of travelers around geographic spaces and epistemes. Multilingual signs and announcements similarly allude to forms of transnational citizenship and international access. This positioning of Changi as a central hub is further evoked by its status as a “world’s best” airport. It presents itself as an international destination while also reproducing an image of the ‘ideal’ airport, an international space of flexible citizenship.

Perhaps the space most frequently associated with Changi is the shopping mall. These corridors which greet passengers immediately after exiting security feature global brands and international products. At Changi, like any contemporary airport, almost anything is for sale: material commodities, duty-free items, food, drinks, everything from basic necessities to luxury handbags. Being a global, flexible subject is thus further associated with being a consumer, one

ready to satisfy the desires of the body, generously supplied by the airport. Following Marx, the fetishization of commodities leads to the alienation of the human aspects of the material, obscuring the labor, the time, the spirit of the worker in favor of its immediate material appearance (Marx 1867: 125-138). These commodities are marketed to subjects as being able to satisfy any desire of the body.⁹

Second, along with producing flexible citizenship through affective experience, Changi's affective airside realm renders subjects mobile within the airport. Its amenities work to associate practices of mobility with affects of freedom, comfort, and desire. However, on the opposite end of this ideal form of subjectivity is the implicit connection drawn between affects of embarrassment, discomfort, and unbelonging with corporeal immobility. This is evident, according to some, in the recently-opened Terminal 4, a Satellite terminal disconnected from the assemblage of T1, T2, and T3 specifically catered to budget fliers. Much of the growth in Southeast Asian air traffic over the past four decades has its origins in the expansion of cheap tickets and budget airlines in the region. T4 has been promised as a way for Budget fliers to live up to Changi's exceptional standard. As Max Hirsh (2016) criticizes, rather than catering this space to the subjects who will eventually utilize it, original plans for T4 emphasized high-end and luxury stores and complete self-check-in kiosks replacing workers who may otherwise be needed to help first-time travelers. These design choices are meant to project the space as being

⁹ In some ways, the commodity spectacle of the airport could be understood in a psychoanalytic sense of compensating for an inherent 'lack' in the practice of air travel, a 'lack' of material substance for the body, confined, stripped away of material resources and launched high above the Earth. In everyday life under late capitalism, visual mediations of commodities and brands surrounds us, yet they're conspicuously absent on planes, in the air. Perhaps the commodities laying themselves out for consumption are meant to adjust for this lack. Indeed, a number of psychological studies note unusually high levels of consumption as people are traveling, perhaps an indication of desires being constructed by the airport apparatus itself through the stressful and repressive 'lacks' it makes the body go through before arriving airside.

designed for a specific, travel-savvy subject, by producing in those who do not fit that mold affects of embarrassment, discomfort, and unbelonging. These sensations are posed as being linked to immobility, implying that such subjects do not really belong in these spaces of mobility.

Thirdly, affects are used to shape subjects as ordered within the space of air travel. Affective techniques of ordering are evident from the moment a subject enters the airside realm to moment they enter the plane, ordered by affective and gendered labor. Upon exiting security, subjects immediately confront kiosks with five faces on a gradient frown to smile asking “How was your experience?” These simple, intuitive ratings systems are all over Changi, created by a Finnish startup called HappyOrNot that seeks to collect “frictionless” high-volume data on customer feelings (Owen 2018). Positioned right outside security, these machines also designate the transition of subject from potential threat to consumer. It changes the subject-state relationship made so visible in the security apparatus to one of client and service provider. Not only does the kiosk affectively designate two separate spaces- those of security and those of consumption- but it also literally asks for immediate affective responses rather than critical discursive feedback. The only goal is satisfaction. Ultimately, the airport responds to areas reporting low satisfaction, but the aim is never to completely reform the underlying structural logic of governance in response to customer feedback.

Beyond the affective kiosks, spaces of travel are designated with gendered affective labor as well. The terminal space is a quasi-public realm where, although it is a highly exclusive space in general, only open to a small population of aeromobile citizens, it is nonetheless public in the sense that it is open to a wide citizenry who can, and do, interact, discuss, live. This sphere is designated as separate from the sphere of the plane, seen as the ‘private’ realm. In practice, both

spaces are quite similar materially: stratified, populated, somewhat public, somewhat private. The differentiation of these realms of public/private is achieved through the use of gendered affective labor, as female flight attendants are designated to fulfill the traditional role of the woman in the realm of the household, (or the private realm in the everyday sense). Not only does this involve tasks related to the reproduction of social life, but also the labor is highly affective, which Hardt & Negri (2004) describe as labor that involves the production of certain affects for 'consumers.'

As subjectivities of transnational mobility, flexibility, and order are produced in the affective arena of the airside terminal, processes of phenomenologically disembodied subjects also takes place. Here, subjects are reduced to immaterial representations and uniform essences as commodity relations replace and reproduce social ones. Unlike the security realm, the main objects of concern in the affective realm are not physical embodied individuals, but rather immaterial representations of subjects in data systems, algorithms, and networks of information coordination. To these systems, physical bodies are relevant, and therefore their differences- in height, weight, age, gender, race, ability- are negated completely. This is most obvious in the organization of seats on planes and lounges which deploy a capitalist ordering logic to politically distribute the means of comfort, an abstract conceptualization of subjects that completely negates and uniformizes bodies. Thus the final steps of abstraction works to render subjects as unaware of their bodies and therefore blind to the ways in which governance inflicts disciplinary and regulatory techniques on them. Flight becomes an apolitical, universalizing, abstract activity, rather than being seen as the Earthly, governed domain it actually is. In the realms of affect, then, as well as the realm of space and the body, we see how structures of governance at Changi

work to produce subjectivities characterized by transnational flexible citizenship, corporeal mobility, and accustomization to hierarchical ordering.

Conclusion: Returning to Changi, Becoming-Singaporean

In the preceding section, I have discussed processes of subject-production at Changi Airport in Singapore by as aimed at producing flexible, mobile, and ordered aeromobilities. I discussed this process as having effects *on* bodies (that is, ways that subjects are governed by external mechanisms, be it space, state security apparatuses, or affect), as well as governing *through* bodies, which are not simply passive objects but rather contain potential power that can be directed. Specifically, the state uses the stages of movement through Changi to produce sensations of disembodiment upon which new dominant forms of understanding and defining subjectivity can be inscribed. As subjects move through the airport, they enter virtual realms and drop their material belongings, are reduced to uniform bodies in security, and are engaged with immaterially in the affective realm in the terminal. When it's time to board, passengers enter into a world of sedated bodies, personalized media and custom imagery, a hyperreal universe aimed at divorcing consciousness from corporeal extension and discomforts. The sense of abstracted bodies is further heightened by the disjunctures in space and time experienced by the body, widely acknowledged in discussions related to jet lag and disorientation.

In this disembodied state, subjects are constituted and reconstituted according to abstract, representational logic, without any sort of embodied characteristics. This serves to negate difference between bodies, on the one hand, and offer in place identifications on the basis of conceptual notions such as nation and territory. In Changi's case, the airport functions as both a way of disembodiment subjects and negating bodily difference, preserving the

preexisting normative hierarchy of defining and governing subjects. However, such abstractions also reproduce a particular image of the ‘normal’ aeromobile body as an abstracted figure, which in Singapore’s context serves to unify different bodies under the conceptual category of ‘Singapore.’ Subjects relinquish whatever notions of themselves they arrived at the airport with, abstracted away along with their body, and are given instead a unifying notion of themselves as “Singaporean.”

In addition to techniques of abstraction being used for subject-production, abstraction also serves to promote discourses of air travel that render flight as apolitical. Specifically, such abstractions of the aeromobile body obscure differences in embodied experiences of air travel, allowing the dominant discourse to construct it in apolitical terms, as either an apathetic, irrelevant practice (never as important as the destination) or as an overly influential, dreamlike humanistic practice. In either case, techniques of governance that target bodies and differentiate subjects based on bodies are not represented by dominant discourses of air travel. In these discourses, all bodies are seen as equal and therefore equally governed; the only differences in subjective treatment are warranted, justifiable ones.

This process is not neutral and nonviolent. It involves, as Butler discusses, degrees of normative violence in which subjects are reconstituted in according to dominant discourses and structures, a process which is quite natural for some and violent, painful, and traumatic for others. By abstracting bodies and then inscribing a very particular and narrow definition of “Singapore” and “Singaporean” as a flexible, mobile, and ordered subject, Changi shapes not just aeromobility but Singaporean national identity as well. In that way, Changi is very much a

metonym for Singapore as a whole, producing mobility, flexibility, and order through the very ways subjects understand themselves as citizens, as bodies, as Singaporean.

A variety of authors discuss the cultural dimensions of Changi airport and its relationship to national identity in Singapore; indeed it is hard to find other countries with an example of something so nationally unifying as this singular apparatus serving as the main border crossing for visitors and Singaporean citizens alike, an apparatus which must be engaged each time bodies enter or leave its sovereign territory. “Maybe that is why we need Changi,” Balasingamchow concludes. “Not because it wins awards, handles a mind-boggling 54 million passengers a year or polices our national boundaries - but because when we see the control tower... still operating as it should, then we know we are home.” (27)

Chapter 3

Los Angeles: Optimization and Optimism

Performing Neoliberal Subjectivities

It is almost too easy to say that LAX is a perfect metaphor for L.A., a flat, spaced-out desert kind of place, highly automotive, not deeply hospitable, with little reading matter and no organizing principle. (There are eight satellites without a center here, many international arrivals are shunted out into the bleak basement of Terminal 2, and there is no airline that serves to dominate LAX as Pan Am once did JFK.) Whereas "SIN" is a famously ironical airline code for Singapore, cathedral of puritanical rectitude, "LAX" has always seemed perilously well chosen for a city whose main industries were traditionally thought to be laxity and relaxation. LAX is at once a vacuum waiting to be colonized and a joyless theme park--Tomorrowland, Adventureland, and Fantasyland all at once.

-Pico Iyer, "Where Worlds Collide"

The sprawling, amorphous complex that constitutes LAX is a world away from Singapore. When you fly from Singapore to Los Angeles you end up leaving one of the world's best airports and arrive at what many consider to be one of the world's worst, rendered notable not because of its sterile opulence and ordered efficiency but for its lack of these amenities in a land of excess, consumerism, and dreams of prosperity. While Singapore may represent "Plato's dream of airports," a 'clinically opulent' hub that has perfected the art of mobilizing, ordering, and disembodiment for the metaphysical journey of flight, the Earthly realities of LAX are far more sobering. Standing in stark contrast to optimistic visions of the American Dream and the glamour of a bygone era of American aviation, LAX emerges as a purely functional apparatus, a tool for moving bodies. Its lack of identity is among its most characteristic feature, one symbolizing its connection to the vast postmodern city it serves.

LAX is not alone in these characteristics, but it serves as a useful representation not only of Los Angeles but of American aviation more generally. The realm of aviation in the US is not treated as an iconic symbol of national unity and are instead tools, functional technologies that aspire to do little more than move bodies. The resultant political subjectivities that are produced

in the American context are less concerned with orderly mobility and transnational access on the basis of citizenship, and are more concerned with a calculated, rational ‘consumption’ or use of this purely functional technology. I argue here that these political subjectivities are rooted squarely in neoliberal ideology and culture. At LAX, neoliberalism is operationalized in a unique way, through conventional operations of infrastructures and superstructures, sure, but also through its role in abstracting the bodies that move through its space. At Singapore, these abstractions served to unify disembodied subjects under the underlying category of “Singapore.” At LAX, they reinforce notions of neoliberal life as abstract, immaterial, and imaginary. Perhaps this is most clearly embodied in an abstract “American Dream” that for many exists but never comes true. Similarly, the abstracted experience of traveling at LAX is emblematic of the disconnect between the way air travel is presented and received conceptually and how it is actually lived. The abstracted promises of neoliberalism are central components to how neoliberal subjectivity is produced at LAX and at airports throughout the United States.

This chapter investigates neoliberal subjectivity at LAX, the forces underlying its (re)production as subjects become Aeromobile in its spaces, and the ways in which this subjectivity differs from that produced at Changi. First I offer an overview of the characteristics of the ‘ideal subject’ in this context. Then, I describe how this neoliberal subjectivity is produced in the journey through LAX. In these descriptions I discuss the way these technologies aimed at optimizing the neoliberal rationality of aeromobile subjects at the level of the body also aim to shape subjects by using the body as a tool of subject-production itself. By producing sensations of disorientation, disembodiment, and imagination, aeromobile bodies are abstracted, and notions of subjectivity become even more conceptual, producing subjects well-suited for

neoliberal environments where what is imagined and what is experienced is often far apart. I further discuss the function of corporeal abstractions and their political implications in the concluding section.

America's subject: Homo economicus

Late capitalism in the American context generally takes on a particular form of neoliberalism, one that emphasizes the freedom of private actors and markets and the autonomy of economics from other spheres of social and cultural life. Broadly defined, neoliberalism is a particular understanding of society and nature which presumes the autonomy of the economic sphere from other aspects of social life and the resultant obligation to separate or 'liberate' this sphere from the control of the States. It also emphasizes the primacy of a rational, self-interested and entrepreneurial individual, an ideal subject that Foucault has termed *homo economicus* or the 'economic man.' (Foucault 2008). In practice, neoliberalism has been carried out as a guiding ideology for states, businesses and multinational institutions to varying extents around the world, often times used to rationalize present inequalities and exacerbate historical hierarchies of power, justifying such practices with economic logic and the assumption of autonomy of economic outcomes (Harvey 2005). At LAX, technologies of governance are aimed at optimizing and reproducing the neoliberal rationality underlying this form of subjectivity on and through the body.

But how does neoliberalism manifest at the level of the individual subject? Michel Foucault spends much of his career examining the nature of subjectivity under this specific ideological category of neoliberalism, which he terms not as purely ideological but rather a "regime of truth" that shapes social structures, practices, knowledge, and, crucially, individual

subjectivities. In his March 14 1979 lectures at the College de France, Foucault distinguishes American neoliberalism from its European counterparts by noting its strong foundational role in the birth and development of the nation, is a central feature and object of political debate in America, and engenders unique hostility to non-liberal proposals; in short, for Foucault, “American liberalism is not- as it is in [France and Germany]...just an economic or political choice formed and formulated by those who govern and within the governmental milieu. Liberalism in America is a whole way of being and thinking....It is also a sort of utopian focus which is always being revived.”(2008: 218) It is not just a set of ideologies or policies; neoliberalism has become a way of life- both for living and thinking in the present and envisioning hopes for the future. As Ong has further argued, neoliberalism is a particular mode of governance that has not been implemented with the same hegemonic depth in Asia as it has in the United States, where it manifests only within the limits of the sovereign ‘exception.’ If the gap between Singapore Changi and LAX is any indication, we could glean much about the specific nature and form of American neoliberalism- and particularly neoliberal subjectivity- that is reflected in this difference in trajectories.

At the center of this neoliberal culture, Foucault focuses his attention to *homo economicus* or the ‘economic subject’ which operates as the subject of neoliberal society. This *homo economicus* is slightly different from the classical conception of the ‘man of exchange’ or ‘entrepreneurial man.’ In neoliberalism “*homo economicus* is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself...being for himself his own capital...his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings.” (Ibid). No longer viewed as a dual subject which both produces and consumes, as in the classical conception of the ‘man of exchange,’ the entrepreneurial subject is conceived as a singular

producer of their own satisfaction, an individual solely responsible for their own wellbeing, giving rise to the notion of 'human capital' and the infiltration of economic rationality to formerly extra-economic fields of life. I focus on these three features- individualism, entrepreneurialism, and economic rationality- in the following discussions of aeromobile subjectivity at LAX.

First, the logics of air travel as a practice in the American context are frequently understood in entrepreneurial terms, involving a rational traveling subject going on a journey to maximize their own satisfaction. Famously, the answer to the question "what is the purpose of your travel?" always boils down to two possible answers: business or pleasure, the two binary options for how an entrepreneurial subject may spend their time. This dichotomy, one that serves as the basis for classical economic theories of the labor market, reinforces the naturalization of an exclusive subset of human labor as "business," rendering the rest to "pleasure." In particular, the framework of human capital further commodifies leisure travel. No longer traveling for their own sake, leisure travelers today often do so as a way of accumulating a certain 'human capital,' able to represent themselves as worldly, cultured, well-traveled. Travel photography and social media play an integral role in asserting this accumulation.

Secondly, in addition to rendering subjects as entrepreneurial, structures of air travel reinforce the commodification of place and the impetus to think of travel solely in economic terms. The subjective experiences of travel to new places, the processes of 'human-capital accumulation' described in the preceding paragraph, become commodified and standardized in the universalized form of airline miles. This occurs in a manner very similar to how capital, according to Marx, universalized the measure of human labor-power (Marx 1867: 247-257).

Perhaps few archetypes of traveling subjects encapsulate the image of a capital-accumulating *homo economicus* better than the business executive, a subject who in this society also happens to be most frequently portrayed as a wealthy, white, educated, able-bodied, heterosexual man.

Thirdly, the image of the ideal subject of *homo economicus*, the subject towards which technologies of governance at the airport are oriented, is one that is individualized. This has only been enhanced by technologies of digitization and informationalization. Whereas cheap tickets in the Asian context were made possible by a new political-economic environment and the arrival of companies catering to a specific low-cost niche in the market (going on to gain huge value and market share), the economic structure of air travel in the US has been characterized by consolidation, mergers, and the seemingly endless growth in size and scope of the largest airlines. Cheap tickets, in the American context, are driven not by low-cost carriers but rather the advent of individual customization of commodified aspects of air travel, or processes of what economists call ‘price discrimination’ which gets ever more perfect with more information and technology. The point we are arriving at today is one where economic markets perfectly cater to the preferences of each individual consumer.

To summarize, the aeromobile subjectivity that technologies of governance at the airport aim to (re)produce is one of who thinks in economic terms, is motivated by individual interest, and entrepreneurially optimizes their own level of satisfaction by rationally weighing costs and benefits. This is closely linked to social and cultural values that justify inequality, emphasize autonomy and self-governance, and the liberation of private actors and markets from public regulation. In the context of American aviation, these characteristics of subjectivity have been central to the structures and practices of air travel, from differentiating prices for rational actors

in flexible, data-driven markets, to using reward miles as a form of commodifying human capital in the context of travel. I now to discuss the specific ways in which these characteristics of aeromobile subjectivity in the American context are (re)produced at LAX.

Aeromobile Bodies at LAX: Optimizing Neoliberal Subjectivity

Instead of governing by ordering mobility & producing flexible, docile subjects, governance at LAX and at airports across the US operates by optimizing individual choices and cultivating a sense of entrepreneurial autonomy and free mobility. The basis of aeromobility lies not in a form of *political* citizenship that guarantees transnational mobility, as it is in Singapore; instead, at LAX the basis of aeromobility is *economic*, purely relating to an individual's willingness and ability to pay for what they want. Processes of abstraction that occur as bodies become aeromobile are therefore aimed not at producing a unified notion of national identity but by producing particular conceptualizations of LAX as an imagined space (a conceptualization perhaps at odds with reality). These ideas of LAX parallel notions of neoliberal life as full of freedom and opportunity, imaginaries that persist even in the face of experiential realities at odds with it. In the next sections, I illustrate this process of neoliberal subject-production as a specifically embodied practice from the perspective of space, the body, and affective experience. In these discussions I also highlight ways in which bodies are abstracted, subjects are disembodied, as they become aeromobile. I suggest that these technologies of governance not only reinforce notions of neoliberal rationality but also particular notions of the body itself, and of subjectivity as a disembodied, objective condition. I conclude by discussing the implications of these conceptualizations.

Spaces of Aeromobility: Neoliberal Navigation

The first dimension of subject-production I examine is that of spatial extension. I argue that the spaces at LAX are constructed to individualize, commodify, and consume the experience of travel. The sprawled and disorderly nature of LAX as a material, experienced space combine with images of LAX as a conceptual, imaginary space, portraying it as gateway to a futuristic American fantasyland. Together, these two ‘spaces’: one real, one imagined- constitute the lived experience of space. Henri Lefebvre, a French Marxist geographer and social theorist, demonstrates how space is not an objective, given fact of life but rather lived, understood, and produced socially- and therefore politically (Lefebvre 1974). In *The Production of Space* Lefebvre offers a framework to understand this produced ‘social space’ in the form of his spatial ‘triad’ which conceptualizes space as being either material, conceptual, or lived- involving some combination of the other two (Merrifield 2006)¹⁰. This “thirdspace” as Soja terms it and exists as both a driver and re-presentation of social relations; as Watson (2011), drawing off Gottdiener points out, “Lefebvrian space is ‘both a material product of social relations (the concrete) and a manifestation of relations, a relation itself (the abstract)’ (130)...in other words, space is a means of production and also a means of control.” (13). Still, Andy Merrifield insists that the spatial triad framework “loses its political and analytical resonance if it gets treated merely in the abstract: it needs to be *embodied* with actual flesh and blood and culture, with real life relationships and events.” (Merrifield 175, emphasis original). Applying this framework to LAX, I examine how spaces of travel operationalize certain neoliberal understandings of the ‘self’ as rational, individual, and entrepreneurial.

¹⁰ Despite such neat categorical distinctions, however, Lefebvre ultimately conceptualizes all three components of the spatial triad to be at play simultaneously, producing social space in a dialectical relationship with the society itself.

First, the spatial arrangement of LAX works to reinforce an understanding of the aeromobile subject as a singular individual primarily concerned with their own well-being or their own 'private' sphere. Indeed, much of this individualism is embodied in the material geographies of Los Angeles and the sprawled and decentralized design of LAX's terminal complex was constructed in the American postwar economic boom following the end of World War II. With government subsidies encouraging home ownership and the rise of the automobile as a central technology and icon of American life the cultural conditions of American political life began to shift. As Matt Huber (2013) has argued in his problematization of America's 'addiction to oil,' the influence of petroleum-based and individualized mobility has had profound effects on American culture. He asks, "What if the most problematic relation of oil is the way it powers forms of social life that allow individuals to imagine themselves as severed from society and public life? Oil is a powerful force not only because of the material geographies of mobility it makes possible but also because its combustion often accompanies deeply felt visions of freedom and individualism." (xi) Huber thus situates the practice of privatized automobile transport as a core vehicle for neoliberal subject-production in America's postwar years.

Huber's analysis follows other scholars who are primarily interested in how the banal, common features of everyday life can have important effects on the constitution of subjectivity. What petroleum-powered auto transport made possible, he argues, is a restructuring of the subjective understanding of 'public' and 'private' spheres of life, whereby everyday lifestyles of moving from the private home, to the private vehicle, to work, leisure, and back induced a lost sense of the 'public' sphere and public life in the minds of these subjects. These material geographies acclimate subjects to the rationalist logics of neoliberalism. "Rooted in the *material*

transformation of social reproduction centered upon the spatiality of single-family home ownership and automobility, oil helps power what others have called ‘the real subsumption of life under capital,’ where subjectivity itself mirrors the entrepreneurial logics of capital.” (xiv).

At LAX, the individualism of *automobility* is reproduced in the form of neoliberal *aeromobility*. Automobility, according to Huber, is a powerful force not just to its individualizing tendencies but also because of the physical control and power it endows subjects who drive. Aeromobility is far more confining, far less freeing, far more structured state, but LAX works to individually structure the experience of travel by evoking associations of automobility in its space. The sprawling terminal complex functions like a freeway, a space of passage and movement, not arrival. Neoliberal subjectivity is also reproduced as the entrepreneurial subject must become a ‘navigator of themselves’ through the airport from a particular Cartesian perspective, as if they were driving through an urban network. Changi directs individuals more experientially, with architectural features that attempt to create a sense of space and ‘natural’ sense of direction and movement, through design elements that suggest directions of movement in addition to arrows and signs. This is basically missing from LAX, and the main tools of wayfinding are representational, with signs and maps.

Second, the spaces of LAX work to shape subjectivity as experiencing air travel as a commodity to be consumed rather than as a discrete experience or practice in and of itself. The rise of digital technology and the ability of computer software to store and interpret big data has led to a wide range of customizable ‘products’ in the air travel market, a structure well-suited to the logics of a homo economicus. This space of stratification most immediately visible in the check-in counter, which directly confronts travelers with exclusive zones and queues. Whereas

amenity spaces at Changi are generally open to the public and are meant to evoke a sense of unification and singularity, the spaces of travel that different bodies experience at LAX is rather inaccessible, especially with the increased costs of services such as luggage check, mobile boarding, and lounge access. These services become commodities in their own right, embodying in a way inequality of mobility and accessibility and justifying such inequalities with an economic rationality.

Third, the spaces of LAX shape subjects as entrepreneurial not only by encouraging the rational optimization of utility by weighing costs and benefits, but also by operationalizing entrepreneurial attitudes spatially. One example of how this occurs is virtually, in the coded, virtual and imagined spaces of LAX. A virtual space or database of subjects that corresponds to aeromobile bodies acts as the main technique for recording and reordering bodies, rationalizing material differences in access and comfort with computerized, abstract algorithms displaying price differentials. Representations of travel for purposes of leisure likewise serve to enhance human capital of its subjects by evoking a sense of worldliness and cosmopolitanism while also furthering a particular image of the ideal *homo economicus* as one who not only works but balances his material needs with the satisfaction of his desires (Foucault 2008). Again, at the check-in hall, this is most visible as subjects rationally customize their consumption of travel and express it representationally (in the form of photos or social media check-ins) to assert their responsible cultivation of a worldly human capital.

In addition to the way bodies are governed through spatial arrangements, I argue that spaces at LAX work to abstract bodies, rendering notions of aeromobile subjectivity as disembodied. For example, the disorienting nature of LAX require maps and a solid sense of

direction as seen from above. However, this is in actuality a particular mode of viewing the self in space that obviously privileges certain bodies and subjects over others, instilling a normative sense of hierarchy even in individual navigation of the space. As Kathleen M. Kirby (1996) points out, “men can separate themselves from their environments, live in a space that somebody else relates and maintains, ‘tune out’, see in the space only what it pleases them to look at. Women, the working class, and people of the Third World create the environment *for* Western man, so they are able to expel it from their consciousness. A woman’s consciousness is more immersed in her surroundings...formulating ‘subject’ as individual with pre-set boundaries, [mapping] fails to recognize the very conventionality of the individual boundary it imposes.” (54). Not only is Cartesian wayfinding, in other words, productive of particular subjectivities that are individualized, distant, and neoliberalized, but also suited for the privileged white, male, wealthy subject. This evokes a sense of who belongs and does not belong in the space and allows judgment of ‘savvy’ travelers on the basis of a naturalized and increasingly universalized mode of navigating reality that is highly disembodied, objective, and rational.

As Kirby has further argued, “the development of Enlightenment individualism,” itself a fundamental component of contemporary neoliberalism, “was- and continues to be- inextricably tied to a specific concept of space and the technologies invented for dealing with that space...the ‘individual’ expresses a coherent, consistent, rational space paired with a consistent, stable, organized environment. Cartography...is both an expression of the new form of subjectivity and a technology allowing (or causing) the new subjectivity to coalesce.” (45) This subjectivity “is a construct incapable of responding to many of the features of the (geopolitical) environment,” and “it is an exclusive structure encoded with a particular gender, class and racial positions.”

Further, Kirby points out how “cartography selectively emphasizes boundaries over sites,” (46) giving rise to the emphasis on ownership and private property in the European cultural tradition, as well as a particular standardization “applied its own culturally specific standards as if they were indeed universal to the end that actual otherness was erased.” (Ibid).

The spaces of LAX, both material and imagined, work to produce an individualized, distant, rational subject, allowing the making of an ‘economic man’ modeled on the (dis)embodied white, male, privileged subject. Moreover, spatial arrangements aim to produce sensations of disembodiment, allowing neoliberal subjects to understand themselves in individualistic, distant, Cartesian terms.

Securing Aeromobile Bodies; Neoliberal Biopolitics and Performance

Neoliberal subjects are further (re)produced at the level of the body through security practices structured according to dominant logics of neoliberal rationality. Indeed, over the past several decades, especially in the wake of 9/11, the American aviation security apparatus has become increasingly neoliberalized, both in structure and practice. This has involved the privatization of multiple aspects of the security apparatus, differentiated and specialized techniques of securitization for subjects of different bodies and socioeconomic standing, tactics of performativity, the emphasis of individual responsibility for collective risk, and the rationalization of extreme and invasive tactics of screening. At the same time, bodies are further abstracted through security discourses of uniformity and objectivity and technologies that erase representations of bodily difference (Wilcox 2015). By directly imposing these new structures of security on the bodies of subjects who are identified and screened, this apparatus cultivates neoliberal subjectivity.

First, aeromobile subjects at LAX are constructed as individual, autonomous subjects through security practices and discourses that individualize danger and risk. Security threats are constructed in individualistic terms, such as the need to be vigilant for ‘terrorists’ or ‘criminals,’ focusing attention away from more hidden and normalized practices of violence in other forms. Moreover, the risks of flying are similarly individualized, and since 9/11 the US has operationalized discourses that prioritize bodily safety (whose?) above all else and offered coded calls to individuals to ‘never forget’ the possibility of biopolitical disaster, of the possibility of individual death- a premise that since 9/11 has been constructed as looming, ever present, and avoidable through cooperative participation in practices security. Rendered as mere individual bodies in the process of security, subjects are further categorized at identification checks by the prevailing discursive structures of dominant institutions. Although this process, as Butler notes, involves practices of normative violence and subjugation that imposes subjective notions on bodies, it is nonetheless regarded as apolitical, natural, and justified for the ‘greater good’ in practices of security. This suggests that concepts of “safety” is very narrowly defined and that the bodies that are deserving of such protection does not include those who may be rendered vulnerable by normatively violent practice.

Secondly, at the same time as the security apparatus reduces subjects to an individual-as-body, technologies of security draw on economic rationality and quantitative logic to justify practices of screening. At a structural level, this is most evident in the increasing privatization of aspects of airport security apparatuses. Justified by a belief in the ultimate efficiency and quality of private markets and agents over public entities, the privatization of essential state functions and services (even biopolitical ones like security) is a central feature of

neoliberal modes of governance. This has led to the commodification of practices of security, where subjects can optionally purchase services like “TSA Precheck,” or “Clear,” a privatized identity identification software to get in faster, less-scrutinized lines. In effect, security, once a purely public process, is now becoming a consumer good. These normalized practices of differential screening for differentiated bodies likewise justifies graduated approaches to examining bodies, rationalizing heightened security for some ‘risky’ bodies and less scrutiny to others on the basis of free markets, risk analyses, and statistics (Wilcox 2015).

Thirdly, the entrepreneurial nature of neoliberal subjects is operationalized at security. If *homo economicus* is a producer of their own satisfaction, then in the American security context they can be interpreted as producers of their own safety as well. Increasingly, for example, the responsibility of protecting the population from risk, a concern of the state under conventional biopolitics, has been socialized in discourses that interpellate individuals as vigilant state cooperatives for the sake of their own security (i.e. “if you see something, say something”). Discussing Bigo, Wilcox notes that this has the effect not only of a panopticonic normalization, but rather a *banopticon* that seeks “proactive control and risk management rather than normalization.” (105) At the same time, these discourses imply that cooperation with governing institutions is always a safe, non-violent alternative to ‘terror’ and ‘insecurity,’ despite the presence of normative violence that subjugates individuals whose bodies fall outside the normalized frame of the white, male, privilege subject for whom cooperation with the state poses no threat. Safety is therefore constructed as something more than the mere absence of violence; it is the formation of docile, cooperative subjects who must submit to the authority of the state in order to demonstrate their worthiness of biopolitical protection from risk.

Through processes of security the bodies of subjects are not just targeted in order to reproduce neoliberal subjectivity; these bodies are actively incorporated in these technologies of governance. Specifically, practices of security, while producing characteristics of individualism, rationality, and entrepreneurialism, also produce notions of the body as distinct from consciousness and passively controlled. In the practice of screening, individuals are removed from material possessions and, importantly, excluded from virtual spaces as most authorities prohibit the use of mobile technology in the screening area. Bodies are reduced immediately to the level of flesh to be examined systematically and uniformly. Biometric scanners have only enhanced this conceptual notion of the subject as a body amongst others to be systematically screened. Interestingly, such quantitative modes of security on the body, ones that emphasize the collection and examination of empirical evidence to assess risk, is combined with the coded cultural discourses of 9/11 which, as a national event, further aims to unify subjects, reducing bodily differences in the face of shared cultural memory. These discourses are not meant to illustrate real and present dangers but to evoke abstracted conceptualizations that justify the need for such invasive security measures. Through this interesting mixture of affective cultural memory and economic rationality, subjects are (re)produced as abstract, disembodied actors who are rendered uniform in the eyes of the state and in cultural memory, able to emphasize safety and at the same time rationalize violent practices that aim only to protect a particular ‘public’ from danger.

Affective Governance: Performativity in Public

In the airside realm, subjects enter into a sort of “public” sphere. This is clearly not a truly public sphere as it is located within an exclusive space, but it is public in the sense that the

individuality and autonomy described by Huber meets a wider realm of other actors. Though stratified, this sphere offers subjects a rare opportunity for affective relations that neoliberal geographies of private single-family homes and private cars has rendered uncommon. Subjects here are constituted by affective relations, increasingly through techniques that induce stress, paranoia, and frustration in travel to (re)produce neoliberal subjectivities of individuality, rationalism, and entrepreneurship. These effects are far from the desire and opulence produced at Changi. Resulting from these affective techniques of control, aspects of performativity that emphasize disembodiment, minimal expression of feeling, and solitary codes of conduct further reproduce neoliberal subjectivities in the affective realm.

First, understandings of the self as an individual is evident in the increasing use of personalized, customizable digital spaces of social media and entertainment that stratifies and individualizes members of the otherwise shared 'public' space. At the same time, media, signs, announcements, and discourses are designed to produce affective responses of paranoia in the material, lived space. The relative danger towards which the 'public' in the terminal is regarded, combined with the positive aspects that personalization and customization is designed to produce through immaterial content, virtual social realms, and entertainment, leads to the understanding of the 'self' as a private individual. The 'public' is seen as dangerous and untrustworthy and must be guarded against for the sake of the individual.

Secondly, logics of economic rationality are reproduced in *homo economicus* as the experience of flight becomes quantified and commodified. In the economized world of air travel, the affective experiences of travel are seen as rational derivatives from the amount of money that each rational subject was willing to pay, and therefore affective experiences are

relegated to the realm of individual choice. Individuals in this way see themselves as ‘consumers’ of a certain experience of flight, and is therefore affective emotions of frustration and entitlement reinforce a particularly commodified rationale of flying. Moreover, the call to ‘tone down’ emotional responses in stressful situations and instead respond with calm, composed rationality produces neoliberalized understandings of how to respond to stressful situations. This also reinforces a particularly masculinist approach to social relations that emphasizes rationality and reason over emotion and affective experience.

Finally, the entrepreneurial characteristics of *homo economicus* are reproduced affectively in the airside realm as bodies perform particular images of the ‘ideal’ subject’ to reflect, and accrue, human capital. As Butler argues, subjectivity can be understood as embodied, practice, and (re)produced through the performative ways individuals live out their everyday lives. In the airside realm of airports, subjects perform the entrepreneurial maximization of personal satisfaction. For those traveling for the purpose of ‘business’ this often manifests in the association of the ‘down time’ of flight with the opportunity to complete productive work; only over the past few decades the permission to smoke at cruising altitude has shifted to permission to use laptops.

Aside from performing conventional productivity, entrepreneurial subjects are affectively rendered entrepreneurial by techniques that commodify the experience of travel and of being in new places as a kind of ‘human capital’ in which miles flown serves as a substitute for worldly experience. Specifically, affects of stress are utilized to maximize the entrepreneurial impulse to not only perform all the tasks of aeromobility perfectly: arriving on time, boarding without issue, and enjoying the whole experience. At the same time, stress in travel is associated with travel

‘experience’; the entrepreneurial subject therefore must respond to stress with a balance of repressed emotion and performed responsibility. Overall, situating the bodies of all travelers within a large quasi-public sphere of productive workers further induces the economic impulse to orient their travel in terms of human capital, as somehow having to be ‘productive’ of either human or actual capital in order to be worth it.

In addition to airport affects being used to produce subjectivities through engaging subjects-as-bodies, I argue that bodies are directly used as tools of governance by way of abstraction. In this realm, this often takes the form of calling subjects to performatively separate themselves from their corporeal condition in engaging with others. Emotions must be minimized, and bodily-induced tiredness, stress, pain, or disorientation must be temporarily set aside in intersubjective performances. Moreover, in such performances bodies themselves are ignored or not brought up, especially when it comes time to board the plane, illustrated by the stark disconnect between seating assignments and bodily features. Sensations of disembodiment are further emphasized by codes of conduct and media technologies that aim to reproduce the experience of travel as individual and solitary; mobile phones, headsets, and personalized TV screens all work to make individuals less aware of their body and material surroundings, becoming abstracted for the disembodied journey of flight.

In the affective realm, governing techniques and performative practices continue to shape aeromobile subjects as being individual, rational, entrepreneurial, just as the structure of space and screening techniques on the body similarly act in other spaces of LAX. Although exclusive, this ‘public sphere’ allows individuals separated from public, civic life in the realm of the everyday a chance to interact. However, cultural performances of disembodied aeromobility

work to continue producing individualized, rational entrepreneurs even in the realm that is most directly concerned with human feeling and emotion.

Conclusion

To summarize, technologies of governance at LAX work to produce neoliberal subjects, or subjectivities characterized by individualism, economic rationality, and an entrepreneurial approach to self-satisfaction. I also demonstrate processes that work to abstract bodies, disembodied notions of subjectivity. Such processes of abstraction parallel imagined understandings of LAX as a space, which together shape subjects who are accustomed to stark differences in conceptual and experienced realities. Neoliberalism, and the discourse of the “American dream” which underlies its individualizing, entrepreneurial logic, relies on such divergences in perception and reality, in promise and delivery. Subjects who are accustomed to such divergences, who replace actual experience with abstract notions of space or bodies, are far more well-accustomed to the cruel promises of neoliberal life (Berlant 2011).

In one of the earliest ethnographies of the Los Angeles area Hortense Powdermaker describes Hollywood as a “dream factory,” and notes in his concluding chapter that “The happy endings of at least 100 per cent net profit for the studio and a relatively long period of employment at high salaries for employees, are becoming less common. Yet, although this is well known, many individuals still cherish the fantasy for themselves. In the movies the happy ending is still almost universal. Perhaps the people who make the movies cannot afford to admit that there can be another kind of ending, and many of those who sit in the audience prefer this fantasy, too” (Powdermaker 1951: Ch. 15). Indeed, what LA offers- an image, an idea, a concept,

a *dream*- is in reality far from the conditions reflected in the lived experiences of the present. Similarly, LAX works to disembody subjects in order to produce individuals accustomed to imagined ways of life that are distinct and different from lived experience.

Perhaps the most clear example of this is the bright, larger-than life “LAX” sign that greets travelers as they drive up towards or away from the airport. Rather than creating a shared, lived public space, the signs serve to promote a conceptual understanding of LAX as an entity. It is a visual image to be ‘consumed’ in the brief seconds that it takes for cars and busses whiz by, a shared visual experience of all travers coming to and from LAX that is nonetheless experienced individualistically, privately, and conceptually. When one thinks of “LAX,” one often thinks of that sign more than the embodied experience of traveling through LAX. The sense of identity reflected by the welcome sign juxtaposed with the material spatiality of sprawled and disconnected terminal complexes eliminates any possibility of spatial identity through a built, material ‘public’ sphere. This is reinforced by the fact that automobility is a necessary technology to getting around LAX, as walking between terminals is not realistically feasible. Despite the ephemeral agglomeration of bodies at LAX, technologies of control and governance aim to produce a lived experience of this space as individualized and disembodied, giving rise to neoliberal modes of subjectivity.

Contrast this, once again, to Changi. LAX aims to construct a particular imagined identity as a singular, unitary ontological whole; unlike Changi, however, this identity is not one of national pride and international iconography but rather as an *imagined* place, a sort of futuristic dream of the past. It is the entryway to the postmodern metropolis where desires are fulfilled, culture is created and dreams are realized. These imagined pictures of LAX, as a sort of gateway

to the American dream itself, meets the mundane, disorganized, and chaotic material realities of LAX as an actual, tangible space. Rather than canceling out or negating each other, however, these two contrasting images of LAX combine to constitute the very nature of LAX itself. LAX is not LAX without these imaginaries. In the same way, sensation of disembodiment produced by abstracting bodies combines with a subconscious awareness of bodily difference to produce subjects accustomed to a fundamental disconnect between the real and imaginary, between real and imaginary bodies and between real and imagined spaces. Neoliberal subjectivities, in other words, are not simply produced through the structural and material mechanisms of the airport but are additionally constituted by technologies that abstract bodies.

Abstraction in the American context does not only serve to render air travel as apolitical, obscuring the operation of governance at the airport, nor is it simply a way of enhancing other tools of subject-production. Although these aspects are both present, similar to Changi's case, I argue that in the American context abstraction of bodies specifically relates to hierarchies of power under contemporary neoliberalism, a highly racialized and gendered regime of truth. Discourses of equality, "individualism," "free enterprise," and "personal responsibility" all assume an ontologically neutral historical starting-point, neglecting structural inequalities and preserving them under the guise of immediate 'fairness.' Similarly, the dismantling of 'big government' and the public sphere occurred directly after the civil rights movement, as middle-class suburban whites began to intentionally attack the social support systems upon which so many minority communities relied. The intent of this rhetoric, as noted by Omi and Winant (2014), was not to simply advocate for the neoliberal project through catchy one-liners but to create a "politics of resentment," using the racist prejudices that were buried but never

destroyed after the Civil Rights movement to enact a new system with the individual, and not their identity or the baggage it carries, at the center.

The embodied nature of neoliberal subjectivity, one drawn on at the airport to govern subjects *through* the body rather than just as a body, is similarly evident when looking at gender. The logical basis of economic rationality and the assumptions of competition and even social Darwinism in discourses of capitalist entrepreneurship are firmly rooted in Western masculinist notions of reason; anything that is contrary or different from these conceptualizations is deemed ‘irrational’ and dismissed. The ideal subject of ‘homo economicus’ is portrayed as a white man through discourses that reproduce the female figure as ‘irrational’ and incapable of economic logic, thereby necessitating their relegation to the extra-economic sphere. The gendered and racialized structure of American neoliberalism are reinforced by aviation technologies that abstract and disembody subjects, producing distant, neutral, and Cartesian understandings of the body. This disconnect between lived subjectivity as embodied and conceptual subjectivity as abstracted mirrors other disconnects between imagination and reality we see all over LAX.

In some ways, Los Angeles and its dreamy imaginaries reflect the larger disconnects between the American dream itself and the reality of life under its contemporary regime of neoliberal governance. Lauren Berlant (2011) calls this juxtaposition a kind of “Cruel optimism,” a situation that exists “when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or people risks striving; and, doubly, it is cruel insofar as the very pleasures of being inside a relation have become sustaining regardless of the content of the relation, such that a person or world finds itself bound to a situation of profound threat that is, at the same time, profoundly confusing.” (2) In

other words, when people are unable to ultimately arrive at the goal towards which they are striving, and instead become content with simply striving for it (even when such relations involve threats and confusion). I draw on this definition of a particular characteristic relation of LAX and American aviation to further understand the dynamic of subject-production at the airport.

Even as the structural relations of power remain unchanged by the widespread adoption of neoliberal logics, discourses, and structures by aeromobile subjects, the relentless cruel optimism of the American Dream- a sentiment captured in the unreal corridors of LAX- offers a way out. The ability of this dream to deliver, however, is ambiguous at best and cruel at worst. Still, people put their faith in the American Dream to deliver them from situations that result from the same neoliberal system that discursively constructed such a beautiful narrative of escape. As Berlant inquires, “Why do people stay attached to conventional good-life fantasies- say, of enduring reciprocity in couples, families, political systems, institutions, markets, and at work- when the evidence of their instability, fragility and dear cost abounds? Fantasy is the means by which people hoard idealizing theories and tableaux about how they and the world ‘add up to something’” (2). If there is any space that encapsulates this fantasy better, that can more viscerally visualize a single entity being both the source of fragility and instability as well as the falsely promised opportunity to escape from it, it would be the dark corridors and glorified imaginaries of LAX.

Pico Iyer, an immigrant and writer extensively familiar with LAX after living there for weeks on end recognized this role of the airport in our imaginaries:

“One reason airports enjoy such central status in our imaginations is that they play such a large part in forming our first (which is sometimes our last) impression of a place; this is the reason

that poor countries often throw all their resources into making their airports sleek, with beautifully landscaped roads leading out of them into town. L.A., by contrast, has the bareness of arrogance, or simple inhospitality. Usually what you see as you approach the city is a grim penitential haze through which is visible nothing but rows of gray buildings, a few dun-hued warehouses, and ribbons of dirty freeway: a no-colored blur without even the comforting lapis ornaments of the swimming pools that dot New York or Johannesburg. You land, with a bump, on a mess of gray runways with no signs of welcome, a hanger that says "Trans World Airlines," another broken sign that announces "Tom Brady International Airport," and an air-control tower under scaffolding....."

The idealized visions of LAX are met with the mundane inhospitalities of its material reality; passengers arriving to LA, a destination which Iyer also points out is unique in that people go there to arrive, are faced with a reality very different from their optimistic visions. For most of these travelers, undeterred, this only remains emblematic of the larger neoliberal culture they are about to enter. As Iyer concludes: "For many immigrants, in fact, LAX is quietly offering them a view of their own near futures: the woman at the Host Coffee Shop is themselves, in a sense, two years from now, and the man sweeping up the refuse is the American dream in practice." Working in a space with only an imaginary sense of identity, engaging intersubjectively with only a conceptual body, and living life with unrealistic dreams, the processes of abstraction at LAX function as cruel optimism. It is full of dreams that do not come true and dominating conceptualizations at odds with lived reality, naturalizing and reinforcing the operating logic of American neoliberalism. As Iyer soberly adds: "The staff at the airport seems to be made up almost entirely of recent immigrants..... Many of the bright-eyed dreamers who arrive at LAX so full of hope never actually leave the place."

Conclusion

Between Abstractions

Bodies, Territorialization, and Flight

“The thing about dwelling in an in-between state is that you never know how you will feel and respond to the same questions from one moment to the next...You are an emigrant to those you left behind and an immigrant to your new friends. But in between the tags fall off. You lose the certainty of the state you are in, as though you are on a train whose front half rests in one state and whose back carriages lag in another....somewhere between stations you forget the name of the place you have left behind, and the name of the place coming towards you is still indistinct. For that moment, you dwell in an autonomous state, a resting place between memory and imagination, between forgetting and remembering, between home and home.”

-Boey Kim Cheng, “Between Stations”

Moments on flights, moments when bodies are literally suspended between destinations, can be jarring, confusing, and anxiety-inducing, as Boey Kim Cheng captures in his short story. Perhaps the power of airports to shape subjective understanding draws, at least in part, from this state of ‘in-between’ induced in the practices of flight, where subjects remain open to redefinition and new understandings. Leading up to this ultimate state of aeromobility, I argue a variety of technologies at the airport aim to do just that, by shaping characteristics of aeromobile subjectivity differently across contexts. The ‘in-between’ state, as exceptional and removed from politics as it may feel (even as we may *want* it to feel), is never apolitical; structures of governance and discourses of power are at play throughout the journey.

So far, I have described these structures of governance as they operate in two distinct contexts: Singapore and Los Angeles. In Singapore, technologies of governance are aimed at producing subjects who are mobile, ordered, and flexible citizens, and does so through the positioning of Changi airport as a global hub and a symbol of national identity. On the other hand, in Los Angeles, technologies of governance aim to operationalize neoliberal logics and

cultures to produce subjects who are rational, entrepreneurial, and individual, and produces these traits in part through the jarring disconnect between LAX as an imagined space and LAX as a real, built environment. Although these two aeromobilities are different, they both rely on processes of *abstraction* of bodies; that is, each airport works *through* bodies in addition to operating *on* bodies in processes that disembody subjects, associating aeromobility with Cartesian subjectivity. The process of becoming aeromobile not only directs attention to the dimensions of space, body, and affect, but also illustrates the ways in which the body as a substance is transformed to a mere 'object' distinct from consciousness. In this conclusion, I discuss the implications of this abstraction as well as methodological conclusions from a phenomenological approach to subjectivity.

This analysis has focused on approaching all rests on fundamental notion of subjectivity being tied to bodies and of bodies having generative, productive potential. In doing so, I address two fundamental critiques of conventional conceptualizations of subjectivity that treat it as a disembodied state and which only conceptualizes bodies as objects without generative or productive potential. As I have alluded to in the preceding chapters, such conceptualizations are actively reproduced through corporeal techniques at the airport that aim to reduce bodies to the realm of abstraction. Meanwhile, dominant structures that rely on normative violence are not questioned and are actively reproduced through the hegemonic logics of categorization and control at airports.

Focusing on bodies opens up the realm of methodology to new conceptualizations and approaches to phenomenological studies. A focus on bodies challenges researchers to look beyond the realms of semiotics and representation to try and understand lived experience

holistically. In this paper I focus on realms as widely apart and distinct as space, the body, and affects, but which together form components of lived experience in transit. By treating the body and conscious subjects as one and the same we can arrive at more nuanced, specific theoretical conclusions rather than falling into the trap of simply reproducing dominant discourses and understanding.

Abstracting aeromobility: Political implications of disembodied subjectivity

These governing technologies *on* the body are not the only mechanisms by which aeromobile subjectivities are produced. Indeed, such conceptualizations still conceive of bodies of passive objects upon which certain characteristics of subjectivity are just waiting to be inscribed. While bodies, under this framework, may be targets of governance or conduits of power, they are not seen as being a source of power in themselves, as having productive potential. Rejecting this framework, this paper argues that such characteristics of the body are evident in the operation of the airport governing apparatus. Rather than conceptualizing bodies as passive entities upon which these new subjective understandings are inscribed by the state, I discuss bodies as core productive components in this process. Specifically, the airport apparatus works to construct bodies as abstract and conceptual, and therefore construct subjectivity as disembodied. This disembodiment, in turn serves political ends. The bodies of subjects in this state of relative disembodiment, of mind-body separation, imply a number of conclusions: first, disembodied subjects are more easily able to overlook structures of governance at the airport, rendering flight as apolitical; second, disembodiment implies a preferred, “ideal” imagined traveler; and third, disembodiment connects locales to each other within a larger integrated system of late-capitalism.

First, abstractions of the aeromobile body obscure differences in embodied experiences of air travel, allowing the dominant discourse to construct it in apolitical terms, as either an apathetic, irrelevant practice (never as important as the destination) or as an overly influential, dreamlike humanistic practice. Quoting Gottdiener, Crang (2002) cautions against falling in the trap of accepting at face value these imaginaries of the airports as an apolitical, mainly personal, and ultimately freeing experience. Gottdiener seems to be aware of the disembodying opportunities air travel provides, arguing that “traveling alone strips both men and women of their family and work status and frees up identity so that it is pliable and chameleon-like.” Crang, however, reminds us that this approach “risks falling for the manipulated image of airports. It may speak to a globe-trotting semiotician, but says little to the family with overtired children delayed by lack of connecting buses in Majorca. As the most inequitable form of travel it is vital to keep a sense of the occasional as well as the frequent flier.” (573). We naturally gravitate towards thinking of flight from the perspective of the frequent flyer, which compels us to think of the practice as natural, neutral, and non-political rather than uneven and unequal.

This takes us to the second effect of aeromobile abstractions. Techniques of disembodyment reproduce a particular image of the ‘normal’ aeromobile body as an abstracted figure. Left to fill in the blanks, dominant discourses are compelled to picture this figure as white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, fairly wealthy frequent-flyer. Institutional forms of governance at the airport are primarily directed at securing his safety, comfort, and free mobility above others, while generalizing this image to all ‘passengers’ and ascribing those who are outside this image, either by virtue of their bodies or actions, as non-representative of the true, essential nature of air travel as a freeing, empowering technology. This results in normative

violence in the process of combining structures of global mobility with an image of the aeromobile body. Those who do not submit to such subjugating practices or whose bodies cannot be abstracted because they fall outside the frame of this figure are relegated to the realm of the 'infrequent flyer,' the 'immobile,' the 'un-aeromobile.' Often times, they are even given other names, like "migrant worker," "alien," "local," that designate their corporeal deviation from the standard assumption. In Singapore individuals outside the norm face political consequences in terms of flexible citizenship, while in the US these subjects are seen as failing to maximize their own individual satisfaction as a neoliberal entrepreneur. Furthermore, in the American context the degree to which one can be abstracted through bag checks, uniform security, and so on, has been increasingly conditional on individual's willingness to pay for it as a sort of commodity that only certain subjects can now afford. Mobility, worldliness and transcendence thus once again become associated with a particular subject: a distant, male, white, abstracted Cartesian subject; staticity, locality, immanence, and nativity becomes associated with those who fall outside this frame.

Finally, disembodiment is the mechanism that connects subjects across political space and situates them within a larger global system of late capitalism. Abstraction of bodies, in larger part, allows subjects to seamlessly move from one space to another, remaining abstracted, conceptual, disembodied in the aeromobile 'in-between.' Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari interpret the fluid nature of subjectivity under contemporary capitalism as a form of 'relative deterritorialization' and 'reterritorialization' of subjectivity across disparate contexts. I conclude by connecting the role of corporeal abstraction to such process of territorialization that occur in flight, in between destinations. More broadly, abstraction of bodies also connects subjects to a

larger system of late-capitalism that itself functions by way of abstraction. These include the “real” abstractions of human relations via commodities, abstractions which manifest in real life as a result of commodity relations replacing and restructuring human ones. As Marx argues in *Grundrisse*, “individuals are now ruled by abstractions, whereas earlier they depended on one another.” (Marx 1973: 164). As Toscano (2010) points out, in his discussion relating religious abstractions to abstractions under capitalism, the major function of dominant discourses is to treat such abstractions as apolitical, disconnected from material conditions, and purely agential: “Whether we are dealing with money or with religion, the crucial error is to treat real abstraction as mere ‘arbitrary product[s] of human reflection.’” Viewing aeromobile disembodiment in similar terms likewise obscures underlying political conditions and more naturally incorporates subjects into the global economic system of late-capitalism, a system of production that relies on abstracted logic to operate.

Lines of Flight: Space for Resistance & Change

In the face of the daunting power that the global system of air travel seems to wield over aeromobile bodies, it can seem at first glance that nothing can be done to resist or advocate for change within this larger system. However, I argue that feminist and post-structuralist conceptions of subjectivity under late capitalism can offer insights into both corporeal techniques of governance and space for resistance. We see these possibilities macropolitically as the airport takes on metonymic significance representing sovereignty, security, borders, and the stability of ‘the State’ and everyday life under global capitalism. But not all resistance has to take such visible, material forms. Similarly, efforts aimed at reforming the way air travel is experienced do not need to be exclusively focused on changing the governing structures of

travel externally. Airports exist as products of broader power relations and discourses that dominate global society, and incremental change in how an airport is experienced does not necessarily change the underlying subjective conditions that are produced by them. Instead, we can look for space at the micropolitical level to challenge and resist, through personal reflection and self-definition. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1980) offer useful theoretical frameworks for this state of subjectivity, and I turn to them to see how we might use aeromobility to “reterritorialize” new autonomous subjective identities in a larger assemblage of relations.

Subjects in the disembodied state of travel, moving from one place to another, one subjective context to another on journeys of ‘becoming,’ exist in a state of being ‘in-between.’ This is the subjective condition which the State tries to intervene on and control, using apparatuses of governance in the airport to produce subjects in certain ways and render the condition of aeromobility as phenomenologically abstract. Yet by recognizing the political nature of travel, by rejecting the apolitical or apathetic discourses of flight and conceptualizing alternative ways in which flight might be structured and lived- alternatives which do not require subjugation, state violence, and the reproduction of an oppressive system of late-capitalism- we may begin to define our subjective experience of travel- and ourselves- in our own terms.

This in-between state, therefore, is both a vulnerable state of subjugation by the state but also, for many scholars, full of potential for alternatives. For Deleuze and Guattari, this subjective state has radical potential for reflection, redefinition, and ultimately escape from hegemonic systems of power. In this context, it is little wonder why they term these possible routes of ‘escape’ from these hegemonic, dominant discourses “lines of flight.” Ultimately, if nothing else, this paper hopes to have shed light on the discourses of flight we must reject, the

power dynamics we must understand, and the subjective experiences we must create in order to define that autonomous state- a state between memory and imagination and home and home, for ourselves.

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