

## Beyond Separate Atmospheres: Anne Morrow Lindbergh and Women Aviators in the 1930s

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### INTRODUCTION

As the rhetoric of a “woman’s sphere” became widely adopted to legitimize the white, middle-class gender ideologies of nineteenth century America, that language came to be used not only metaphorically — to describe the boundaries imposed on and created by women — but also in its literal sense. Physical space, the “sphere” in which people lived and worked, became more and more gendered. Industrial development segregated women’s occupations from men’s, causing men and women to work in separate factories, offices, and streets. Because women established their own institutions for education as well as for political and social reforms, socialization and social activism took place in separate spaces for men and women. As “work” and “non-work” became more clearly split, the “home” was increasingly associated with leisure and moral development. This bore specifically gendered meanings. The reorganization of physical spaces — both public and private — according to the laws of industrial society prompted a new, more rigid, gender designation of those spaces.<sup>1</sup>

While such gendering of physical space confined women in certain

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ways, women of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries gained much more mobility and lived in a much broader space than their mothers and grandmothers had. A major cause of this spatial expansion of the "woman's sphere" was the revolution in transportation that had been taking place since the mid-nineteenth century. Steam ferry, omnibus, commuter railroad, horsecar, and cable car all played important roles in expanding women's spheres. The most revolutionary of all such forces, however, was the automobile. After Henry Ford developed the Model T in 1908, the automobile was no longer only a luxury toy for the wealthy; the automobile became accessible to the middle, and even to part of the working, classes. It brought women out of their households into a larger world.<sup>2</sup>

In the same period, an even more radical vehicle for spatial movement was rapidly taking shape: the airplane. From the moment when Orville and Wilbur Wright demonstrated the miracle of flying in 1903, Americans were fascinated, some even obsessed, with the idea of flying. Adventure-lovers took part in air races, seeming to set new records with every flight, and opening up the new frontier. The airplane was a harbinger of the new age, one in which people would travel unprecedented distances not only horizontally but vertically.

Women did not lag behind men in realizing the modern dream of flying. The airplane seemed to symbolize more than anything else the freedom and power which was lacking in their traditional lives. Operating heavy, complex machinery and traveling great distances were more visible and clearer proofs of the liberty of the New Woman than the more gradual and controversial changes in their political and social lives. As early as the 1910s, women entered the world of aviation as barnstormers, stunt women, and pilots. By the 1920s there were already a significant number of female aviators, most of them professionals. In 1929 the first organization of women pilots, the Ninety-Nines, was established in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

The course of women in aviation, however, did not trace the same route as the men's. Whereas male pilots took to often dangerous adventures and were praised for their feats of courage, the activities of their female counterparts were generally confined to the more conservative realm acceptable to most contemporary Americans. There were a number of women pilots who accomplished incredible feats in air races, and many of them defeated male participants. Demonstrating their physical strength, mechanical skill, and courage, these women proved

that the characterization of women as unscientific, unmechanical, and technologically inept was cultural stereotypes rather than their biological nature. Nevertheless, the accomplishments of the lady flyers did not prove sufficient to convince the general public of the determination and the ability of women to take part in the male world; nor were the female pilots seen as representative of the contemporary woman. Despite the efforts of most female aviators, their activities were, in the end, channeled into conventionally feminine roles. As a result, the "separate spheres" on the ground that had driven women into flying were recreated in the air. This sexual division of the aerial domain was established and rigidified in the 1930s, even as women aviators struggled to fly and to live beyond the confines of the feminine atmosphere.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh was the best known female aviator of this period. She learned to fly after her marriage to Charles A. Lindbergh, the most prominent aviator of the time, and she accompanied her husband on two major aerial expeditions around the world in the 1930s. Charles's exploits and Anne's own charms attracted national attention, and Anne became the heroine of the sky. Her talent, however, was not restricted to operating airplanes. She was as much an author as an aviator, producing travel narratives, essays, poems, and novels. Her writings can be read as historical records of the gendering process of aviation. They reveal much about the sentiments of a woman who was fascinated by new possibilities but was at the same time expected to play a conventionally feminine role.

This article takes up Anne Morrow Lindbergh's writings, mainly those produced in the 1930s, as a case study in the struggle of women aviators against the gendering of aviation. Anne's later works, especially *Gift from the Sea* (1955), drew much attention from female audiences, while her earlier travel literature came to be neglected. However, Anne Lindbergh's standing as a model of companionate marriage, a status popularized in the 1950s, had its roots in the 1930s. As a result of the imposition of contemporary gender ideology, and through her construction of her own public image, Anne the aviator, writer, wife, and mother became the archetype of white, middle-class woman in modern society. More broadly, Anne Lindbergh's life during the 1930s reflects a decisive era in the history of women in the aerial domain.

## THE CREATION OF SEPARATE ATMOSPHERES

When Anne Morrow Lindbergh first took to the air in 1928, she was aware that operating an airplane was considered a very unladylike activity. By that time a considerable number of women had already entered the world of aviation, and people had begun to debate whether women had a place in the sky, and, if so, what their roles ought to be.

The gendering of aviation labor was not fully established at first, largely because aviation work itself was not as divided and specialized as it soon became. During the pioneering phase of aviation, from the first decade of the twentieth century to the 1920s, aviators, both men and women, were not only pilots but also manufacturers, mechanics, demonstrators, barnstormers, and salespersons. All aviation enthusiasts were, in Joseph Corn's words, "missionaries evangelizing for aviation." They were not only interested in completing great flights and becoming heroes. They also had a strong faith in the airplane's promise to transform the world and the human condition through a closer networking of people and goods. Determined to advance the cause of aviation, they demonstrated many ways in which the airplane could be employed in daily life.<sup>4</sup>

Women's entry into the field of aviation began as early as 1910. Jessica Raiche, who learned to fly from her French aviator husband, was awarded a gold medal inscribed "First Woman Aviator of America" by the New York Aeronautical Society in 1910. Harriet Quimby, a former actress, came to New York from California and became air-minded through exposure to the active aviation scene of Long Island. She acquired the first international license issued to an American woman and in 1912 became the first woman to fly across the English Channel. Many other women who sought to escape conventional lifestyles and to explore new arenas of activity rushed to take flying lessons. Flying was especially attractive to these women because, in the air, they experienced feelings of strength, mastery, and confidence that were denied in their early lives confined by Victorian norms. Female aviators believed that in the new field of aviation lay great opportunities for their sex. However, despite their considerable experience, the Army rejected the proposal by several women fliers to become military pilots during World War I.<sup>5</sup>

In the period following WWI, as more and more women rushed to the cockpit in search of liberation and power, the sexual division of labor in the sky became increasingly manifest. The aviation industry, which was

not developing as rapidly as expected because of persistent fear of flying among ordinary people, turned to women aviators to solve the problem. In order to reduce the public's fear of flying and to undermine the common notion that only an "intrepid birdman" could fly, the industry manipulated stereotypical gender images to demonstrate that even frail, timid, unathletic, and unmechanical women could operate airplanes. Female aviators were hired by aircraft companies as barnstormers, demonstrators, and saleswomen; they often put clients in the back of the cockpit and took to the air. To serve their purpose women pilots were expected to appear especially "feminine": they always wore makeup and dressed in feminine clothing during their flights.<sup>6</sup> Amelia Earhart, who was perfectly capable of competing with top-level male pilots, and whom many called "Lady Lindy," gained popularity not only because of her professional achievements but because of the feminine ways in which she dressed and behaved.<sup>7</sup>

Lady flier stereotypes helped women find a place in the sky, but they simultaneously circumscribed that place by recasting women in the role of the "fragile sex." Believing in expanded occupational and public roles for women, female aviators often chafed at restrictions on what they might do as pilots. But since they considered themselves "evangelists of aviation," as their male counterparts did, they could make little protest. As Corn writes, "to the extent that their feminism conflicted with their air-mindedness, the women fliers invariably subordinated the cause of equality for women to the cause of aviation."<sup>8</sup>

What is more, many women aviators believed that their sex *should* be confined to certain spheres in aviation. Women were primarily to exemplify "safe and sane" flying, helping to "steer men away from the spectacular." Women's place in the air would be limited to the "housekeeping functions" of aviation. Flyers such as Ruth Nichols and Dorothy Lynn, in speaking the rhetoric of "aerial domesticity," comported themselves in accordance with traditional notions of the feminine and reiterated a modern version of the nineteenth-century paradigm of the female as nurturer and moral exemplar. This behavior enhanced their effectiveness as evangelists for the cause of aviation and helped them dislodge the prevailing image of pilots as intrepid birdmen. It domesticated the image of flying in the popular mind.<sup>9</sup> Thus emerged the "separate atmospheres" for male and female aviators. Despite the aspirations of pioneer women aviators who dreamed of liberation and the overcoming of sexual roles, females were channeled into a "separate at-

mosphere."

In 1929, under the leadership of Amelia Earhart and Ruth Nichols, the first organization of women pilots was established. They called themselves the "Ninety-Nines" after the number of charter members. The interests of the group were not monolithic: some members were involved in feminist concerns about sexual discrimination in the aviation industry. Others were more interested in traditionally feminine issues such as fashion and cooking.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the foundation of the Ninety-Nines marked a significant period in the history of aviation. From this point on female and male pilots had different paths and domains to advance in the cause of aviation. As Susan Ware points out, the establishment of women's professional organizations that were separate from the men's signified the continuation of gender-specific political strategies. This occurred despite women's increasing entry into traditionally male professions from the 1920s onward.<sup>11</sup>

By 1930 there were approximately 200 licensed women pilots in the United States; by late 1935 the number had grown to between 700 and 800. Helen Richey was hired as a pilot for Central Airlines in 1934, but her employment lasted only a few months because of opposition from male airline pilots. In 1930 Boeing Air Transport hired the industry's first stewardesses. This distinctly feminine job exemplified woman as domesticator of the sky and soother of the fears of travelers. Other occupations — flying instruction, mapping, and navigation — came to be increasingly held by women, and the sexual division of labor in aviation further developed.

Entering the world of aviation in 1928, Anne Lindbergh's career as an aviator overlapped precisely with the gendering process that took place in the air. Thus, the fascination and frustration that she reveals in her writings of this period do not only inform us about her personal concerns. To a significant degree, they represent problems felt by other women aviators of the time.

#### ANNE MORROW LINDBERGH: LIFE AND WORK

Anne Morrow Lindbergh would not have been very likely to have gone into aviation had it not been for her husband. Growing up as a shy girl in an intellectual, literary household, she was far from adventurous or mechanical in her early life. Anne was born on 22 June 1906, to Elizabeth Cutter and Dwight Whitney Morrow in Englewood, New

Jersey. Elizabeth Cutter attended Smith College, taught there, chaired the board of trustees, and later served as the college's interim president. Throughout her life she actively promoted the education of women and supported humanitarian causes. Dwight Whitney Morrow graduated from Amherst College and Columbia Law School. After practicing law he joined the banking house of the J. P. Morgan Company and remained there until 1927, when he became the United States ambassador to Mexico. Afterwards he declined the offer of the presidency of Yale University in order to run successfully for a United States Senate seat from New Jersey.

Anne attended Mrs. Chapin's School in New York and Smith College. She spent summers in Maine, and traveled to Europe with her family. While in college, her talent for writing was discovered by one of her professors, and she contributed regularly to college publications. She read and wrote extensively. Anne's interests were chiefly literary and did not transcend the so-called "womanly" fields of scholarship.<sup>12</sup>

In 1928, when the Morrow family gathered to celebrate Christmas at the United States embassy in Mexico City, Anne met Charles A. Lindbergh. He had accomplished a solo transatlantic flight in the previous year and was the greatest American hero of the day. Having expected Charles to be "a regular newspaper hero, the baseball-player type — a nice man, perhaps, but not at all 'intellectual' and not of [our] world at all," and having determined that she "certainly was *not* going to worship 'Lindy' (that *odious* name, anyway)," Anne was impressed by his shyness and honest directness. They soon fell in love, and they were married in May 1929, after Anne graduated from Smith College.<sup>13</sup>

Anne started to show interest in aviation when Charles took her on several short flights. She often bought *Popular Aviation* at the newsstands and studied a book called *Airmen and Aircraft*. Fascinated by a world that was so tremendous, new, and foreign to her, she also felt hopelessly unsuited for learning to fly. She was depressed upon reading a list of the requirements for an aviator because they seemed so wholly opposite to her own qualities. The requirements listed were:

*Instantaneous co-ordination between his muscles and thoughts*

Good eyesight

The ability to withstand great physical and mental strain

*Never become stampeded by unforeseen difficulties*

A complete lack of fear while in the air

Readiness to take risks when they are necessary,

*but calm and levelheaded at all times*

Concluding that good eyesight was her only qualification, she sighed, "Voilà qui laisse de l'espoir!"<sup>14</sup> Anne was very conscious of her unmechanical, unscientific nature and often resented it. She later confessed to Charles, "I never passed an arithmetic examination in my life. I had to be tutored to get through elementary physics in college. I never understood a thing about electricity from the moment that man started rubbing sealing wax and fur!"<sup>15</sup> Aware of her own ineptness in athletic, scientific, mechanical, and adventurous matters, she knew that she epitomized the stereotypical woman. Though she did not believe that women were inferior to men, she nearly despaired of proving otherwise. Nevertheless, under Charles's instruction, Anne succeeded in learning to fly, earning pilot and glider licenses.

After her marriage Anne accompanied her husband on his extensive surveying trips across the world. Learning to pilot the plane and to operate other equipment, she was not just a passenger but played important roles as a copilot, navigator, and radio operator. In 1929 the Lindberghs made survey flights between New York and Los Angeles for Transatlantic Air Transport. In the summer of 1931, the couple left on a survey flight to Asia to study Arctic air-routes, crossing Canada, Alaska, and Siberia to Japan and China. Two years later they undertook another exploratory flight. It lasted five and a half months and took them 30,000 miles over four continents and twice around the Atlantic.

As in the case of other women aviators, flying provided Anne with freedom and power, and she discovered a new self through flying. She writes:

Flying was a very tangible freedom. In those days it was beauty, adventure, discovery — the epitome of breaking into new worlds. From being earth-bound and provincial, I was given limitless horizons. From the clustered atmosphere of books, writing, and introspection, I was freed to action. The practical work of learning to fly, of being a radio operator and navigator, of carrying my own parachute and my own weight as a crew member on the flights, gave me a feeling of enormous self-confidence. For the first time, I had a sense of value in the "real world" of life and action. Like the bird pushed out of the nest, I was astonished that — flapping hard — I could fly. All this was liberating.<sup>16</sup>

By referring to her shift from "the clustered atmosphere of books, writing, and introspection" to "the 'real world' of life and action," she



juxtaposed a typical life of white intellectual womanhood with a conventionally masculine world.

Anne pursued her writing even as she learned to fly. Writing allowed her to ponder the changes in her life, to mediate between her public life and her inner self. Although the publication of her works was yet to come, she wrote many long letters to her mother and sisters, kept a diary, and composed poems. These writings (published later in her life) reveal her joy and confusion as her lifestyle drastically changed from a quiet, introspective one to a busy, active, and outgoing one through marriage and the sudden exposure to publicity.

Anne's first published writings were narratives of her extraordinary travels. *North to the Orient*, published in 1935, and *Listen! the Wind*, published in 1938, describe the flights of 1931 and 1933 respectively. Anne's narratives captivated the public's imagination during the 1930s, when aviation was surrounded by an aura of mystery and adventure. But, as Elsie Mayer writes, Anne's aim was not to pander to public curiosity but to dispel the myths associated with flying.<sup>17</sup> These two works reveal much about the process of Anne's maturation as an aviator and a writer, as well as her thoughts on women's place in the air.

In *North to the Orient*, one sees Anne's inner conflict between the desire to be regarded as a crew member equal to Charles and her sense of incapability and ignorance. She also reveals her ambivalence about the public expectation that she fulfill traditional feminine roles. A single incident exemplifies such tensions especially well: One day before take-off two women reporters ran up to Anne and asked about her clothes and "housekeeping in the ship" — where she kept her lunch boxes. She expresses her annoyance in the book:

I felt depressed, as I generally do when women reporters ask me conventionally feminine questions. I feel as they must feel when they are given those questions to ask. I feel slightly insulted. Over in the corner my husband is being asked vital masculine questions, clean-cut steely technicalities or broad abstractions. But I am asked about clothes and lunch boxes. Still, if I were asked about steely technicalities or broad abstractions, I would not be able to answer, so perhaps I do not deserve anything better.<sup>18</sup>

Here she realizes that flying can mean a transcendence of traditional female activity and the expectations and assumptions which are imposed on her as a woman aviator. At the same time, she comes to see her in-

dividual incompetence as the incompetence of the female sex. Frustrated by her high aspirations and a sense of incapacity, Anne questions her ability as a woman. Such frustrations haunted her throughout the voyage. In Kamchatka, looking at Soviet people and society, she says to herself:

And of course the Soviets were young and modern, modern men, modern women, modern children. No, I did not fit in there. Was I a modern woman? I flew a modern airplane and used a modern radio but not as a modern woman's career, only as wife of a modern man. They would find me out, too, I was sure of that, those Pilgrim Fathers. They were stern examiners. Pinning me down, they would question me, "Can you explain the theory of regeneration in the vacuum tube?" "No." "What do you know about the inside of this radio?" "Nothing." "What do you do to justify your existence?" "I don't know." "Occupation?" "Married." "Well, then, we have decided to ——" But what could they do to me? After all, my husband was scientific and orderly and efficient enough for two. In fact, if he were not efficient and orderly, I might be more so. So, really, it was all evened up in the end. But that argument might not convince them. It would just sound frivolous.<sup>19</sup>

Aware of her own inexperience as a novice flier and also of the public reception of her as "the wife of Charles Lindbergh," Anne continued to aspire for recognition as an individual aviator. She felt great joy when her husband recognized her as a crew member before other aviation experts, and she thought to herself, "Have I then reached a stage where I am considered on equal footage with men!"<sup>20</sup> Clearly she felt that showing competence in aviation work led to defying and transcending traditional gender stereotypes.

Anne struggled to resolve her conflicts and to find her own place in the air throughout the voyage. Later, when she was writing the preface of *North to the Orient* and contemplating the flight, she became convinced that her role in aviation was the "back stairs." That function, she felt, enabled and supported great achievements:

The back stairs of aviation-magic is sometimes a parachute and sometimes a rubber lifeboat. But it can also be a radio tube or a sextant or army rations or a life preserver or snake-bite serum or a bug-proof tent or a revolver or a compass —— or even a pair of heavy boots. One must always be thinking, not only, "Thirteen hours of gasoline will take us to Aklavik," but also, "If we have an engine failure on the way, we have food enough for thirty days' walking to an outpost."

The back stairs are terribly important — almost more important than the front stairs — so much so that one is tempted to say, if it were not for them there would be no front stairs.<sup>21</sup>

Arguing for the importance of the “back stairs” in aviation work, Anne sees her narrative as the “back stairs” of aviation literature, and she discounts the technical merit of her writing. Nor does she ever make any generalizations in this book about her role in aviation with regard to that of all women aviators. She does not write about women in aviation at all. However, she is well aware of the stereotypical image of women as unmechanical and unscientific, and to a certain degree she accepts that notion, admitting that she herself fits precisely into the image. Finding her place in the “back stairs” of aviation, she suggests the ways in which a woman can gain a place in and contribute to aviation.

In the years between the 1931 flight and the 1933 flight, as well as the years between the writing of *North to the Orient* and *Listen! the Wind*, Anne made considerable progress both as an aviator and a writer. Her experience gave her the new confidence that is manifest in the narrative of *Listen! the Wind*. In contrast to the somewhat disjointed structure of *North to the Orient*, the second book has a clear and linear structure with detailed descriptions of incidents and a more controlled voice. Anne is more sure of her role in the air, and she integrates her perception of the machine with her inner self. By focusing on encounters with people and her role as an interpreter, she depicts herself as an intermediary between the machine and the people, between technology and life. Also, she feels more sure of her place in the airplane, writing of the “domestication” of the cockpit in the chapter named “My Little Room”:

This little cockpit of mine became extraordinarily pleasing to me, as much so as a furnished study at home. Every corner, every crack, had significance. Every object meant something. Not only the tools I was working with, the transmitter and receiver, the key and the antenna reel; but even the small irrelevant objects on the side of the fuselage, the little black hooded light, its face now turned away from me, the shining arm and knob of the second throttle, the bright switches and handles, the colored wires and copper pipes: all gave me, in a strange sense, as much pleasure as my familiar books and pictures might at home. The pleasure was perhaps not aesthetic but came from a sense of familiarity, security, and possession. I invested them with an emotional significance of their own, since they had been through so much with me. They made up this comfortable, familiar, tidy, compact world that was mine.<sup>22</sup>

These sentences show that Anne domesticated a particular physical space within the airplane, thus literally creating her own “atmosphere.” The domestication of the space led to the domestication of aviation work, which was enabled by her confidence as an experienced aviator. She writes of her operations:

Without sight, my fingers also knew the precise shape and spin of the small screws to open the radio boxes. My hand knew the plump smooth wooden handle of the antenna reel, and the cold square metal brake to fasten it. I could even change the coils by touch alone, running my finger over the polished spool and the ribbed surface of tightly wound wires, judging by the number of turns the wave-length of the coil....

Tonight, I must do all by touch...I ran my fingers over the coils, found the right ones, jiggled them out of their places and pressed them (smelling faintly of shellac) into their sockets in the transmitter box. I clamped down the earphones over my ears...My work had begun. Outside the night rushed by. How nice to be in your own little room, to pull your belongings around you, to draw in like a snail in his shell, to work!<sup>23</sup>

Through her experience as an aviator and a writer, Anne succeeded in domesticating the sky both for herself and for her readers. However, in order for this domestication to be conveyed to the readers, there was yet another task for Anne: effective presentation. Her self-conscious efforts in presenting her experience to the readers are apparent when one contrasts these two works with her private writings: her diaries and letters. The private writings reveal the inner conflicts and personal concerns that were carefully left out of her travel narratives, and they show the external circumstances which surrounded her while she was writing.

*Hours of Gold, Hours of Lead* is a collection of Anne's diaries and letters written between 1929 and 1932. In this period, through her first encounter with Charles, falling in love, and marriage, Anne found her lifestyle changing rapidly from a secluded, quiet one among books to a busy, active life always under the public gaze. Her newly acquired skill of flying, as well as her love for Charles, provided her with a sense of fulfillment and liberation. However, Anne's joyful life was suddenly put to a halt on 1 March 1932, when her first son Charles, Jr. was kidnapped from the Lindbergh residence in Hopewell, New Jersey. After weeks of suspense and negotiation, he was discovered dead not far from the house.<sup>24</sup>

Realizing that excessive publicity had reached the point of destroying their peace and security, the Lindberghs started to feel discouraged about

making spectacular flights that would draw public attention. Although she was fully devoted to the cause of aviation, Anne became torn between her desire to fly and her desire for peace and quiet. A little while after the kidnapping she wrote to Charles's mother, "I feel as though we would live more quietly from now on. Spectacular trips do not bring us much happiness because they lead to more publicity."<sup>25</sup> The writing of *North to the Orient* took place during these "hours of lead." The disjointedness of its structure reflects the emotional strain which Anne was forced into while writing, and Anne expressed her own dissatisfaction with the work. In her diary, she notes:

Wrote in afternoon two hours or more on Point Barrow. Not so difficult though I have no impetus of pleasure as you have when you say "This is good." I do not see it whole with a single clear idea in it. There is no design — it is just narrative. I like better to work around and around and around one single idea — a polished stone in its setting. But then I do neither.<sup>26</sup>

The tragic consequence brought about by her popularity made Anne self-conscious about writing, and *North to the Orient* turned out to be a rather restrained, impersonal narrative. In a later collection of her diaries and letters Anne admits that:

In many ways [*North to the Orient*] is a rather restrained account. The stress of the winter does not show in its pages and even the stresses of the trip are politely smoothed out. At the time I felt that conflicts, weakness, fears, and the general "nitty gritty" of life were a kind of indecent exposure, not only for myself but especially for my husband, who strictly guarded his privacy. So that my first book now seems to me a somewhat glazed account of our adventures.<sup>27</sup>

While she was going through such emotional strain, she was also playing the part of an aviator in the 1930s. She knew that because of her public visibility, she had a responsibility as an aviator to try to promote the development of aviation. For that purpose, she consciously screened out of her public writings the fear or danger which she felt during her flights. She sometimes had to hide her honest feelings about flying in her letters as well, lest her family should worry. Later, when Anne edited *Hours of Gold, Hours of Lead*, she confessed in her introduction:

Actually, I was frightened to death being pulled off the mountain alone in a glider, but I could not admit fear to my [mother-in-law]. Once in the

air, however, it was an ecstatic experience I have never forgotten or regretted. The transcontinental flight east, on the other hand, was exhausting. I was seasick and in pain the last four hours of that fourteen-hour trip. (Since I had never been airsick, it must have been due to gasoline fumes and my "condition [pregnancy].") I could not interrupt and spoil the record flight and I did not want my fears or discomforts to get to the newspapers and make a story that would have a damaging effect on aviation, whose advance I had embraced as a cause, following my husband's example.<sup>28</sup>

Although *Listen! the Wind* is more consistent in tone and theme than *North to the Orient*, and includes some accounts of the fear and danger of the voyage, *Locked Rooms and Open Doors*, which collects Anne's diaries and letters between 1933 and 1935, gives us a more personal narrative of her feelings about flying — sentiments left out of *Listen! the Wind*. We find that Anne's fear of as well as joy in flying was closely knit to her dependence on and collaboration with Charles; and in her diaries and letters she writes of such feelings in a spontaneous manner. For example, on a day when the Lindberghs had difficulty finding a place to land, Anne wrote in her diary:

We go down — will [Charles] see the earth before he hits it? We go so fast. We wheel on that red wing. The Terror again. Fog, he knows — but this is a strange thing, perhaps he does not know. He hasn't had experience in dust storms. We wheel — we turn — it is on all sides of us. There is no light spot. I think we will be killed. I will never fly again. I think in anger, and then, terrified, I say, you will never fly again — no — you will be killed. "Death playing hide-and-go-seek with us."

But no, I must have faith in [Charles]. "You ought to have more faith in me," he said. "I have faith in you, but I have no faith in life." I will close eyes. I will not strain so — I will not meet this till I have to. I will not watch every moment. I don't have to live through this fear. I will deny living for this moment. I shut my eyes, and open them again and cry out. It is dark, muddy colored, on all sides. "Oh, it is so much worse!" I cry in terror. I touch the stick lightly.<sup>29</sup>

In a letter to her mother, she describes an encounter in Rotterdam with a gentleman-pilot. He told her how lovely it was for the couple to be able to fly together, doing everything themselves, completely dependent on each other, saying, "You go through good weather and bad weather together." Anne becomes especially aware of the interdependence between her and her husband during the flight, and writes in joy about her

newly gained confidence that Charles feels the same dependence on her as she feels on him. This confidence is seen in *Listen! the Wind*, as mentioned above. But her diary is more straightforward in expressing her pride. She writes in the introduction, "I was amused but also inordinately proud to hear about the comment of a Pan American radio operator who, after sending me a one-hundred-and-fifty-word message in code through heavy static, made the astonished remark, "My god, she got it!"<sup>30</sup> But even after having accomplished important tasks in radio operation and navigation, she still felt ambivalent about her own merit and her dependence on Charles. When she received the honorary degree of Master of Arts from Smith College in 1935, she felt excited, flattered, and pleased, but she confessed to her mother:

And yet I don't really think they ought to do that. They ought to give degrees to people who have done things in their own rights, on their own responsibilities — women who have held a career by themselves. After all, what *are* they giving it to me for? Flying around the world with my husband? I certainly have no career as a pilot or a radio operator. [Charles] could have got a better copilot, a better navigator, and a better radio operator. I don't know whether he could have got a better wife — although even so, I was only a moderately good one, I kicked a lot and was afraid most of the time....

Oh, well, the only way I can look at it is that they feel [Charles] has made contributions to the world and that I have helped him. Which is a lot of hooley because he would have done all that anyway, only he would not have been quite as happy....<sup>31</sup>

Since the kidnapping of Charles, Jr., the Lindberghs had been searching for a place of residence where they could avoid publicity and live in peace and privacy. In 1935 they decided to "exile" themselves from the United States and settle in England. While Charles pursued his scientific study and research there, Anne spent her time writing *Listen! the Wind* and raising her children. Later, when she wrote her introduction for *The Flower and the Nettle*, a collection of her private writings from 1936 and 1939, she referred to this period as "the happiest years of my life."<sup>32</sup> Returning to peaceful family life, she placed her priority on maintaining that happiness, and stayed away from aviation except as a passenger. Occasionally, when she had conversations with notable men in Europe, she made remarks on aviation, asserting that "the best way to look at flying [is] to make it useful" and that "it was quite right that aviation should have the best as it was so terribly important in the modern world and the

nations who did not realize it would fall behind.”<sup>33</sup> But her attempts to promote aviation did not go beyond such casual remarks. She was very serious about her writing of *Listen! the Wind* and was worried about its outcome, but she thought of writing as her “secondary business,” her “main business being taking care of the children.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, Anne’s commitment to public life, through both aviation and writing, was quite limited in this period.

During the years in Europe, Charles’s association with the German air force and his anti-Semitic statements were reported in the United States, and his fame as the American hero was rapidly tainted. The Lindberghs heard about Charles being hissed in movie theaters, his name being taken off the “Lindbergh Line,” and Jewish booksellers boycotting Anne’s books.<sup>35</sup> The Lindberghs returned to the United States in 1939, as Europe became overshadowed by the threat of the war. In the same year Charles gave the first of many speeches opposing American involvement in World War II. In the following year Anne published *The Wave of the Future*, a collection of essays expressing her opposition to the war. Thereafter, neither Charles nor Anne were looked up to as spokespersons for the dream of aviation. Both were sincerely committed to the use of aviation for the human race and civilization, and preached for the peaceful operation of airplanes. Dismayed by the destruction caused by the aviation which they themselves had promoted, the Lindberghs turned away from modern technology to life in the wilderness. Charles became involved in the conservation movement, and Anne wrote critiques of the destructive use of technology. As a result of the utilization of the airplane in the war, flying was no longer the art it had been in the 1920s and early 1930s. In the new age of large-scale commercial aviation and ever-expanding military flight, where more and more work in operating the plane was done by the machinery, people no longer worshipped the “lone eagle” or the “milady flyer.”

#### BEYOND SEPARATE ATMOSPHERES

Anne Lindbergh’s concerns and struggles were shared by many other women aviators of the 1930s. She had taken to the sky out of an aspiration for freedom and power over the new horizons. On this point she succeeded to a large degree — she felt liberated and found her new self through flying. On the other hand, she was aware of the public expectation that she should play conventionally feminine roles. Although she,



like other women aviators of the era, did not always feel comfortable with such expectations, she needed to conform to them in order to contribute to the cause of aviation that she was deeply committed to. She often experienced frustration due to the contradictory demands of being independent and having to meet traditional ideals. She also had to juggle her various "occupations" — aviator, writer, wife, and mother. While she was sincerely involved in aviation, she thought of her role as wife and mother to be her primary one. All these concerns were common among most women aviators of the time. Most of the well-known women aviators were married, including Amelia Earhart, Jacqueline Cochran, Phoebe Omlie, and Blanche Noyes. They all had to do the work of wives and mothers, while fighting against discrimination in the air and trying to live beyond the barriers of separate atmospheres.<sup>36</sup>

However, there were several aspects of Anne's life and situation which put her in a peculiar position among women aviators. First of all, she was constantly exposed to unusual amounts of publicity — even before she started flying. Reporters and ballyhoo makers who put Charles on the pedestal of national worship were chasing the Lindberghs everywhere.<sup>37</sup> Anne, who grew up in a quiet, sheltered environment, longed for privacy, especially after the kidnapping of her first son. The search for peace and privacy was, for the most part, incompatible with her role as an aviator and a promoter of aviation, because such promotion was, at least in the 1930s, made through spectacular flights that drew the attention of the mass public. In order to maintain peace in her domestic life, she had to refrain from such activities in the last half of her life and leave the task of advocacy to Charles. To the extent to that she subordinated the cause of aviation to her private life, Anne was less of a spokesperson for aviation than other women aviators.

Second, in the eyes of the public, Anne was more than anything else "the wife of the hero." While there were several elements in her background and character that smoothed the way to making her a heroine, what made her famous in the beginning was the popularity of her husband. As an aviator, too, she was more Charles's wife than solo flyer. Although she earned her license to pilot the plane and made solo flights in private, she never flew solo in air races or for any other public event. This was a crucial difference between Anne and other women aviators in the 1930s, who achieved their fame by flying solo in various air races and setting new records. There were a number of air races during the 1930s, such as the National Air Races which were held annually, the

1933 International Air Races in Chicago, and the 1935 All American Air Maneuvers in Miami. In all of these races, women competed against men as well as among themselves, the women often setting better records than the men. In 1934 women held their own event, the First Women's National Air Meet, at Dayton Municipal Airport, Ohio. Twenty women aviators participated in the competition, among them Jeanette Lempke, Annette Gipson, and Helen Richey.<sup>38</sup> Anne never took part in such races, and all her major work as an aviator was done as a crew member of Charles's flights.

This position as "the wife of the hero," though Anne herself had ambivalent feelings about it, was precisely what succeeded in making her a true heroine. She was far more famous than other contemporary women aviators who accomplished much more significant flights. Even the name of Amelia Earhart would not have remained long in the popular mind had it not been for her mysterious disappearance on a round-the-world flight in 1937. The image which Anne presented was perfectly compatible with the prevailing gender ideologies of the 1930s. In the Depression years, white middle-class women who had spent their youths as the New Women of the 1920s were aspiring for careers and self-fulfillment, but at the same time they wanted their husbands to be the head of the family and the breadwinners. Men also disapproved of women who pursued their careers and deprived men of jobs in a time of massive unemployment.<sup>39</sup> Anne's image — an intelligent woman who entered a traditionally male domain but always stayed beside or behind her husband and never tried to get ahead of him — fit the ideals of contemporary womanhood and companionate marriage that were acceptable to both women and men of the era.

Another of Anne's unconventionalities was her literary talent. Throughout her life, and even while she was actively flying, writing was her chief form of creativity. It was also a way to resolve her conflicts. What she could not achieve through flying she tried to achieve — and did achieve — through writing. While writing provided Anne with self-fulfillment, it had another important function. Her talent in writing and her wide knowledge of literature underscored her "femininity" for the public. Throughout Anne's lifetime there remained strong male opposition to women's writing and creative exploration. Writings by women who were politically committed to leftist movements were especially shunned not only by the general public but also within leftist circles. Literary and political vitality was widely associated with masculinity.<sup>40</sup>

Anne's writings in the 1930s gained popularity despite this strong resistance to women's literary activities because they were distinctly "feminine" in their themes, styles, and audiences. She wrote specifically as a woman to a largely female audience. Her writings, in short, did not threaten the predominant equation of literary activity with masculinity because they dealt with "separate spheres" of writing. Anne tried to fly beyond separate atmospheres but had to conform to popular ideologies, and she resolved the tensions by domesticating the sky. Similarly, she challenged the ideologies of "separate spheres" on the ground by engaging in a traditionally male occupation of writing, only to have her success come from conforming to public expectations and "domesticating" writing. That this domestication of writing was also a part of Anne's conscious effort is apparent when one considers her commitment to writing as a way to effectively promote aviation.

Due to the uniqueness of Anne's situation, she was not included in the circles of other women aviators of her time. Despite her popularity as *the* woman aviator, she had little association with other women flyers. She was not a member of the Ninety-Nines, and she rarely mentioned other women aviators either in her published works or in her private writings. Anne was not concerned with the role of women in aviation per se; she never addressed the kinds of issues that the members of the Ninety-Nines were taking on, namely, opening up the opportunities for women aviators, fighting sexual discrimination in the aviation industry, and so on.

Anne had ambitions for freedom and career, and called herself a "feminist" in one of her writings, but she was not an outspoken advocate of female aviators. Nevertheless, she had entered the sky, become aware of the separate atmospheres, struggled to live beyond their boundaries, reconciled her inner conflicts by domesticating the sky, and as a result, advertised aviation and made flying tenable for the public. All this was achieved through Anne's conscious presentations of self, both in the sky and on the ground.

## CONCLUSION

The ways in which Anne Lindbergh was characterized in the press during the 1930s are quite clear when one looks at the photographs and articles which described her. Articles about the flying instructor Charles gave to Anne present her as a symbol of the "mechanically inept" female

gender. The *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, in an article describing the course of instruction, reported:

Not that Mrs. Lindbergh was a difficult student. Quite the opposite was the case. But when one recalls how few women are able to learn such a simple thing as driving an automobile from the husbands, with whom they are in other matters (with the possible exception of bridge) able to get along perfectly, one begins to suspect that as a teacher Lindbergh must have had unusual tact and patience.<sup>41</sup>

Anne's personality and appearance further enhanced this image of femininity. A photograph of Anne and Amelia Earhart beside each other shows the difference between the characters of the two figures: whereas Earhart looks modern, independent, and outgoing, with one hand in her pocket and eyes looking straight into the camera, Anne looks more shy and quiet, her hands held together in front of her and, her gaze distant, her mouth slightly open.<sup>42</sup> In almost all of the photographs which appeared in the press, Anne is standing right beside Charles, with a cordial smile. Whether in a dress or in pants and flying cap and goggles, she is always pictured beside her husband. Such an image fit the contemporary gender ideologies of "comradely ideal," to borrow Barbara Melosh's phrase. The picture of men and women side by side, working together for a common goal, denied men's and women's separate interests and functioned as a trope for acceptable gender roles.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Anne was characterized as the archetype of femininity in 1930s — she had the traditional characteristics of the female gender, but by learning new skills, she realized a shared, cooperative ideal of modern marriage.

Although Anne retreated from the position of the advocate of flying by the end of the 1930s, unlike her husband, she did not lose her popularity. She continued writing, and her works, including poems, novels, and essays, were widely read. *Gift from the Sea*, in which Anne wrote beautifully of the lives of contemporary American women, became a best-seller and is still cherished by a number of women across the world. But she was no longer a heroine in the sense she was during the 1930s; her role in domesticating the sky and making flying tenable was completed.

The separate atmosphere for women aviators was thoroughly established and institutionalized during World War II. Hundreds of women pilots served in the female domain of aviation while their male counterparts flew air-fighters in combat zones. Members of the Women's Auxiliary Ferry Squadron (WAFS), later re-organized as Women's Airforce

Service Pilots (WASP), taught basic flying, flight-tested and delivered military aircraft, towed aerial targets for gunnery practice, and performed other aerial tasks so as to free male pilots for service in battle-grounds.<sup>44</sup> The first women to fly aircraft on military missions as part of a United States military organization, they were ambitious and competent in their roles. But such service further institutionalized and completed the establishment of separate atmospheres, and for decades after WWII, a woman's chief occupation in the air came to be that of the stewardess.

Today, there are a number of female aviators who pilot airline transport. As of 1985 there were 43,483 active female pilots out of 709,540 in total. In 1984 Captain Beverly Burns and Captain Lynn Rippelemeyer made aviation history when they captained two 747 aircraft.<sup>45</sup> Women soldiers piloted military aircraft in the recent Gulf War. The struggles of these women to break down the barriers of the separate atmospheres were not unprecedented. The courage, efforts, and accomplishments of their early predecessors paved the way for these women to prove themselves in a field dominated by men. Solidarity and organization among women aviators provided the members with the support and cooperation unobtainable in the male domain. However, as we have seen, they themselves were partly responsible for the establishment of separate atmospheres, which made the barrier high and thick for their followers.

Anne Lindbergh, in a strict sense, failed in her struggle to fly beyond separate atmospheres, and, consequently, to live beyond separate spheres. But she was unquestionably successful in fulfilling her mission of the time. Anne shared the frustrations of other women pilots of the day, even if her position in and attitude toward aviation differed from that of many other female professional pilots. She had different ways of tackling common problems. While bearing in mind her idiosyncrasy, an examination of the history of women in aviation reveals that Anne's career path was more representative of the gender politics in the aviation industry — and in American society in general — than that of any other female flyer. The 1930s was a crucial period in domesticating the sky and establishing separate atmospheres, existing, as it did, between the age when flying was seen as a miraculous act of intrepid birdmen and the era in which stewardesses came to serve meals and bring blankets for the passengers of the airplane. Anne was, regardless of her own will, the most effective personage in that process.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (June 1988): 9-39.

<sup>2</sup> For general information on the Transportation Revolution and the coming of the automobile age, see Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985) Chap. 2, 6, 9; and James Flink, *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988) Chap. 1-4.

<sup>3</sup> The early history of women in aviation is documented in Joseph Corn, *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation, 1900-1950* (New York: Oxford UP, 1983) Chap. IV; Dean Jaros, *Heroes without Legacy: American Airwomen, 1912-1944* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1993). See also Claudia M. Oakes, *United States Women in Aviation through World War I* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978); Kathleen Brooks-Pazmany, *United States Women in Aviation, 1919-1929* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983); Deborah G. Douglas, *United States Women in Aviation, 1940-1985* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Corn, 51-70.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 74-85.

<sup>7</sup> On Amelia Earhart see Susan Ware, *Still Missing: Amelia Earhart and the Search for Modern Feminism* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Corn, 76.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 80-81.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 86-88; Jaros, 197.

<sup>11</sup> Ware, 84.

<sup>12</sup> Elsie F. Mayer, *My Window on the World: The Works of Anne Morrow Lindbergh* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1988), 3-4.

<sup>13</sup> Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Bring Me a Unicorn: Diaries and Letters of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1922-1928* (New York: Harcourt, 1971), 89-91, emphases by Lindbergh.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 147, emphases by Lindbergh; Leonard Mosley, *Lindbergh: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 135-136.

<sup>15</sup> Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *North to the Orient* (New York: Harcourt, 1935), 31.

<sup>16</sup> Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Hours of Gold, Hours of Lead: Diaries and Letters of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1929-1932* (New York: Harcourt, 1973), 4.

<sup>17</sup> Mayer, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *North to the Orient*, 38-39.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>22</sup> Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Listen! the Wind* (New York: Harcourt, 1938), 222-223.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 228-229.

<sup>24</sup> For details of the kidnapping, see George Waller, *Kidnap: The Story of the Lindbergh Case* (New York: Dial Press, 1961).

<sup>25</sup> Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Hours of Gold, Hours of Lead*, 267.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 283; emphasis by Lindbergh.

<sup>27</sup> Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Locked Rooms and Open Doors: Diaries and Letters of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1933–1935* (New York: Harcourt, 1974), xxv.

<sup>28</sup> Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Hours of Gold, Hours of Lead*, 10.

<sup>29</sup> Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Locked Rooms and Open Doors*, 35.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 253–254.

<sup>32</sup> Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *The Flower and the Nettle: Diaries and Letters of Anne Morrow Lindbergh, 1936–1939* (New York: Harcourt, 1976), xv.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 51–52, 85.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 471.

<sup>36</sup> Corn, 81–82. For biographical information on women aviators, see Jean Adams and Margaret Kimball, *Heroines of the Sky* (New York: Doubleday, 1942).

<sup>37</sup> On the obsession of the press with the Lindberghs, see Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1931), 180–187. Also, see Kenneth S. Davis, *The Hero: Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dream* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

<sup>38</sup> Oakes, 29–47.

<sup>39</sup> Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Sex Roles in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986), 148–165.

<sup>40</sup> For recent scholarship on women's writing and gender politics in the leftist literary movements in the 1930s, see Paula Rabinowitz, *Labor & Desire: Women's Revolutionary Fiction in Depression America* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Paula Rabinowitz, "Women and U.S. Literary Radicalism," *Writing Red: An Anthology of American Women Writers, 1930–1940*, eds. Charlotte Nekola and Paula Rabinowitz (New York: The Feminist Press, 1987), 1–16.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in "Husband-and-Wife Teams in Flying Game," *Literary Digest* 105 (April 12, 1930), 39.

<sup>42</sup> Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Hours of Gold, Hours of Lead*, illustration between p. 132 and p. 133.

<sup>43</sup> Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991)

<sup>44</sup> For details about WAFS and WASP, see Adela Riek Scharr, *Sisters in the Sky* 2 vols. (St. Louis: The Patrice Press, 1986).

<sup>45</sup> Douglas, 109, 118.