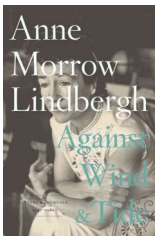
Against Wind & Tide: Letters and Journals



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These days not many people are familiar with the work of Anne Morrow Lindbergh. During her life (she died in 2001) she was most famous for her relationship with her husband, pioneering aviator Charles Lindbergh, the first person to fly between New York and Paris, to cross the Atlantic solo. There was also much publicity and notoriety about her firstborn's kidnapping and murder in 1932.

Against Wind & Tide begins with Anne roiling with the news that she is pregnant for the seventh time. She's in her forties and her whole spirit rebels against another pregnancy. Yet, unless she has a physical reason for an abortion, she does not feel that can be an option. Much of the book is about motherhood. Charles once asked Anne what she believed the most important relationship in life to be--he said between husband and wife--but Anne said the relationship between mother and child was paramount. However, even as a rich woman who could afford a housekeeper and a cook, she often felt divided between parenting demands and her own writing. Yet what a wonderful mother her letters show her to be. She relates to each child differently, extremely aware of his or her strengths and weaknesses, and always encouraging each to be his or her best.

Anne was an amazingly gifted writer and though she wrote extended book-length essays and fiction, she excelled at detailing the personal struggles and explorations of an individual. She did that throughout the 20th century. Anne's writing is deeply contemplative. She does not skim the surface of life but burrows into it both seeking and answering some of the hard questions.

In this book she covers all the "flood truths": life, death, nature, love, the nature of friendship, and the complications, frustrations, and great joys of marriage. Charles often travelled and would seldom tell Anne when she could expect him back. Later, it turned out that he had fathered seven children in Europe while they were married. There is no mention of whether Anne knew anything about Lindbergh's other lives; however Anne did recognize their relationship as complicated. Several times in the book, she thanks him for broadening her life and also for all his encouragement for her writing. He carefully edited her book galleys but also pushed her out into the world, encouraging her to spend nine weeks touring post-World War II Europe and write articles about it. This was during a time and cultural period when most men thought women only should stay at home.

Anne's also incredibly well-read. Many of her letters especially to her children suggest books for them. The book is also full of travel. The Lindberghs took safaris in Africa, whale watching trips to Baja, trips out West to ski and camp. Inspired by their history of being two of the world's first aviators, flying to Europe, Florida, and Hawaii was never a big deal.

Most touching are the journal entries and letters about her own mother's decline and death. Anne compared dying to birth; she thought it had a similar rhythm. And how lucky she was in her mother's death. Her mother's first stroke happened in Anne's home after Thanksgiving, and though Mrs. Morrow lost her ability to speak that night, it returned the next day. All that day, Anne and her mother shared their thoughts of love and their life together. The next day Mrs.

Morrow lost her ability to speak again, but how grateful Anne was for that day.
Equally touching but much harder to bear was the news that Reeve's baby son John had encephalitis. His death brought back so much of Anne's pain from her own child's loss, but she knew how to counsel her daughter, and to connect deeply with her during this difficult period. Several of her children edited this book, and what a tribute to their mother who so often talks about them and corresponds with them in these pages. Lindbergh celebrates solitude and the deep interpersonal connections that make life rich and rewarding.
If you like Anne's writing try her wonderful *Gift from the Sea* about a woman seeking solitude on Cape Cod. For more about this famous couple, check out their daughter Reeve's memoir of both parents titled *Under a Wing*.

Posted by Dory L. on August 14, 2012

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