

FRIEDERICH, ALEXANDRE. *easyJet*. Paris: Allia, 2014. ISBN 978-2-84485-778-6. Pp. 87. 6,20 €.

Ostensibly written over a period of twenty days, during which Swiss blogger Friederich took seventeen different intercity flights on the low-cost carrier easyJet, this slim volume is not a simple chronicle of adventures in airports. It is about how an airline's marketing strategy, including the typical passenger's experience, has both shaped and reflected the state of consumer society in Europe today. One gets the impression that easyJet "means" less than it *reveals*, and, in eighty-seven pages, it reveals plenty: for instance, a Europe mushrooming with regional airports, where people of all social classes now routinely travel thousands of kilometers for both business and pleasure. The ubiquity of orange easyJet airplanes signals the banality of air travel: it is everywhere, accessible to almost everyone. The people Friederich meets, usually because they are sitting next to him on flights, illustrate the ease of air travel for most Europeans. An anxious Greek man, signing himself during takeoff, returns to a job in Berlin (21); a young woman leaves Greece to find a job in Germany, which she knows nothing about (37). That flight, from Thessalonica to Dortmund, much like another Friederich takes from Lisbon to London, contains locals heading to less economically stressed cities to look for work (41). Other travelers are flying to visit their "second homes"—a phenomenon encouraged by low-cost airlines, according to Friederich—or simply to vacation in cities they have never seen before. More importantly, *easyJet* redefines air travel as a form of thoroughly industrialized behavior. Especially since the massive airport security reforms following the 9/11 attacks in the United States, travel has become both mechanized and humiliating. The passenger must now "répondre aux robots, respecter leurs instructions, éviter le rapport humain, être ponctuel, renoncer à ses affaires personnelles, se plier aux exigences, éviter les questions" (27). What seems even more a shame is that passengers are now willing to submit to this dehumanizing process, in exchange for the ease and low cost of traveling to other cities: "Désormais, le passager est là pour l'avion" (27). One of the first anecdotes in the book evokes the industrial nature of the process: two totally unrelated travelers, an African and a Northern European, wash their hands in an identical series of movements, in an airport bathroom: "L'avion et le lavabo sont des outils [...] le nettoyage du corps et le transport de l'homme des processus" (9). It may be the era of easyJet, but this could be a scene out of Jacques Tati's satirical, stylized 1967 film, *Playtime*. Now, however, there are many more such scenes playing out in European airports. Ultimately, Friederich seems less interested in contemporary consumer culture than in our evolution as a curious, moving species: the easyJet phenomenon unfolds in the era of the Internet, after all. This confluence conditions our sense of what it means to "go" to "other places." For Friederich, this signals an imminent, post-human era in which air travel could become totally obsolete.