



6-15-2009

Hélène Boucher

J. Todd Hawkins

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview>

Recommended Citation

Hawkins, J. Todd (2009) "Hélène Boucher," *Westview*: Vol. 29 : Iss. 1 , Article 26.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol29/iss1/26>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Westview by an authorized administrator of SWOSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.

Hélène Boucher

by J. Todd Hawkins

On July 8, 1934, French aviatrix Hélène Boucher, by averaging a speed of 412 kilometers per hour, broke not only the women's world speed record for a 100-kilometer flight, previously held by Amelia Earhart, but the men's record as well. Unsatisfied, she broke the world speed record for a 1,000-kilometer flight two weeks later. Said to exude a quiet confidence, Boucher continued her pursuit of even faster speeds. Though she had always been superstitious of the number 30 and adamant about not flying on the 30th of any month, she was persuaded to fly a training flight on November 30, 1934. On that cloudy morning with poor visibility, she crashed from a height of 300 feet. Boucher was twenty-six years old and, at the time of her death, held many major speed records for all categories of flight.

As violet horizons visit lips of wine-dark earth,
I fly, rising medallion-eyed in wonder. The ground below
is nearly fogbound — it's far too hard to follow
the lines they chalked to guide me across land dim in dearth.
How quickly clarity's lost to speed: hills I'd hoped to give wide berth
approach through wispy veils bewailed by screaming winds. Bellow,
winds! Throw this plane about! I'm drunk on the pulse of breath, aglow
in blood flushing my face and tension anxious as childbirth.

Yet running atop the frost of dawn, haze suffocates the plain.
Fear seeps slowly in my paper-wasp wings, and the plane,
a timid mare, senses its rider's uncertainty, hears the Siren hole
in the soil howl loud. Alas, new flights must await a new rein
and ones less doubtful to hold it, who unfazed in frantic rushes reign
over skies that split wide open and mornings that eat shadows whole.

