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A Content Analysis of Three Works of Aviation Literature

Paul A. Craig

Middle Tennessee State University, paul.craig@mtsu.edu

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Since the earliest human flights, man has attempted to relate back to the people of Earth the essence of flight. The problem has been that pilots have focused on the machine and not the sensations of flight – never mind venture into the meanings of flight. Early aircraft inventors and fliers didn't have much time to speculate on flight as a metaphor. They were too busy being engineers, not poets. The first ever balloon flight on November 21, 1783, carried two men: the Marquis D'Arlanders and Jean-François Pilâtre de Rozier. D'Arlanders seemed to value the view and commented on seeing the river, but de Rozier was not concerned about the sights and sensations. He reportedly scolded D'Arlanders, for admiring the view too much and placing straw on the fire too little, "if you look at the river in that fashion you will be likely to bathe in it soon" (English, 1998, p. 63).

Author David McCullough in his book, *The Wright Brothers* (2016), praised Wilbur and Orville for their innate engineering skills and their technical abilities. They were intensely concerned with the airplane itself but not as much with flight's wider meaning. The first account of a powered flight came from Orville Wright after the December 17, 1903 flight, "With a short dash down the runway, the machine lifted into the air and was flying. It was only twelve seconds, and it was an uncertain, wavy, creeping sort of flight at best; but it was a real flight at last and not a glide" (English, 1998, p. 62).

More time passed before pilots started expressing their impressions of flight. Articulating the value of flight beyond the technical advances and practical applications, required a transition. Flying an airplane is certainly an art and the ability to convey the experience of flight in writing is also an art. Not until people with both flying skills and writing skills came along, did Earth-bound people get a glimpse of what flight was truly providing for mankind. There have been some famous and excellently written books that offered training on flight, such as *Stick and Rudder: An Explanation of the Art of Flying* by Wolfgang Langewiesche, first published in 1944. These books taught us *how* to fly, but it was left to other writers to teach us *why* we fly.

This project is not just a commentary on several written works on aviation. The project is qualitative research, using established scientific methodology, that will examine what techniques early aviation writers employed that allowed them to so vividly portray the soul and meanings brought to us through the experience of flight. This research is not typical, yet still employs sound research methods. The researcher selected three titles to undergo a Content Analysis method in an attempt to discover patterns and emerging themes within these written works.

Selection of Works

The researcher selected three works by acclaimed aviation writers. These three works have been widely recognized as some of the best aviation writing to have ever been published. Certainly, other works could have been considered for

analysis. Other works and other writers have also earned praise for their excellence and the researcher does not discount any other works, but selected these three because of their prominence. The researcher welcomes analysis of other works beyond those selected for this research.

The Titles Selected

Wind, Sand and Stars, by Antoine de Saint-Exupery (Published 1939).

Saint-Exupery was born in 1900 and while flying for the French Air Force, was killed in World War II on July 31, 1944. He was a French writer, poet, aristocrat, journalist, and pioneering aviator. *Winds, Sands and Stars*, won the Grand Prize from the French Academy in 1939, and also the National Book Award for Nonfiction that same year in the United States. The National Geographic Adventure magazine voted *Wind, Sand and Stars*, number three on its list of the 100 greatest adventure books of all time (National Geographic). Saint-Exupery is best known for his novella *The Little Prince*, which has been translated into 300 languages and is the fourth highest selling book of all time.

Figure 1

Antione de Saint-Exupery



West with the Night, by Beryl Markham (Published 1942).

Born in 1902, Beryl Markham was an English-born Kenyan aviator, one of the first safari pilots, an adventurer, racehorse trainer and author. She was the first person to fly, non-stop across the Atlantic from Britain to North America. Markham chronicled many of her adventures in her memoir, *West with the Night*. One of her contemporaries was Ernest Hemingway who wrote about Markham's book, "This girl can write rings around all of us who consider ourselves as writers ... it really is a bloody wonderful book" (Gutekunst, 1982). Markham died in 1986. The National Geographic Adventure magazine voted *West With the Night*, number eight on its list of the 100 greatest adventure books of all time (National Geographic).

Figure 2

Beryl Markham



Fate is the Hunter, by Ernest K. Gann (Published 1961).

Ernest Kellogg Gann was born in 1910 and died in 1991. He was an airline pilot, sailor and conservationist. *Fate is the Hunter* is a memoir of the early days of aviation and airline flying. He wrote nine feature films, five guides, three autobiographies and eighteen novels. *Flying Magazine* ranked Gann thirty-fourth on its 2013 list of the 51 heroes of aviation. Playwright and author David Mamet (2019) wrote, “The best book written about aviation is Fate Is the Hunter.”

Figure 3

Ernest K. Gann



Methodology

The researcher utilized the qualitative method for this research. Bogdan and Biklen (2016, p. 2) describe qualitative research, “as an umbrella term to refer to several research strategies that share common characteristics.” There are many tools in the qualitative researcher’s toolbox. The initial challenge is to select the best tool for the job. In this research a Content Analysis method was selected to conduct an analysis of the three aviation-related books. Content Analysis is typically performed on forms of human communication, including books, newspapers, personal journals, legal documents, films, television, art, and music (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). In this case the human communication is previously published books. Patton (2002) indicates that qualitative Content Analysis can be used to analyze various types of data, but generally the data needs to be transformed into written text before analysis can start. This makes Content Analysis a particularly good method match for the written word – in this case books. The Content Analysis method is not just reading books and making commentary; this method is highly structured with multiple steps in the process of data collection and analysis. “Quantitative research shares with qualitative research an emphasis on disciplined data collection” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016, p. 6). Content Analysis is a method designed to identify and interpret meaning in recorded forms of communication by isolating small pieces of the data that represent salient concepts and then applying or creating a framework to organize the pieces in a way that can be used to describe or explain a phenomenon (Kleinheksel et al., 2020). There is a specific step-by-step process. To get started, the researcher takes measures to make the process as objective as possible. The following steps are typical:

1. The researcher identifies the specific body of material to be studied.
2. The researcher defines the characteristics or qualities to be examined in precise concrete terms.
3. The researcher breaks down each item into small, manageable segments that are analyzed separately (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 235).

These manageable segments, or smaller pieces of the data are identified as codes. Kleinheksel (2020) explains that codes are the *currency* of Content Analysis. Researchers use codes to organize and understand their data. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) further define the process of Content Analysis as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. The researcher first becomes saturated in the data through prolonged engagement. As the research proceeds through the data, certain topics and concepts start to become apparent. As the researcher went through the three selected books, many concepts emerged, but only those concepts that appeared multiple times in all three of the books would qualify as a code. Once the codes were revealed, examples from each book, and for each code was separated out. These data were first analyzed using a technique

called triangulation. In triangulation, multiple sources of data are collected with the hope that they will all converge to support a particular assertion, hypothesis, theory or conclusion (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Through this process, the researcher discovered six different codes within this specific dataset. From the codes, various categories become obvious. From the categories, ultimate themes of the works emerge. This three-step Content Analysis process that moves from codes to categories to themes (Kleinheksel et al., 2020), is not typical of research projects that utilize a quantitative research design, but this is a qualitative design that is well suited for the objective of this research.

A research methodology, of any design, must provide validity and the conclusions must be trustworthy. For qualitative designs to achieve the highest level of validity, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended a set of activities that would help improve the credibility of these research results: prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation, triangulation, negative case analysis, checking interpretations against raw data, peer debriefing, and member checking. Many of these activities were included in this research design to ultimately produce trustworthy conclusions.

Are the discoveries generated from a qualitative Content Analysis study generalizable? Bogdan and Biklen (2016, p. 34) write that “When researchers use the term generalizability, they usually are referring to whether findings of a particular study hold up beyond the specific research subject and setting involved.” But for this research, generalizability was not the goal. This is a deep drill-down on just three specific works of aviation writing – that is all. “If they [researchers] do a case study of a classroom, for example, they do not mean to imply in reporting results of the study that all classrooms are like that one” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016, p. 34). This researcher does not mean to imply that the characteristics of the selected written works are automatically duplicated in other works. If understanding of a greater meaning takes place because of this research, that does not infer that those same meanings will always apply to other studies. If the codes, categories and themes identified in this research are helpful to other researchers then that is a favorable outcome, but generalizability is not the goal of this Content Analysis study.

Coding

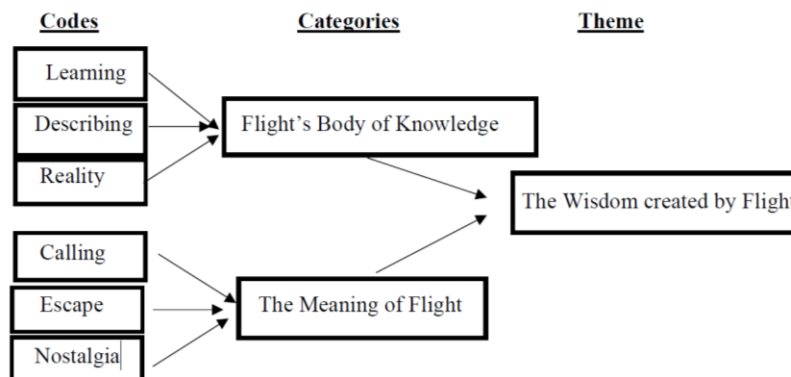
Bogdan and Biklen (2016, p. 2) write that, “While people conducting qualitative research develop a focus as they collect data, they do not approach the research with specific questions to answer or hypotheses to test.” The Content Analysis method does not start out with a set of theories and then attempt to prove (or disprove) those theories. Content Analysis turns that process around. The codes used to identify categories and themes in this research were not invented by the researcher. Instead, the codes selected themselves as the researcher examines the

data. Leedy and Ormrod (2019, p. 353) indicate that identifying the codes requires an, “Initial data analysis that involves an open-minded perusal of the data for ideas and significant characteristics to consider.”

Throughout the prolonged engagement with the data, the researcher uncovered dozens of potential codes, but only those topics and concepts that appeared at least a dozen times in all three of the written works ultimately qualified as a code. After an extensive review, the research revealed six unique codes, that lead to two categories. Those categories pointed themselves to one overriding theme, illustrated in Figure 4.

In order to qualify as a code a topic or a concept must have repeatedly appeared in the writings of all three authors. For the purpose of identifying the codes many examples of the writings are included here, but for brevity only a representative sample of those writings are included in this report. The codes identified are: Learning, Describing, Reality, Calling, Escape, and Nostalgia.

Figure 4
Research Map



Code: Learning

An undeniable code that emerges from the writings of the three authors is that there is an endless array of lessons to be learned from flight. These lessons can be practical but often point to an even greater understanding.

Gann writes to us like a wise flight instructor passing on lessons that were earned through past trials: “Nobody who gets too damned relaxed builds up much flying time” (Gann, 1939, p. 180), and “Rule books are paper – they will not cushion a sudden meeting of stone and metal” (Gann, 1939, p. 153). Markham elevates the pilot skill of chart reading to an element of faith:

A map in the hands of a pilot is a testimony of a man's faith in other men; it is a symbol of confidence and trust. A map says to you, “Read me carefully,

follow me closely, doubt me not.” It says, “I am the Earth in the palm of your hand. Without me, you are alone and lost.” (Markham, 1942, p. 243)

There is much to learn in the air about nature and specifically the weather. This is coupled with understanding the nature of a person, their confidence and their ability to resolve problems. Saint-Exupery (1939, p 7) portrays the tug-o-war between nature and the pilot when he wrote, “You’ll be bothered from time to time by storms, fog, snow. When you are, think to yourself, ‘What they could do, I can do.’” And Saint-Exupery (1939, p. 23) relates that, “The machine does not isolate man from great problems of nature, but plunges him more deeply into them.”

One of the lessons to be learned goes beyond fuel calculations and memorizing V-speeds. Gann describes the art and grace that is the difference between an airman and a pilot:

There are airmen and there are pilots: the first being part bird whose view from aloft is normal and comfortable, a creature whose brain and muscles frequently originate movements which suggest flight; and then there are pilots who regardless of their airborne time remain earth-loving bipeds forever. When these latter unfortunates, because of one urge or another, actually make an ascension, they neither anticipate nor relish the event and they drive their machine with the same graceless labor they inflict upon the family vehicle. (English, 1998, p. 164)

The lessons to be learned go beyond any textbook. Gann reminds us that the stakes are very high and we must be meticulous: “Put your trust in God and Pratt and Whitney” (Gann, 1961, p. 179). “We set the gyros and altimeters, and carefully completed the cockpit check list of instruments, engines, and controls. This we carried out from memory, our voices chanting the sacrament as priests before an altar” (Gann, 1961, p. 168).

Code: Describing

The three authors are communicators from the vantage point of flight. They have the ability to transport the reader with their words into the air with them as they describe the sights, sensations and challenges of flight.

Here Markham (1942, p. 277) describes what humans must understand about nature:

We fly, but we have not “conquered” the air. Nature presides in all her dignity, permitting us the study and the use of such of her forces as we may understand. It is when we presume to intimacy, having been granted only tolerance, that the harsh stick fall across our impudent knuckles and we rub the pain, staring upward, startled by our ignorance.

The fact that aircraft fly above the ground and the pilot, from that vantage point, has the rare opportunity to see nature and its power is conveyed when Saint-Exupery (1939, p. 69) writes, “The airplane has unveiled for us the true face of the

Earth,” and “I know nothing, nothing in the world, equal to the wonder of nightfall from the air” (1939, p. 138).

Gann also describes the experience of flight at night:

Few pilots are immune to this nocturnal spell. It has a mystical quality which lays a pleasing coverlet over the usual technical thought patterns necessary in a cockpit, and once again the airplane becomes an argosy afloat in space instead of a mere machine. (1961, p. 81)

The authors conjure up insightful images with nature’s dignity, unveiled wonder, the face of Earth and a rich supply: argosy. The authors become our eyes and ears in flight. Even when we do not travel with them, their use of word-craft and succinct detail of language conveys an understanding that is beyond the extent of ordinary human experience. The authors are describing the fact that flight is not an ordinary human experience.

Code: Reality

Despite all the writing about flight in poetic, sometime lofty, terms, the authors also understand that flight takes place in a real machine and is subject to the real elements and dangers. “In reference to flying through thunderstorms; A pilot may earn his full pay for that year in less than two minutes. At the time of the incident, he would gladly return the entire amount for the privilege of being elsewhere” (Gann, 1961, p.63).

“Nor is the well-wishing of a ground mechanic to be taken lightly, for these men are the pilot’s contract with reality” (Markham, 1942, p. 277).

“Navigating by compass in a sea of clouds over Spain is all very well, it is very dashing, but – you want to remember that below that sea of clouds lies eternity” (Saint-Exupery, 1939, p. 6). Gann also describes the loss of life as *eternity*, in a passage about a lost flight crew, “And, far worse, they could not have known at what instant the floor might violently reverse its angle and tumble them into eternity” (Gann, 1961, p. 171).

The authors tell us that experience is the best teacher – but only if you can survive the lesson. Gann describes what it is *like* to fly in an airplane and the risks involved, when he writes, “There are two kinds of airplanes – those you fly and those that fly you...you must have a distinct understanding at the very start as to who is the boss” (Gann, 1961, p. 47), and “Anyone can do the job when things are going right. In this business we play for keeps” (Gann, 1961, p. 70).

“Don’t mistrust the compass – your judgment will never be more accurate than that needle. It will tell you where you ought to be going and the rest is up to you” (Markham, 1942, p. 188).

“The airplane is a means, not an end. One doesn’t risk one’s life *for* a plane any more than a farmer ploughs for the sake of the plough. But the airplane is a means of getting away from towns and their bookkeeping and coming to grips with reality” (Saint-Exupery, 1939, p. 177).

Markham writes that for a pilot is to achieve success and safety, it requires diligence and work: “If a man has any greatness in him, it comes to light, not in one flamboyant hour, but in the ledger of his daily work” (Markham, 1942, p. 157). And finally, “After that, work and hope. But never hope more than you work” (Markham, 1942, p. 140).

Code: Calling

There is no more common concept among the three writers than the idea that flight is a calling. Often in profound terms, the authors explain to us *why* we fly. This is a question that most pilots cannot quite answer themselves, so we need an assist from these writers. Referring to flight Saint-Exupery writes, “whether we call it sacrifice, or poetry, or adventure, it is always the same voice that calls” (1939, p. 227). The same idea carries over when Markham relates, “By his nature a sailor must sail, by his nature a flyer must fly” (Markham, 1942, p. 274). Gann describes the experience as hypnotic, “It was a brilliant night and I turned the cockpit lights far down so that the luster of the Moon would permeate the cockpit and for a little time, at least, relieve the hypnotic sensation of being stared at by the instruments” (Gann, 1961, p. 382).

These passages identify a greater meaning of flight than merely transportation. There is a voice that calls, there is nature summoning and there is a hypnotic spell. All these impressions point to an elevated concept of flight.

Saint-Exupery takes the concept a step farther and speaks of the *heart-beat of the heavens* and relates the calling of flight like going home:

The magical instruments set like jewels in their panel and glimmering like a constellation in the dark of night. The mineral glow of the artificial horizon, these stethoscopes designed to take the heart-beat of the heavens, are things a pilot loves. The cabin of a plane is a world unto itself, and to a pilot it is home. (1939, p. 132)

Note that Saint-Exupery uses an alliteration, *heart-beat of the heavens*, for greater literary effect.

Markham evokes the idea of depending on more than one’s self: “I learned to watch, to put my trust in other hands than mine. And I learned to wander. I learned what every dreaming child needs to know – that no horizon is so far that you cannot get above it or beyond it” (Markham, 1942, p. 187). Finally, Gann points to a responsibility that comes with the calling to flight:

You can always tell when a man has lost his soul to flying. The poor bastard is helplessly committed to stopping whatever he is doing long enough to look up and make sure the aircraft purring overhead continues on course and does not suddenly fall out of the sky. It is also his bound duty to watch every aircraft within view takeoff and land. (English, 1998. p. 23)

What these passages seem to have in common is a yearning for flight. There is a need to search for greater meaning. That greater meaning is discovered as the

authors speak of love, wander, trust, dreaming, the security of home, and committing a soul to flight.

Code: Escape

When we takeoff into the air there is a physical separation with the earth, but the three authors jointly offer a premise that there is also a mental separation from the Earth. In multiple passages compartmentalizing takes place. The pilot divides into sections their experience. There is a life on the ground and that life is separate from the life in the air. The separation between these two worlds is so distinct that traveling from the ground to the air is not a journey, but an escape. Markham (1942, p. 280) even calls this escape a release from *custody*, as if escaping from imprisonment, “Flight is but momentary escape from the eternal custody of Earth.” Saint-Exupery equates this custody, to being oppressed: “I fly because it releases my mind from the tyranny of petty things” (English, 1998, p. 7). And Markham uses that same idea when she wrote about flying over Kenya before civilization took over:

To see ten thousand animals untamed and not branded with the symbols of human commerce is like scaling an unconquered mountain for the first time, or like finding a forest without roads or footpaths, or the blemish of an axe. You know then what you had always been told - that the world once lived and grew without adding machines and newsprint and brick-walled streets and the tyranny of clocks. (Markham, 1942, p. 43)

In a translation for today, those adding machines would become computers, the newsprint becomes the internet but the meaning of the *tranny of clocks* remains the same. Flight is seen as a way to escape the stress and time-pressures of everyday life and that life on the ground is not all that important anyway – being filled with *petty things*.

The skill of compartmentalizing the mind is also key to the safety of a pilot. If the pilot allows Earth-bound problems into their sky-borne decision-making, the result can be dangerous. Gann (1944) explains that pilots can become very accustomed to their role in flight, calling this escape an invisible world that includes enchantment and magic – but if the pilot ever allows the Earth-cares to interrupt this world the fallout can be catastrophic:

As the years go by, he returns to this invisible world rather than to earth for peace and solace. There also he finds a profound enchantment, although he can seldom describe it. Their world is like a magic island in which the factors of life and death assume their proper values. Thinking becomes clear because there are no earthly foibles or embellishments to confuse it. Professional pilots are, of necessity, uncomplicated, simple men. Their thinking must remain straightforward, or they die—violently.

The idea of compartmentalization therefore is an ability to maintain mental toughness. To ensure that things on the ground stay on the ground when we are in

flight. Flight therefore is a welcome escape from the trivia of everyday life. Flight breaks us away from the shackles of Earthly problems. The authors recognize that to fly is to physically and mentally rise above.

Code: Nostalgia

Airplanes and the adventures survived in them have a profound effect on the aviator. The three aviation writers speak of times gone by, of flights flown, and of friendships forged through common experience.

In 1936, Beryl Markham became the first person to fly across the Atlantic from East to West. She flew a Percival Gull which she simply called *The Gull*. Her destination was Floyd Bennett Field, but ice in the fuel lines forced her to land in Newfoundland. She was rescued from a bog and flown the rest of the way to New York:

On the following morning I did step out of a plane at Floyd Bennett Field and there was a crowd of people still waiting there to greet me, but the plane I stepped from was not the Gull, and for days while I was in New York I kept thinking about that and wishing over and over again that it had been the Gull, until the wish lost its significance, and time moved on, overcoming many things it met on the way. (Markham, 1942, p. 285)

There is strong evidence that a code of nostalgia exists when you read this sample passage from Saint-Exupery:

Nothing, in truth, can ever replace a lost companion. Old comrades cannot be manufactured. There is nothing that can equal the treasure of so many shared memories, so many bad times endured together, so many quarrels, reconciliations, heartfelt impulses. Friendships like that cannot be reconstructed. If you plant an oak, you will hope in vain to sit soon under its shade. For such is life. We grow rich as we plant through the early years, but then come the years when time undoes our work and cuts down our trees. One by one our comrades deprive us of their shade. (Saint-Exupery, 1939, p. 30)

Ernest K. Gann was an airline pilot in the 1930s who under-studied with pilots from the previous air age. In this passage he remembers such a pilot:

He was a true professional, challenging the greatest expanse of the atmosphere. He was helmet and goggles, fabric covered wings, Wright Whirlwind engines, leather and oil. He was a cow-pasture landings and loops over Sunday crowds; he was the Curtis Condor, and the strumming of flying wires. There is now a special determination in the cant of his head, the fighting pose of a pilot in bad weather when instruments were new and help from the ground unavailing. He was distance and height and independence in a lonely sky – and he was uncertainty and sadness because too many of his comrades were lost to inexplicable fortune. He was wind and rain, thunder and terror, humility and pride. (Gann, 1961, p. 383)

Note that Saint-Exupery and Gann, writing two decades apart, used the same word to describe the friendships that they had bonded: comrades.

These *look-backs* seem to be more than reminiscing, they are a nostalgia. The authors mark a moment in time with longing, but make their peace with the passage of time and do so without regret.

Categories, Emerging Themes

After codes have been identified, tallied, and examples provided, the next step is to determine if the codes themselves fall into logical groups or categories. Leedy and Ormrod (2019, p. 349) explains the next step is to “Identify noteworthy patterns and relationships among the codes.” The researcher therefore went back through each code and each code’s justification looking for patterns.

A category of codes with consistent characteristics emerged among the Reality, Learning, and Describing codes. These codes logically went together. If flight involves both science and art, this group seemed to represent the *science* side of the equation. The researcher then concluded that an accurate descriptor for this category would be the *Flight’s Body of Knowledge* category. This is not to say that the entire body of aviation knowledge resides within only the three written works examined – it does not. But in these codes the authors provide sage advice, offer techniques and instruct on practical applications.

The Calling, Escape, and Nostalgia codes naturally seems to work together with similar qualities. This category represented the importance of flight to mankind. Here the authors provided eloquent poetry and prose – this is the *art* side of the equation. The authors took us past knowledge, above understanding, beyond metaphors and reached for the meaning of flight. The researcher concluded that the descriptor for this category must therefore be the *Meaning of Flight*.

Just as the categories became apparent from the characteristics of the codes, the final step in the process follows a similar procedure. What is the overall message or theme that can be seen through the lens of a researcher? What do we logically derive from the patterns and frameworks? Klienheksel et al. (2020) write that, “Such frameworks describe and provide structure to complex concepts and may often be derived from relevant theories. Latent content analysis requires that the researcher is intimately involved in interpreting and finding meaning in the text because meaning is not readily apparent on the surface.”

The lessons learned from the codes and the categories are both practical and artistic. There is discernment, imagination, insight, enjoyment, and perception of both the science and art of flight. If we are to consider these lessons in our judgment, actions and decisions we would be applying nothing less than wisdom. The researcher, considering all the factors, inevitably arrived at the fact that the overarching theme passed down to us from the three aviation writers is to divulge the wisdom that resides in the science and art of flight. Saint-Exupery, Markham

and Gann have bestowed on us an inheritance of wisdom created by the human experience of flight.

Conclusion

Although the Content Analysis method does not start with research questions, an overarching question did emerge. Pilots and aviation enthusiasts may easily recognize the wisdom of the three written works that were examined within this research, but what about those outside the realm of aviation? To those non-pilots and non-aviation enthusiasts, is the work of Saint-Exupery, Markham and Gann just a collection of aviation stories, or do these works rise to a higher level? Do these works take their place among the classics of literature?

Britannia (n.d.) defines literature: “The name has traditionally been applied to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution.”

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (n.d.) considers literature to be “writings having excellence of form or expression and expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest.”

John Oldcastle (2000) writing for the London School of Journalism on English literature:

A piece of literature differs from a specialized treatises on astronomy, political economy, philosophy, or even history, in part because it appeals, not to a particular class of readers only, but to men and women; and in part because, while the object of the treatise is simply to impart knowledge, one ideal end of the piece of literature, whether it also imparts knowledge or not, is to yield aesthetic satisfaction by the manner of which it handles its theme.

Whether or not Saint-Exupery, Markham, and Gann have successfully crafted imaginative works, inspired universal interest, produced excellence of form and created aesthetic satisfaction and therefore reached the status of literature, is ultimately decided by the reader. At this point in a research report, authors often offer suggestions for future research. This researcher suggests that you do your own research and read the great aviation writers. Then make your own determination:

You rolled yourself up into a ball in your genteel security, in routine, in the stifling conventions of provincial life, raising a modest rampart against the winds and the tides and the stars. You have chosen not to be perturbed by great problems, having trouble enough to forget your own fate as a man. You are not the dweller upon an errant planet and do not ask yourself questions to which there are no answers. Nobody grasped you by the shoulder while there was still time. Now the clay of which you were shaped has dried and hardened, and naught in you will ever awaken the sleeping

musician, the poet, the astronomer that possibly inhabited you in the beginning. (Saint-Exupery, 1939, p. 14)

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