



# The Spectacle of Flight: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1920-1950

*Robert Wohl*

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## **The Spectacle of Flight: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1920-1950** Robert Wohl

In the decades following the First World War, when aviation was still a revelation, flight was perceived as a spectacle to delight the eyes and stimulate the imagination. Historian Robert Wohl takes us back to this time, recapturing the achievements of pioneering aviators and exploring flight as a source of cultural inspiration in the United States and Europe.

Wohl begins the story of flight in this era with a fresh account of the impact of Charles Lindbergh's dramatic New York-Paris flight, then goes on to explain how Mussolini identified his Fascist regime with the modernist cachet of aviation. Wohl shows how the Hollywood film industry—drawing on the talents of such director-flyers as William Wellman and Howard Hawks and the eccentric millionaire Howard Hughes—created the aviation film; how writers such as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry helped foster France's self-image as the “winged nation”; and how the spectacle of flight reached its tragic apotheosis during the bombing campaigns of the Spanish Civil War and World War II. Generously illustrated with rare photographs, paintings, and posters and elegantly written, this book offers a gripping account of aviation and its hold on the popular imagination during the years between 1920 and 1950.

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