When Frank Lloyd Wright Scandalized Chicago

By JANET MASLIN
Published: August 2, 2007

Unlike most writers of historical fiction Nancy Horan has not had to inflame the passions of real people in order to create a transporting drama. If anything, she has had to tamp down the truth behind "Loving Frank," a novel about the most fearsome chapter in the wildly eventful life of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Telling a love story that is known to this great architect's admirers but will stagger those not braced for its monstrous resolution, this book describes the runaway romance between Wright and Mamah Borthwick Cheney. Mrs. Cheney, the Oak Park, Ill., wife of a sedate businessman, began as a Wright client and wound up the great love of Wright's life. When they impulsively fled Oak Park for Europe in 1909, Frank and Mamah (this book is on a decidedly first-name basis) left behind two baffled spouses, nine aggrieved children (including a daughter of Mamah's dead sister) and a salivating American press corps eager to see the Faustian side of the lovers' rash move.

Not even the most tabloid reportorial imagination could
LOVING FRANK

By Nancy Horan
$23.95.

have foreseen how luridly this story would explode five years later. And beyond its shock value, the outcome would have ramifications not only for two ruptured families but also for architects, feminists, criminologists and armchair moralists of every stripe.

Any writer, even one as level-headed as Ms. Horan, would be accused of histrionic overkill if she had not hewn closely to the facts. But her book has been pieced together and extrapolated from Wright’s autobiography, newspaper accounts, a handful of Mamah’s letters and other matters of record.

“Loving Frank” opens on a revealing image: that of Mamah frantically trying to crank up her Studebaker so that she can race off to hear Frank address a Nineteenth Century Woman’s Club meeting. The year is 1907, and Mamah already knows Frank: she and her husband live in a house that they commissioned from him four years earlier. Now Mamah and Frank plan to add a garage. And that’s not all they are brewing. “It’s going to be the best damn garage in Oak Park,” he tells her, not long after Ms. Horan has described “the naked landscape of his body gliding over hers” in keeping with the book’s architectural imagery. “But it could take years to finish.”

The author’s biggest challenge is that of finding conversational ways to integrate cultural landmarks (Mamah reads Ibsen) and artistic ideals (“He’s a visionary, Mattie, and he’s going to be famous someday for developing a true American architecture”) into an otherwise forthright narrative. No crowbar is needed, despite the occasional sign of a heavy hand. For instance Mamah’s husband foreshadows: “Everyone likes pirates, no matter how bad they are.”

The book chronicles how Frank and Mamah arrive at the point of no return, how they construe their rebelliousness as idealism, and how they reconcile self-interest with inconvenient family obligations. This last matter is trickiest, since it is potentially so polarizing.

But Ms. Horan makes a point of keeping the children at a distance, mirroring her subjects’ myopic if tormented state of mind. And she echoes the quaint tone of contemporary press coverage in explaining the runaways’ decision. “Spouse Victim of a Vampire,” one Chicago newspaper wrote, by way of illustrating what Catherine Wright claimed had befallen her husband.
The first great mystery in this story is what made Frank and Mamah sever their family ties. To its credit “Loving Frank” humanizes its main characters so successfully that this seems no mystery at all. But the second question has to do with trouble in paradise, and it is more complex. After their sojourn in Europe they settled in Wisconsin, where Frank designed his legendary prairie house Taliesin as their new home. It was an exercise in optimism that nearly destroyed them both. (William R. Drennan’s recent “Death in a Prairie House” offers a more detailed factual account of what transpired.)

Ms. Horan has the novelistic imagination to conjure the psychic storm clouds that arose, as well as the freak criminal outburst. And since Mamah is the more obscure figure, the book’s main challenge is to breathe life into her transformation. Invigorated by nascent feminism as powerfully as she was smitten by Frank, Mamah also succumbed to the gravitational pull of Ellen Key, a Swedish advocate of true love’s ability to trump quotidian obligation. Ms. Horan explains how Mamah became Key’s translator and disciple, only to grow disillusioned by Key’s manipulative nature.

This novel shows not only how Key influenced Taliesin but also how she executed a philosophical about-face, one that suddenly transformed her into a champion of motherhood. That left Mamah demonized and in the lurch. Caught in these pincers as well as in the arrogance that led Frank “to mistake his gift for the whole of his character,” Ms. Horan’s Mamah comes to face as much inner peril as outward jeopardy.

If “Loving Frank” begins dutifully, it takes on the impact of truly artful fiction when all these forces come into play. In the end it shows how Mamah and Frank faced dangers more deep-seated than a murderous accident of fate. If “Loving Frank” clings to any blind romanticism, it is in the measure of how deeply a personal tragedy could dent a swaggering figure like Frank Lloyd Wright. In his capacities as prophet, guru, narcissist, chick magnet and inspiration to Ayn Rand, Wright showed many signs of being impervious to loss.

Ms. Horan sees the events in “Loving Frank” as devastating. She writes this book vibrantly enough to make her readers agree. But according to Mr. Drennan, Wright played host to a party for rural mail carriers barely three weeks after Taliesin’s conflagration. “We are told,” wrote a local Wisconsin newspaper, “that this was one of the most successful and enjoyable meetings the assembly has held.”


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Byline: MEG WOLITZER

"LOVING FRANK." By Nancy Horan. Ballantine, 362 pp. $23.95.

GOOD ideas for novels sometimes spring nearly fully formed from life. Such is the case with Nancy Horan's "Loving Frank," which details Frank Lloyd Wright's passionate affair with a woman named Mamah Cheney; both of them left their families to be together, creating a Chicago scandal that eventually ended in inexplicable violence.

It's easy to see why Horan, a former journalist and resident of Oak Park, Ill. - where Wright was hired to design a house for Cheney and her husband and which is home to the largest collection of Wright architecture - found this an excellent subject. Not only are the characters memorable, the buildings are, too.

Of course, like all writers of historical fiction, Horan is pinned to the whims and limits of history, which by its nature can create a "story" that takes undramatic paths. But Horan doesn't seem unduly constrained by the parameters of hard fact, and for long stretches her novel is engaging and exciting.

Wright comes across as ardent, visionary and erratic, while Mamah (pronounced MAY-mah) is a complex person with modern ideas about women's roles in the world. In her diary, Mamah writes out a quote from Charlotte Perkins Gilman: "It is not sufficient to be a mother: an oyster can be a mother."

While it might have been hard even for an oyster to be a mother while conducting a love affair with Frank Lloyd Wright, Mamah eventually sees no way to be with him but to abandon her children:

"Mamah spoke slowly. "Now, listen carefully. I'm going to leave tomorrow to go on a trip to Europe. You will stay here with the Browns until Papa arrives in a couple of days. I'm going on a small vacation."

John burst into tears. "I thought we were on one."

Mamah's heart sank. "One just for me," she said, struggling to stay calm. ... Mamah lay down on the bed and pulled their small curled bodies toward her, listening as John's weeping gave way to a soft snore."

Horan takes pains to convey her protagonist's maternal guilt and ambivalence, but she also has
the children haunt the story like inconvenient, pathetic ghosts.

The novel belongs to the feminist genre not only in its depiction of a woman's conflicting desires for love and motherhood and a central role in society but also through its sophisticated - and welcome - focus on the topic of feminism itself. As Mamah says to a friend: "All the talk revolves around getting the vote. That should go without saying. There's so much more personal freedom to gain beyond that. Yet women are part of the problem. We plan dinner parties and make flowers out of crepe paper. Too many of us make small lives for ourselves."

Mamah wants a big life; for a while she is so captivated by the writings of Swedish writer and philosopher Ellen Key, a leader in what was then referred to as "the Woman Movement," that she becomes her translator. Mamah is as ardent about rights and freedoms as she is about her lover, to whom her thoughts always inevitably circle back:

"Frank has an immense soul. He's so ... ' She smiled to herself. 'He's incredibly gentle. Yet very manly and gallant. Some people think he's a colossal egoist, but he's brilliant, and he hates false modesty."

Together Mamah and Frank go off on their European jaunt, which includes appealing period details: "She would walk until her feet were screaming, then rest in cafes where artists buzzed about Modernism at the tables around her. "Horan can be a very witty writer; at one point later in the book she has Frank avidly swatting flies, naming them after critics who once gave him bad reviews: "Harriet Monroe! Whack."

But she makes a couple of historically rooted narrative choices that are perplexingly on the nose. In a critical scene, Wright says, "I'd like to call it Taliesin, if it's all right with you. Do you know Richard Hovey's play "Taliesin"? About the Welsh bard who was part of King Arthur's court? He was a truth-seeker and a prophet, Taliesin was. His name meant "shining brow." I think it's quite appropriate."

"Taliesin." She tried the word in her mouth as she studied the house in the distance."

Historical novels sometimes bump right up against the problem of how to render moments that foreshadow events of great significance. In choosing to dwell on the naming of Taliesin, in this instance, Horan gives the moment a nudge and a self-conscious emphasis. It would have been subtler and more effective to refer to the naming of the house in passing and instead to focus on another, more muted moment of intimacy involving the creation of Taliesin.

"Loving Frank" is a novel of impressive scope and ambition. Like her characters, Horan is going for something big and lasting here, and that is to be admired. In writing about tenderness between lovers or describing a physical setting, she uses prose that is knowing and natural. At other times she allows use a glimpse of the hand of fact guiding the hand of art, taking it places where it might not necessarily have chosen to go.

CAPTION(S):

Photo: VISION: Together, Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Cheney were definitively 20th-century.

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Little skyscraper on the Prairie: a rare Frank Lloyd Wright tower—one of his most bizarre buildings ever—rises high above the Oklahoma plains. (TRAVELS) (Price Tower) Curtis, Wayne.

Full Text: COPYRIGHT 2008 The Atlantic Monthly Magazine

In 1952, an Oklahoma businessman named Harold Price met with the 85-year-old architect Frank Lloyd Wright to ask him to design a headquarters for his pipeline company in Bartlesville. Wright agreed. Price told Wright he wanted a three-story building and was willing to spend $750,000. Wright suggested a 10-story tower ("Modern elevators and all that," he explained). In the end, as Price later wrote, "we finally compromised on nineteen floors." Price Tower, completed in 1956, cost $2.1 million.

This monument to Wright's supernatural powers of persuasion still stands in a quiet corner of Bartlesville, a city of 35,000. It's easily one of the more bizarre towers ever built. Wright, who is best known for his low Prairie-style buildings, had a complicated relationship with tall buildings, calling one an "incongruous monstrosity of monstrous dimensions." Yet late in life he created drawings for a 528-story skyscraper featuring atomic-powered elevators with five cabs strung vertically in each shaft. (It was never built.) Price Tower is the tallest building Wright constructed, and it's every bit as startling rising out of the low Oklahoma hills as his corkscrew Guggenheim Museum is crouched in the canyons of Manhattan.

I first saw Price Tower 10 years ago, when passing through Bartlesville on a cross-country road trip. It was a quiet Sunday morning in early summer, and long, poisonous rays of sunlight stabbed across the landscape. The light was so sharp and the city so empty, I might have been wandering through an architectural model; I half expected to see little trees made of lichens, and faceless Giacometti couples frozen in mid-stride. I walked around the tower twice and discovered that as you
move, it subtly shifts in appearance, like one of those holograms that winks at you. From this side, it looked like a sleek sculpture inlaid with turquoise; from that, a complicated proof of a geometric theorem, or maybe a comb. Pressing my face against the glass at the front door left me intrigued but unenlightened.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

A few years ago, I read that the tower had been donated by its most recent owner, the Phillips Petroleum Company, to a nonprofit arts organization, which had converted it into a boutique hotel with 19 guest rooms and suites on eight floors, along with an arts center on the ground floor, offices on several other floors, and a restaurant and bar. I resolved to return and spend a few days getting to know Bartlesville--and Wright--a little better. In March, I finally did.

Wright tended to compose structures based on one geometric shape or another. For Price Tower, he chose the triangle. He liked the triangle, he wrote, "because it allows flexibility of arrangement for human movement not afforded by the rectangle." This statement, like much of the architect's writing, recedes further from comprehension the longer one considers it. Nevertheless, each floor has a curious pinwheel-like geometry, and the light fixtures, stairways, and carport pillars are assembled of acute angles. Even the storm drains in the parking lot are three-sided.

I took an hour-long tour of the building, to get a better sense of what Wright had wrought. It began with a short film featuring home-moving footage of Wright wandering about looking proprietary. I learned about how the tower was built, and that Wright's taste in clothing ran toward capes and other extravagant haberdashery.

Although the building went up in the 1950s, it feels like a time capsule from an earlier era. That's because it was by and large recycled from Wright's 1929 plan for a series of never-built towers in New York City. The design is radical for reasons unrelated to triangles. The central metaphor is a tree. (Wright liked to describe the tower as "the tree that escaped the crowded forest.") A stout central service core is the trunk. The branches--reinforced concrete floors--are cantilevered off it, allowing the floors to taper to as little as three inches thick. Because the outer walls needed no weight-bearing columns, Wright could do what he wanted on the exterior. And what he wanted was to line it with copper panels embossed with geometric shapes of his own devising, bands of windows, and angled copper fins that, like leaves, shaded the rooms from direct sun.

Most floors contained three offices plus half a duplex apartment. Wright's idea was that Price's workers could live on one floor and commute to another. (None, in fact, did.) It's an odd notion for Bartlesville, where one can bike in three minutes from a leafy residential neighborhood to downtown, and it also struck me as a bit impractical--boiled cabbage in Apartment 7A would not, I'd wager, make for happy workers in Office Suite 7B.

But the chief impression I took away was that the tower isn't a cerebral geometry project, but a space almost perfectly scaled for human occupation. The rooms and corridors fit me like a comfortable pair of jeans--and I'm more of a rectangle than a triangle. The
flourishes, including etched concrete floors and embossed copper panels that continue inside, conveyed low-key charm rather than grandeur.

Among my favorite spaces was the 19th-floor office--Price's private redoubt, and one of the most eccentric and lovely offices I've seen anywhere. (The tower was really "eighteen floors to hold up my father's office," Price's son Joe once said.) A five-sided desk sits under a double-height ceiling, and there's a private terrace, a grand wall of triangle-patterned stained glass, and soaring views of the sky. There was nothing in the least monstrous or mentrappy about it.

Wright was famous for architectural sleights of hand. One was to funnel visitors through a low, narrow hallway in order to make the room they were entering feel larger. It's simple and effective, and I've always enjoyed being duped when touring other Wright buildings. But here not so much, since he took the same approach with four tiny elevators, whose cabs are irregular hexagons. During one solo descent, the door opened and a man holding a suitcase peered in. He said, "That's OK, I'll catch the next one." I didn't blame him; it would have been like sharing a shower stall. The posted capacity is 1,500 pounds, which I have to assume was a sly joke on the part of an elevator engineer.

My guest room, on the seventh floor, was a converted office, and it displayed a powerful aversion to right angles, notably in the trapezoidal shower. The modern guest rooms were designed by the New York architect Wendy Evans Joseph, who said that she didn't want "Fake Lloyd Wright" interiors. Instead, the rooms have that pleasingly austere, modern style common to boutique hotels, although cast in a warm glow thanks to the liberal use of copper.

The restaurant and bar, called Copper, are on the 15th and 16th floors, and they also make good use of tight spaces. The restaurant includes two open-air terraces; partly obscured by copper panels, they feel a bit like Dr. Evil's secret lairs, and make fine spots to sip wine and discuss world domination while the sun sets over the Osage Hills.

Price Tower is captivating enough that a visitor needn't ever leave the building, thereby fulfilling Wright's dream of a self-contained environment. (Shortly after I settled in, someone knocked on my door to invite me to yoga in the art gallery on Saturday morning.) But I did get out to tour the sights of Bartlesville, which include the mansions of the early oilmen. Ten minutes away is the town of Dewey, where antiques malls, like hermit crabs, occupy former storefronts. Thanks to the oil boom, Oklahoma is fertile ground for mid-century flatsam--stuff from local attics still washes up in the shops. I found a turquoise Argus slide viewer, a glass sugar bowl shaped like an orange, and a guidebook to the 1964 New York World's Fair, all for less than $6. No souvenir shop could improve on this. I also spent part of a morning at the nearby Phillips 66 Museum, which was more engaging than I had anticipated. Among other things, I learned that hula hoops--which came about owing to a gasoline additive or a plastic resin or an extrusion technology or some combination thereof--are more complicated than you might think.

In 2003, The New York Times called Bartlesville an aspiring "Bilbao with chicken-fried steak." This was in reference to plans to build an elaborate new arts center at the base of Price Tower. Indeed, an addition had been commissioned from the internationally known architect Zaha Hadid, and a model in the center depicts a boomerang-shaped structure around the tower's base. The new center remains in the planning stage until the cash to build it can be raised.

In my room, where I spent most of my time without guilt--it's a rare and pleasing confluence when a hotel room is the actual destination--I Googled the phrase Bilbao effect, which is shorthand for the way avant-garde buildings can trigger an economic boom in an overlooked city. I got more than 10,000 hits. Then I Googled Bartlesville effect, and got zero hits. Between these data sets is no doubt a story about the changing role of architecture in economic development. Price Tower was never the centerpiece of a committee's plan to boost tourism. It was mostly a gesture of generosity, leavened with a little ego, from Harold Price to the people of Bartlesville.

The tower was mocked when it opened--it looked fussy and old-fashioned at a time when sleek glass curtain walls, like that of the UN Secretariat Building, were reshaping the American landscape. BusinessWeek wrote that Price's employees were "victimized by the impractical." Price, unembittered by the cost overruns, defended his tower and said that "criticism of Mr. Wright's architecture [is] based only on minor defects such as leaky
windows and unbalanced chairs. There is no mention of the outstanding beauty and efficiency of the design."

And therein may be the real Bartlesville effect. I found Price Tower not only humble and beautiful but a profoundly peaceful spot, as I imagine Mr. Price did, holed up on the 19th floor. During my second night, a cacophonous thunderstorm with Art Deco-ish bolts of lightning blew in from the plains. The sky blazed and the rain came pounding down, tapping out on the copper panels a complex series of timpani rolls and drip-driven arpeggios.

It was like hiding away in a tree house Frank Lloyd Wright had built. Which, I’m guessing, was pretty much what he had in mind.

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

THE TRAVEL ADVISORY

Bartlesville is about an hour’s drive north of the Tulsa International Airport. Tulsa has an excellent collection of Art Deco and Streamline Madame buildings worth lingering for, if you’re an architecture buff. The Tulsa Foundation for Architecture (www.tulsaaarchitecture.com; 918-583-5550) offers a brochure and laminated map.

Inn at Price Tower (www.innatpricetower.com; 918-336-1000) has 19 rooms; prices start at $145 for a double. Tours of the tower are offered Tuesday through Sunday. The arts center, on the ground floor, has several permanent exhibitions, including an elaborate architectural model of the tower and a collection of Wright-designed office furniture.

Forty-five minutes west of town is the Nature Conservancy’s vast Tall-grass Prairie Preserve, the largest such protected tract in the world. You can drive its 40 miles of gravel roads while remaining alert for some of the 2,500 free-roaming bison.

Bartlesville grew to prominence in the early 20th century, when Frank Phillips and others tapped into the tremendous reserves of oil thereabouts. Much of the oil money stayed local, and Oklahoma’s gilded age can be seen in the neoclassical Frank Phillips Home (www.frankphillipshome.org; 918-336-2491) and in Phillips’s haute-Western ranch house, Woolaroc, a rustic 1925 lodge 12 miles southwest of Bartlesville, with nearly 100 mounted heads of game on the walls (www.woolaroc.org; 918-336-0307).

More about the Phillips family and their enterprises can be found in the bright, airy, and surprisingly extensive Phillips 66 Museum, located downtown at 410 South Keeler Avenue. Architecture fans will like the exhibit depicting the evolution of the prototype gas station, from faux-Cotswold cottage to mid-century batwing (www.phillips66museum.com; 918-661-8687).

Among the early residents of Price Tower was Bruce Gaff, an impossible-to-categorize architect who practiced from the 1920s into the 1960s, in styles ranging from Art Deco to intergalactic. A number of his striking homes are in and around Bartlesville, though none are open to the public. However, you can stop inside the education building of his Redeemer Lutheran Church, built partly with blue-green culler glass, and you can find a compendium of his other buildings at www.brucegoffbartlesville.blogspot.com.

MORE ON THEATLANTIC.COM

For a slideshow of Frank Lloyd Wright's Price Tower, narrated by Wayne Curtis, visit www.theatlantic.com/multimedia.

Wayne Curtis is a frequent contributor to The Atlantic.

Document Number: A180278114
Ellen Key
1849-1926

Nationality: Swedish
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"Sidelights"

The Swedish social reformer Ellen Key wrote and lectured during a time of great change in Europe, and her ideas about women's rights and the education of children helped change attitudes and eventually laws in her native Sweden. Key viewed maternity and motherhood as sacred and argued for widespread reform that would allow women to devote themselves full time to what she considered humankind's most vital job. Such attitudes were at odds with other feminists of the era, who agitated to be entirely free from the burdens of child rearing. A dedicated pacifist, Key also penned tracts that argued that to work for peace was to be a nurturing mother as well. She believed that internationalism would end all war on the planet, in the same way that cannibalism and slavery had come to be considered barbaric, and her ideas about education paved the way for a later generation of reformers who had read her *Century of the Child*.

Key was born into a well-to-do family with a surname derived from a Scot ancestor who had migrated to Sweden around 1650. She was born on December 11, 1849, in Västervik, Sweden, the daughter of a countess and a landowner. Her father, Emil Key, was also the founder of an agrarian party and was elected to the Swedish parliament in 1868. Key had been educated at home by tutors and became her father's secretary when he went to Stockholm to take his seat; the opportunity was a rare one for a young woman of her day, and it greatly enhanced her interest in politics and social reform. Around 1880, however, the family fortune, enmeshed with the finances of her father's party, sank with the falling fortunes of that organization, and Key was forced to become a teacher to support herself. She taught at a liberal school in Stockholm for the next two decades.

At a local hall Key also began to lecture to groups of working women about political topics, which led to a side career as a journalist. Her first book, however, was a treatise on prehistoric man, but she followed this 1888 title with *Missbrukad Kvinnokraft* ("The Strength of Women Misused") eight years later. In it she argued that men and women were, from a physical and mental standpoint, vastly different creatures. "This argument has not recommended itself to modern radical feminists; and the book is, like all of her work, written in a now outdated, stilted, gushing, and too consciously 'beautiful' style," remarked an essayist in *World Authors, 1900-950*.

By 1900 Key had written six other books and was financially independent enough to give up her teaching career. That same year, her most famous book, *Barnets Århundrae*, was published. It was translated for publication in English nine years later as *The Century of the Child*. The title is borrowed from a line in a widely read book at the time in which a character asserts that as the nineteenth century was the century of the woman--referring to the greatly enhanced career and educational opportunities that opened up--the twentieth century would belong to the child. "The primary rights of the child," stated a *New York Times Book Review* critic, "for which the author contends are the right to be born of loving, harmonious parents, healthy and strong in body and sound in brain..."
and soul, into a home where it is welcome and into the arms of a mother willing and able to care for, to train and teach it through its childhood."

In her groundbreaking book, Key argued that women needed to refrain from labor that would harm their childbearing capabilities, and even from wearing damaging corsets, and that the government should be allowed some supervision in marriages and childbearing. She also maintained that, similar to compulsory military service for males, women should be required to spend a period of time in training for motherhood. Such attitudes earned her criticism from more radical feminists of the era, who espoused the vision of an entirely state-run childcare system staffed by "professional mothers." Key was adamantly opposed to kindergartens and day-care centers, however, believing that children benefited from the nurturing and care of both parents. "The Century of the Child offers abundant inspiration," noted Dial reviewer Caroline L. Hunt, despite what she felt were weaknesses in style and argument. "The truth is that it contains a definite program for woman's future work, organized as well as unorganized, in the interest of the child." Key's influential book was read by many, and its assertions were echoed in later works by Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and German educational reformers.

From 1903 to 1909, Key lived primarily in Germany and continued to write and lecture across Europe. She became known as one of the continent's most influential thinkers, and both her work and personality were known to some of the more eminent social and political figures of the day. Another enduring work, Love and Marriage, appeared in English translation in 1911.

Here, Key asserted that current divorce laws were harmful to what she called "the life-enhancement of the race," and that the institution of marriage itself was outmoded. "Love can exist without marriage, but marriage cannot exist without love," she observed. She dismissed onerous religious morals in favor of an emphasis on love itself—in some countries, for instance, a woman gave up so many rights when she married that many couples never formalized their unions; Key even went so far as to declare that some moral tenets were themselves immoral.

In Love and Marriage Key also contended that allowing women free expression of their sexuality would greatly enhance the lives of both men and women, as well as put an end to loveless matches, divorce, and many other social ills. Notions of female chastity and virginity were harmful and unnatural, she declared. "So long as 'pure' women take pleasure in the cruel sport of the cat; so long as with the facile changes of the serpentine dancer, they evade the responsibilities of their flirtations," she wrote. "So long as they delight in provoking jealousy as a homage to themselves; so long will they be helping to brew the hell-broth around which men will celebrate the witches' Sabbath in the company of the bat-winged beviess of the night."

In The Renaissance of Motherhood, translated from the Swedish for American publication in 1914, she expanded many of her earlier arguments about marriage and child-rearing, but some of her ideas still put her at odds with other feminist reformers of the era. Key asserted that women's power of reason was not equal to that of a man's, but that females did possess strong intuition. She decried the outmoded laws that deemed women property of their husbands, without rights of their own, and observed that since most women were financially unable to live on their own, they were forced into an arrangement that was actually a form of sexual slavery. The Renaissance of Motherhood also argues that new mothers should be given financial support for the first three years, but that they should also undergo a year of training for their role. Moreover, Key believed that women should not be allowed to marry until they reached the age of twenty-one.

Key, as a pacifist, was devastated by the onset of World War I. She wrote several works that called for world peace, and was active for several years in a women's movement aimed at ending all war. Her 1914 book Kriget, freden och framtidens was translated into War, Peace, and the Future: A Consideration of Nationalism and Internationalism, and of the Relation of Women to War two years later. Here she writes of a future in which positive relations between all nations would eventually make war obsolete.

Despite some negative criticism, Key was an esteemed figure in Sweden. The government even granted her a tract of land on which she was able to build a lakeside villa. She died there in April 1926. During her lifetime, she was happy to see the Parliament to which her father had once belonged enact much fairer social legislation regarding education, marriage, divorce, and the rights of women and children. Her works found resonance with German liberals for many decades, and even in English many of her best-known works remain in print. Her long correspondence with German pacifist writer Rainer Maria Rilke was published in 1993. She wrote many memorable lines during her career, but perhaps her most famous came with Love and Ethics, in which she

asserted that "The new woman's will to live through herself, for herself, reaches its limit when she begins to regard men as merely a means to a child. Woman could scarcely take a more complete revenge for having been treated for thousands of years as a means."

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Family: Born December 11, 1849, in Västervik, Sweden; died April 25, 1926, in Sweden; daughter of Emil (a politician and estate owner) and Countess Sophia Posse Key.

CAREER

Author. Teacher, c. 1880-1900; journalist and lecturer.
The Detroit Tribune - August 16, 1914

TR. CALLS TREATIES PERILOUS

REBELS OCCUPY CAPITAL

SILENCE ENVENOPS WARZONE

U.S. OPPOSES OTHER FORCE FOR EUROPE

FIGHTER DIE IN ORDER TO CAPTURE

Peace Prevailing Dawns Get Mixed in Dark Kill Several of German-Formed Volunteers

manah Borthwick
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<td>1925</td>
<td>Wright at 58. Portrait of Wright holding his baby daughter lovanna at Taliesin. No other copy of this print is known to exist. This photograph was loaned to Ken Burns for his 2004 Wright documentary. Inscribed on verso: &quot;Frank Lloyd Wright and baby daughter lovanna at Taliesin&quot;. Kelmscott Gallery, Chicago, acquired this photograph from Wright's granddaughter Nora Natof in 1980. Original vintage 2.5 x 4.25 silver gelatin photograph.</td>
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<td>Wright at 67. Frank Lloyd Wright Portrait. Original 5 x 7 Sepia tone. Given to Lucian Schlingin Sr. by Frank Lloyd Wright 1934-35. Purchased from Son. (Note on back: Return to Taliesin, Spring Green, Wisconsin)</td>
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<td>Wright at 69. High res digital 4x5 digital image, 1936. (241KB) 4 x 5.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940s</td>
<td>(Wright in his 70s.) &quot;Frank Lloyd Wright, Taliesin, Spring Green, Wisconsin. 11195-F&quot; Early 1940s at Taliesin. Back: All rights reserved - The L. L. Cook Co., Milwaukee. Real Photo Postcard. 3.4 x 5.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>&quot;Anne Baxter - 20th Century Fox Player&quot;. February 1942. Published by 20th Century Fox Film Corp. Anne Baxter was born in Michigan City, Indiana, on May 7, 1923. She was the daughter of a salesman and his wife, Catherine, who herself was the daughter of Frank Lloyd Wright. Anne was a young girl of 11 when her parents moved to New York City. Verso: &quot;Play time...and it's also time for exercise too for charming 17 year old Anne Baxter, who is being groomed for stardom by 20th Century-Fox following her featured performance in 'Swamp Water' for that studio.&quot; Original 8 x 10 vintage silver gelatin photograph.</td>
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FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

Wright at 18

Wright at 22
Taliesin (1911 - 1925) - Spring Green, WI; Frank Lloyd Wright
Not all that long ago, the Frank Lloyd Wright designed Turkel House (1955) in Detroit, (Seven Mile Road and the only Wright house in Detroit proper) Michigan was in really sad shape. However, what a difference dedicated owners and $1.2 million dollars can make...

New owners, Norman Silk and Dale Norman worked with architect and Wright expert Lawrence Brink to stabilize and undertake the restoration of this remarkable home. They worked from original drawings and correspondence to achieve Wright's original intentions. According to this recent article on modelD.com:

The drawings that they found ensured that the original kitchen cabinetry could be reproduced, as well as the original Music Room furniture that had been removed.

A new energy efficient heating system was installed, broken blocks in the parapet wall were replaced and a new insulated rubber roof was added. Energy efficient glass was installed in over 150 perforated block windows.

Interior work that remains to be completed includes the repainting of concrete surfaces, polishing of red concrete floors and returning the mahogany paneling and gallery cabinets to their original finish.

Outdoors, concrete terraces and walks will be stained red again, sixteen steel frame exterior doors and 24 ventilating windows will be returned to their original robin's egg blue color and a never-executed courtyard terrace will be built.
Meyer-May House Grand Rapids MI
Frank Lloyd Wrights Mistress Torn by Choices

Frank Lloyd Wrights Mistress Torn by Choices

Table of Contents: Essay

Historical fiction takes readers into events in a way straight history can never hope to do. If the purpose of history is to tell what happened, the purpose of fiction is to use motive and emotion to reveal why. Debut novelist Nancy Horan takes a big bite into a complex subject with Loving Frank, a novel that focuses on the scandalous affair between Frank Lloyd Wright and Martha "Mamah" Borthwick Cheney.

Wright and Cheney met in 1903, when she and her husband engaged Oak Park's "Tyrant of Taste" to design and construct their new home.

She found a man of ideas quite different from her spouse: "During construction, with some building detail as a starting point, they had lost themselves time and again in deep discussion. Those six months of collaboration seemed enchanted to her now. Frank Lloyd Wright had ignited her mind like no other person she'd met."

Once the house was finished, they fell out of touch. But their paths cross in 1907, and the dormant flame of mutual attraction is re-ignited.

Mamah came to her marriage as part of a growing group of educated women seeking possibilities beyond society's conventional strictures. Fluent in several languages, she'd taught school and was running Port Huron's library when she re-encountered Edwin Cheney, whom she'd known as an undergraduate student in Ann Arbor.

Edwin courted her with persistence, and she acquiesced to his proposal, despite their differences: She was literary, introspective and energized by ideas while he was an engineer, anchored in the concrete, a man accustomed to getting things done.

In Horan's narrative, Wright casts a spotlight on all that Mamah finds unsatisfying. She loves her two children, and realizes that she is married to a good man who provides her with a comfortable life. Yet time and again, feelings of entrapment arise.

In the diary that Horan uses to relay her central character's interior monologue. Mamah writes, "I have been standing on the side of life, watching it float by. I want to swim in the river. I want to feel the current." It is a feeling echoed in the novel's epigraph, a quotation from Goethe: "One lives but once in the world."

The public is outraged when, in 1909, Mamah and Wright decamp for Europe. They are married, though not to each other, and have between them eight children. Mamah continues to be torn between her unconditional love for Wright and the responsibilities she's left behind, "the terrible weight of remorse and doubt that daily, hourly sometimes, shifted inside like cargo." She finds inspiration in the work of Swedish feminist Ellen Key, who wrote that "love is moral even without
legal marriage, but marriage is immoral without love."

Key proves to be Mamah's salvation, hiring her to translate her work for an American audience. The work provides a needed professional identity, and the philosopher a sounding board.

Mamah and Edwin Cheney divorce, though Catherine Wright refuses to grant the same freedom to her husband. The illicit couple returns to the U.S., where they must face public disgrace and, for Wright, a loss of commissions. They stand firmly together, though, and Wright begins work on Taliesin, his signature home in Wisconsin.

Horan has pieced together a convincing narrative from relatively scant historical documents. Using biographies, and the autobiography, of Frank Lloyd Wright, newspaper articles from the era that cataloged the affair and letters written by Mamah to Ellen Key, she creates the portrait of a woman who is torn by her decisions.

It is a story that should resonate with anyone facing difficult choices, and Horan makes no attempt to sugarcoat the ramifications of Mamah's decision to follow her heart. The public excoriation is deeply painful to the couple, but it is dwarfed by the guilt each of the partners faces daily.

The reader's ultimate reaction to Mamah and her story lies outside the author's hands. Mamah may have been a woman of exceptional courage, living ahead of her time, or she may have been a creature of extreme selfishness. Much of the work's underlying current eddies around whether the world of people should be more important than the abstract world of ideas. Horan does a fine job of presenting the story, leaving it to the reader to judge.


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September 23, 2007

Notes on a Scandal

By LIESL SCHILLINGER

In “Ragtime,” his fable of social change in early-20th-century America, E. L. Doctorow sent a stuffy paterfamilias on an expedition to the North Pole, leaving his docile wife behind in New Rochelle. In the Arctic, the man was disgusted to encounter uninhibited Eskimo women coupling lustily with their husbands. Watching one of them in flagrante, he thought nostalgically of his seemly spouse and doubted whether the Eskimo wife even deserved the name of woman. But while he was off finding the True North, his wife was undertaking her own journey of discovery, setting her sensuality aflame with the teachings of Emma Goldman. Upon the explorer’s return, he sensed with alarm that the orbit of his “moral planet” had shifted. In their marital bed, his wife was “not as vigorously modest as she’d been.” To him, her liberation felt like a punishment from God. But what did it feel like to her? Would changing mores permit her to leave a man she had outgrown and still keep her good name?

“Loving Frank,” an enthralling first novel by Nancy Horan, is set at the same time as Doctorow’s modern classic — the decade before World War I — and recreates its weld of fact and fiction, wrapped around the core theme of female self-actualization. Unlike the wife in “Ragtime,” however, the woman under scrutiny in Horan’s book actually lived, and the world’s reaction to her liberation is known. The “Frank” of Horan’s title is the architect Frank Lloyd Wright; the “Loving” came from a woman who has been all but erased from history’s rolls: Mamah (pronounced MAY-muh) Borthwick Cheney, a learned, lovely woman who scandalized Chicago when she left her husband and two young children to flee to Europe with Wright — who left behind a wife and six children of his own. The two fell in love in 1907, while Wright was building a “prairie house” for Mamah and Edwin Cheney in Oak Park.

If guilt were calculated by the sheer number of abandoned offspring, Wright’s rap sheet would have been longer than Mamah’s; but Mamah was more vilified because she was a woman. (Horan weaves lurid contemporary press accounts into her narrative as proof.) In society’s view, Wright was merely misbehaving, while Mrs. Cheney was doing something far more
shocking: acting like an unnatural mother.

Horan prods readers to consider an uncomfortable question: Were Mamah’s feelings unnatural? Edwin Cheney didn’t think so; he granted her a divorce and allowed her access to their children. Wright didn’t think so; he wanted to marry her, but his estranged wife, Catherine, refused to divorce him. Compelling the reader’s sympathy, Horan evokes the image of Mamah, sunk in depression after the birth of her second child, recording a quotation by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her diary: “It is not sufficient to be a mother: an oyster can be a mother.” Mamah wanted more. “For as long as Mamah could remember,” Horan writes, “she had felt a longing inside for something she could not name.” A few months after the diary entry, that longing acquired a name: Frank Lloyd Wright.

Public outrage followed Frank and Mamah across the Atlantic in 1909, endangering the young architect’s career and destroying his companion’s good name. Wright’s legacy has been retroactively protected and buttressed by his work, but Mamah Borthwick Cheney’s reputation didn’t survive their romance — and neither did she. Horan follows the couple as their relationship travels from its anxious, ecstatic beginnings, past doubts and compromises, through renewed hope, and on to its tragic close. The conversations she invents between Mamah and Frank, as between all of the characters, proceed with unforced ease, enfolding multiple layers of their personal and professional lives, touching on poetry, translation, architecture, idealism, love and family.

At a distance of a hundred years, these conversations can hardly be actual, but Horan makes them plausible and engrossing. In France, desperately wishing to ease her guilt over leaving her family, Mamah seeks solace in the feminism of the Swedish suffragist Ellen Key. (Key later authorized Mamah to translate some of her work into English.) Reading Key’s book “Love and Marriage,” Mamah tells her lover in excitement: “She says that once love leaves a marriage, then the marriage isn’t sacred anymore. But if a true, great love happens outside of marriage, it’s sacred and has its own rights.” Exhilarated, she continues: “The human race will evolve to a higher plane where there won’t be a need for laws regulating marriage and divorce.” Cynically but not unkindly, he responds, “So if we can just hang on for a millennium or two, it’ll all work out.”

Upon the couple’s return to America, Wright built a refuge for them in the hills of southwestern Wisconsin — his famous Taliesin — hoping to escape censure and prying eyes. But their bid for privacy failed, and reporters besieged them. Grieved by the sanctimoniousness of the “birds of prey” who flocked round Taliesin, Wright released an impassioned defense of Mamah to the local press in the summer of 1914, but by then it was far too late to save her. She was “noble,”
he explained, and “valued womanhood above wifehood or motherhood.” Their life together was not hedonistic, he argued, because “the ‘freedom’ in which we joined was infinitely more difficult than any conformity with customs could have been. Few will ever venture it. ... You wives with your certificates for loving — pray that you may love as much or be loved as well!”

And yet, few of Mamah’s closest friends and relations, watching her bond with Wright deepen, had much love to spare for her. Mamah’s older sister, Lizzie, whom Mamah left to care for her children when she decamped with Wright, scorned her sister’s judgment. “Do you realize what you gave up for Frank Wright?” Lizzie asks. “The kind of life most women — most feminists — dream of.”

Even Ellen Key, whom Mamah regarded as her mentor, sent a letter to Taliesin, urging her to leave Wright for the sake of her children. “It has been my belief and expressed philosophy that the very legitimate right of a free love can never be acceptable if it is enjoyed at the expense of maternal love,” Key wrote. To Mamah (in Horan’s depiction), this defection was both devastating and intellectually dishonest: “It struck her that Ellen Key’s ideas were inherently self-contradictory.” How could a woman who believed that staying in a loveless marriage was “tantamount to prostitution” tell her to return to one? In her response to Key (drawn from one of only 10 letters from Mamah that Horan was able to find) she explained that she had made “a choice in harmony with my own soul and what I believe to be Frank Wright’s happiness.” As for reuniting with her children, she added, “that cannot be just yet.” Was such single-mindedness admirable or chilling? Where would this love have led Mamah, if fate had allowed it to continue?

A century after pathbreakers like Emma Goldman, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Ellen Key struggled to raise female consciousness, there is still no satisfactory answer to the question of how a woman dedicated to her own self-expression can fulfill the tradition-bound, justly demanding needs of her children when presented with a competitor for their love. The problem Ellen Key wrestled with in her philosophy, and that Mamah could not solve in her life, had no solution in 1907 and still has none in 2007. In “Loving Frank,” bringing the buried truths of the ill-starred relationship of Mamah Borthwick Cheney and Frank Lloyd Wright to light, Horan only increases her heroine’s mystery. Mamah Borthwick Cheney wasn’t just any woman, but Horan makes her into an enigmatic Everywoman — a symbol of both the freedoms women yearn to have and of the consequences that may await when they try to take them.

Liesl Schillinger is a regular contributor to the Book Review.
Novel Builds on Affair Between Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Cheney


Novel Builds on Affair Between Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Cheney

Table of Contents: Essay

Although Nancy Horan lived in Oak Park, Ill., for 24 years, she only gradually found the inspiration to base a novel on its famous architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Mamah Borthwick Cheney, a client who became Wright's lover. Horan's background had been in journalism. But about eight years ago, she took a class in fiction writing at the University of Chicago and, once the idea of tackling this highly censored early 20th century affair took hold, a historical novel seemed the perfectly obvious route. In fact, Horan had lived on the street where the home Wright designed for Mamah and Edwin Cheney was built.

While Horan says she enjoyed researching the period from 1900 to 1914, she says her first draft of her first novel, Loving Frank, proved too unfocused when told from several points of view. After two years, she began again, settling on Mamah (whose given name was Martha) as the main character. This decision allowed Horan not only to explore the age-old ethical dilemmas of abandoning motherhood and a dull marriage for an "erotic and nourishing" relationship but also to examine turn-of-the-century morals, gender roles and women's rights.

Mamah proved an excellent choice, for she was no simple housewife. Born in 1869, she did not marry until 1899. She was a member of the Nineteenth Century Woman's Club and was an intellectual and a former librarian who was interested in feminist issues, such as the right to work, equal pay and the vote; she had completed a master's degree in language studies and spoke German, French, Italian and Spanish and as well as reading Latin and Greek.

Compared with her dutiful three years as Mrs. Edwin Cheney, the six months when she and Frank collaborated on the house "seemed enchanted." The two discussed aesthetics, philosophy, architecture; Mamah "found herself saving up insights to tell Frank—thoughts she never would have shared with her husband." Both she and Frank were unhappily married; both had children. And in Oak Park, jokingly known as "Saints' Rest" because it had more churches than taverns, each was aware that others viewed them as elitist, eccentric or worse. Each felt a unique, powerful attraction for the other, feelings they eventually failed to resist.

Horan does a masterful job of bringing these conflicts, times and settings to life. Whether in narrative or dialogue, quoted letters or passages from newspaper articles, it's clear friends, family and the public were shocked and thoroughly disapproved. Social mores have changed significantly in the past century, but "the terrible weight of remorse and doubt" Mamah experiences is well portrayed and seriously offsets her hard-won pleasures.

Complicating things further, Frank's professional life suffers from the liaison. Commissions dry up. Finances become problematic. His wife, Catherine, refuses to grant a divorce, as does Mamah's husband. The lovers travel to Europe, where Frank hopes to generate income and to revamp his reputation by publishing a book on his work. The drawings alone will keep him busy at least a
year, but what of Mamah?

At loose ends, with no challenges of her own to occupy her considerable talents, she chances upon a book by the Swedish feminist philosopher Ellen Key, a leader in the Woman Movement, as it was then called. Key's writings proposed free love, individual choice and divorce reform. To Mamah, whose gift for languages opened a path for her to become Key's American translator, both the timing and the older woman's encouragement were priceless.

In fiction, coincidences can undermine a story if they're too convenient. But Horan notes that she found working from a historical context liberating. She was provided with a framework of events, then left to craft real and imaginary characters to flesh out her fictional world. For example, in this rendering, Frank, who is usually only esteemed as an artistic genius, becomes a compulsive shopper, a liar, a temperamental, sometimes vain and selfish man "who worshipped order" yet whose papers were in constant chaos. His flaws balance his strengths, lending him complexity and depth.

However, one drawback to following the entire course of the couple's stormy seven-year romance is a tedious and-then-and-then-and-then quality to the narrative. Too, with her journalism background, Horan sometimes seems more comfortable telling and explaining than showing.

Nevertheless, readers and moviegoers can't seem to get enough of stories based on true life, and Horan had the good sense to recognize the potential in a fascinating love story enriched by important themes and spiced by a famous character. It's to her credit that Mamah easily stands shoulder to shoulder with Frank. Mamah's struggles to risk finding a rewarding life, to leave Edwin but to do right by her son, John, and daughter, Martha, and to pursue meaningful work at a time when women had few career options all contribute to a memorable account.


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Horan, Nancy. Loving Frank.


Horan, Nancy. Loving Frank

Table of Contents: Essay

Long before the scandal sheets were aghast with news of Wallis Simpson and King Edward III, Liz Taylor and Richard Burton, or Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, a couple named Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Cheney caused quite a stir.

He, the iconic architect; she, the wife of a client. Their decision to abandon their respective families and flee to Europe was the talk of Chicago near the beginning of the last century.

Martha "Mamah" (pronounced May-mah, a childhood nickname that stuck) Cheney's unseemly death, murdered in 1914 by a deranged handyman on Wright's Wisconsin estate, added a grisly final chapter to the already tawdry story. Her ex-husband, Edwin Cheney, remarried and moved to St. Louis.

In her first novel, journalist Nancy Horan has translated the Wright-Cheney saga into historical fiction, a narrative track that requires authors to balance truth with the breadth of their imaginations.

For the most part, Horan succeeds.

Loving Frank deserves high marks for historical scholarship, middling to high marks for plot and, due in no small part to prose that stretches to fit facts to narrative, a big fat "F" for dialogue.

As envisioned by Horan, Cheney describes Wright to a friend and confidante: "I know it all sounds like a lot of nonsense to you, but the truth is, he shows you how much better you can live. How much better you can be. You can't have a conversation with Frank about architecture without it turning toward nature. He says nature is the body of god, and it's the closest we're going to get to the Creator in this life."

For all its contrivances, Loving Frank remains true to the trajectory of the Wright-Cheney romance.

By all accounts, Wright was not a nice man and, most probably suffered from bipolar disorder. Horan effectively conveys the unpleasant aspects of the architect's nature. In doing so, she allows the underlying themes of Loving Frank—Mamah Cheney as a feminist-before-her-time—to emerge.

Unfortunately, again, Loving Frank is sabotaged by a style more fitting for a television docu-drama:

"That night she woke in a panic. She had no idea how much or how little money they had. Frank had said their finances were in good shape since the trip to Japan. She realized now she did not trust him."

http://find.galegroup.com/ips/printdoc.do?contentSet=GSRC&docType=GSRC&isIllustrat... 11/7/2008
As portrayed by Horan, it's not hard to imagine that had Mamah Cheney been born a century later, she would have dumped Wright as she had her husband.

Her spiritual connection to a brilliant and prodigious mind notwithstanding, by the time she died, Cheney had long since come to understand why Loving Frank Lloyd Wright was such a tough sell. So, too, is the book.


**Gale Document Number:** EJ2181703004
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Frank Lloyd Wright

1867-1959

Birth: June 8, 1867 in Richland Center, Wisconsin
Death: April 9, 1959 in Phoenix, Arizona
Nationality: American
Source: Contemporary Authors Online, Gale, 2008.
Entry updated: 12/10/2004

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"Sidelights"

Frank Lloyd Wright is "universally accepted as the greatest architect America has ever produced," wrote contributor John Winter in Contemporary American Architects. The Wisconsin-born Wright is known for creating structures that complement their natural surroundings. He also designed integrated structures that carried the lines of the architecture into the buildings' interior design and furnishings. Architect for notable public structures like the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Tokyo's Imperial Hotel, he is also famous for his design of private residences. According to Winter: "It is in the treatment of space within the one-family home that Wright has had the greatest impact and there is hardly a home in America that does not show signs of his influence."

Wright designed scores of private houses, many in a style called the "Prairie Style" due to their "long, low, earth-hugging proportions," in the words of Winter. These homes include the renowned Fallingwater house and the Fallingwater guest house in Bear Run, Pennsylvania, buildings that complement a nearby waterfall and other aspects of the natural landscape. He designed and built many homes in the Midwest, including the famed Robie House in Chicago, Illinois, his own home and studio in Oak Park, Illinois, as well as his own private quarters attached to the
Taliesin complex in Spring Green, Wisconsin.

In addition to his work designing and overseeing buildings and other structures, Wright also worked as a teacher. He founded the Wright Foundation Fellowship for the education of future architects. They studied at the Wisconsin Taliesin and at Taliesin West in Paradise Valley, Arizona. Some of his students finished projects that Wright began before his 1959 death, including the Marin County Government Center in California.

Wright also wrote a number of books. He describes his views on the relationship between a building and its natural surroundings in An Organic Architecture (1939), a work republished in 1970. A collection of lectures that Wright delivered to the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1939, An Organic Architecture includes his assertion that "we are talking about the countryside itself developing into a type of building." Other works by Wright were revised or reprinted in the 1970s. Reviewing the 1977 revised edition of An Autobiography (a work originally published in 1932), Library Journal contributor Gloria K. Rensch called it "a classic work that should be in most libraries." It included Wright's own revisions of the work as well as several photographs of his family, friends, and architectural works.

Wright's book Genius and Mobocracy, first published in 1949 and reissued in 1971, includes Wright's views on democracy as well as information about American architect Louis H. Sullivan. Early in his career, Wright had worked at Sullivan's Chicago, Illinois firm of Adler and Sullivan. Reviewing Genius and Mobocracy, a Choice contributor observed how critics have noted that the work "said more about Frank Lloyd Wright that it did about Louis H. Sullivan, its apparent subject." A collection of Wright's portfolios, Ausgefuehrte Bauten und Entwurfe, was first published in Germany in 1911, and was reissued in 1968 as Frank Lloyd Wright: The Early Work. According to a critic in another review in Choice, this reissue is valuable for "seeing what Europe saw in 1911." This same text was later published as The Early Work of Frank Lloyd Wright: The "Ausgefuehrte Bauten" of 1911 (1982).

In the 1970s and 1980s members of the Wright Memorial Foundation edited and published the so-called "Letters Trilogy," three books of Wright's letters to various people. This trilogy contains the volumes Letters to Apprentices, Letters to Architects, and Letters to Clients. Writing about Letters to Apprentices and Letters to Architects in the Los Angeles Times Book Review, Alex Raksin said the books contain "Wright's thoughts about placing man in harmony with nature" as well as the architect's "desire to help middle-income Americans design their own environment" and his insistence that "talented, poor students be admitted to Taliesin." Commenting on the scope of the collection, Ada Louise Huxtable, reviewing all three in the New York Times Book Review, stated: "Call Wright 'genius,' 'magician,' or 'shaman,' his architecture is rooted in a far more impressive and less mysterious reality. Some of that reality is in the letters; more will emerge as other documents appear."

Interest in Wright's life and works continued into the 1990s. Bruce

Other critics praised Wright's *Collected Writings*. Glenn Masuchika, discussing the first volume in the *Library Journal*, observed that in addition to Wright's skill as an architect, he "was a prolific and imaginative writer." *American Book Review* contributor Robert Twombly recommended the first two volumes for their accurate information, "excellent illustrations" and "for collating a significant portion of what Wright intended for public consumption." The third volume of the *Collected Writings* contains "some gems of insight," commented *Choice* contributor J. Quinan, "into Wright's personality and work." Reviewing the fourth volume in *Choice*, Quinan observed that the *Collected Writings* "continue to provide new insights into one of America's most intriguing and prolific creative personalities." A contributor to *Kirkus Reviews* stated that the fourth volume contains "handsome" photographs and illustrations, "but they can only enhance, never compete with, the drama of Wright's words."

Discussing all the volumes in *Choice*, J. Quinan predicted that "the full set of Wright's writings will constitute an invaluable aid to scholars." Reviewing the first two volumes of Wright's *Collected Writings* in the *New Republic*, Diana Ketcham summarized Wright's legacy: "It was Wright's accomplishment, unique among modern architecture's first generation, to marry the urban glamour of the modern with the romance of the wide open spaces," adding that the architect "was a utopian thinker who practiced the frontier virtues of industry and grit."

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Original name, Frank Lincoln Wright; born June 8, 1867, in Richland Center, WI; died April 9, 1959, in Phoenix, AZ; son of William Russell Cary (an attorney, preacher, and musician) and Anna Lloyd (a teacher; maiden name, Jones) Wright; married Catherine Lee Tobin, 1889 (divorced); companion of Mamah Bortwick Cheney, (died, 1914); married Miriam Noel (a sculptor), 1915 (divorced); married Olga Ivanova Lazovich Hinzenberg (a dancer and writer; took the name Olga Ivanova Lloyd Wright), 1925; children: (first marriage) Lloyd, John, Catherine, Frances, David, Llewellyn; (third marriage) Iovanna; stepchildren: (third marriage) Svetlana. **Education:** Attended the University of Wisconsin School of Engineering, 1885-87. **Avocational Interests:** Collecting Japanese art. **Memberships:** National Institute of Arts and Letters.

**AWARDS**
Kenchiko Ho Citation, Royal Household of Japan, 1919; Royal Gold Medal, Royal Institute of British Architects, England, 1941; Gold Medal, American Institute of Architects, 1949; Peter Cooper Award, 1949; Star of Solidarity, City of Venice, 1951; Gold Medal, City of Florence, 1951; Gold Medal, American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, 1953; Brown Medal, Franklin Institute (Philadelphia, PA), 1954; Freedom of the City, Chicago, IL, 1956. Received honorary degrees from Princeton University, 1947, Florida Southern College, 1950, Yale University, 1954, University of Wisconsin, 1955, University of Wales, 1956, Wesleyan University, and the University of Venice. Honorary member of the Academie Royale des Beaux Arts, Brussels, Belgium, 1927; Akademie der Kuenste, Berlin, Germany, 1929; National Academy of Brazil, 1932; Royal Institute of British Architects, 1941; National Academy of Architects, Uruguay, 1942; National Academy of Architects, Mexico, 1943; National Academy of Finland, 1946; and Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Stockholm, Sweden, 1953. Wright Memorial Foundation in Spring Green, WI, founded in his honor; Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy founded to conserve his buildings.

CAREER

Allen D. Conover, Madison, WI, junior draftsman, 1885-87; Lyman Sillsbee, Chicago, IL, junior draftsman, 1887; Adler and Sullivan, Chicago, assistant architect, 1888-89, head of planning and design department, 1889-93; architect, partner with Cecil Corwin, Chicago, 1893-96; architect, Oak Park, IL, 1896-97; architect, Chicago, IL, 1897-1909, and beginning again in 1912; architect, Taliesin, Spring Green, WI, 1911-59; architect, Tokyo, Japan, 1915-20; architect, California, 1921-24 and 1928; architect, Chandler, AZ, 1928-29, and Paradise Valley, AZ, 1938-59. Founder, Wright Foundation Fellowship at Taliesin and Taliesin West; also worked as a teacher. After his death, Wright's students founded Taliesin Associated Architects to complete some of his projects. Compiled the Spaulding Collection of Japanese Prints, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Appeared in a documentary short film in the Popular Science series; designed a house for the film Five, Columbia, 1951. Recordings include the album Frank Lloyd Wright on Record, Caedmon, 1961.

Major works built include the Frank Lloyd Wright House, 1889, and Studio, 1897, both Oak Park, IL; Larkin Building, Buffalo, NY, 1904; Robie House, Chicago, IL, 1909; Taliesin, Taliesin II, and Taliesin III (Taliesin I and Taliesin II were both partially destroyed by fire), all Spring Green, WI, 1911-25, Taliesin Fellowship Complex built at Taliesin III in 1933; Imperial Hotel, Tokyo, Japan, 1922; Ocatillo, Chandler, AZ, 1928; Fallingwater (Kauffman House), Bear Run, PA, 1935, Fallingwater guest house built in 1938; S. C. Johnson Administration Building, 1936, Research Tower, 1944, and office alterations 1951, all Racine, WI; Wingspread (Johnson House), Racine, WI, 1937; Taliesin West, Paradise Valley, AZ, 1938; Snowflake (Wall House), Plymouth, MI, 1941; Solor Hemicycle (Jacobs House), Middleton, WI, 1942; Fountainhead (Hughes House), Jackson, MS, 1948; Dallas Theatre Centre, Dallas, TX, 1955; Marin County Government Center, San Rafael, CA, begun in 1957, completed by others in 1966; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City, 1959; also designed and built several other buildings,
complexes, and structures.

Reading Group Guide

Loving Frank
A Novel
by Nancy Horan

List Price: $14.00
Pages: 400
Format: Paperback
ISBN: 9780345495006
Publisher: Ballantine Books

About This Book

I have been standing on the side of life, watching it float by. I want to swim in the river. I want to feel the current.

So writes Mamah Borthwick Cheney in her diary as she struggles to justify her clandestine love affair with Frank Lloyd Wright. Four years earlier, in 1903, Mamah and her husband, Edwin, had commissioned the renowned architect to design a new home for them. During the construction of the house, a powerful attraction developed between Mamah and Frank, and in time the lovers, each married with children, embarked on a course that would shock Chicago society and forever change their lives.

In this ambitious debut novel, fact and fiction blend together brilliantly. While scholars have largely relegated Mamah to a footnote in the life of America’s greatest architect, author Nancy Horan gives full weight to their dramatic love story and illuminates Cheney’s profound influence on Wright.

Drawing on years of research, Horan weaves little-known facts into a compelling narrative, vividly portraying the conflicts and struggles of a
woman forced to choose between the roles of mother, wife, lover, and intellectual. Horan's Mamah is a woman seeking to find her own place, her own creative calling in the world. Mamah's is an unforgettable journey marked by choices that reshape her notions of love and responsibility, leading inexorably ultimately lead to this novel's stunning conclusion.

Elegantly written and remarkably rich in detail, Loving Frank is a fitting tribute to a courageous woman, a national icon, and their timeless love story.

discussion questions

1. Do you think that Mamah is right to leave her husband and children in order to pursue her personal growth and the relationship with Frank Lloyd Wright? Is she being selfish to put her own happiness and fulfillment first?

2. Why do you think the author, Nancy Horan, gave her novel the title Loving Frank? Does this title work against the feminist message of the novel? Is there a feminist message?

3. Do you think that a woman today who made the choices that Mamah makes would receive a more sympathetic or understanding hearing from the media and the general public?

4. If Mamah were alive today, would she be satisfied with the progress women have achieved or would she believe there was still a long way to go?

5. In Sonnet 116, Shakespeare writes, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds/Admit impediments. Love is not love/That alters where it alteration finds..." How does the relationship of Mamah and Frank bear out the sentiments of Shakespeare's sonnet? What other famous love matches fill the bill?

6. Is Mamah's story relevant to the women of today?

7. Is Frank Lloyd Wright an admirable figure in this novel? Would it change your opinion of him to know that he married twice more in his life?

8. What about Edwin Cheney, Mamah's husband? Did he behave as you might have expected after learning of the affair between his wife and Wright?

9. Edwin's philosophy of life and love might be summed up in the following words from the novel: "Tell her happiness is just practice. If she acted happy, she would be happy." Do you agree or disagree with this philosophy?

10. "Carved over Wright's fireplace in his Oak Park home are the words "Life is Truth." What do you think these words mean, and do Frank and Mamah live up to them?
11. Why do you think Horan chose to give her novel the epigraph from Goethe, "One lives but once in the world."

12. When Mamah confesses her affair to her friend Mattie, Mattie demands, "What about duty? What about honor?" Discuss some of the different meanings that characters in the novel attach to these two words.

13. In analyzing the failure of the women's movement to make more progress, Mamah says, "Yet women are part of the problem. We plan dinner parties and make flowers out of crepe paper. Too many of us make small lives for ourselves." Was this a valid criticism at the time, and is it one today?

14. Why does seeing a performance of the opera *Mefistofele* affect Mamah so strongly?

15. Why is Mamah's friendship with Else Lasker Schuler important in the book?

16. Ellen Key, the Swedish feminist whose work so profoundly influences Mamah, states at one point, "The very legitimate right of a free love can never be acceptable if it is enjoyed at the expense of maternal love." Do you agree?

17. Another of Ellen Key's beliefs was that motherhood should be recompensed by the state. Do you think an idea like this could ever catch on in America? Why or why not?

18. Is there anything that Frank and Mamah could have done differently after their return to America that would have ameliorated the harsh welcome they received from the press? Have things changed very much in that regard today?

19. What part did racism play in Julian Carlton's crime? Were his actions the product of pure insanity, or was he goaded into violence?

Critical Praise

"This graceful, assured first novel tells the remarkable story of the long-lived affair between Frank Lloyd Wright, a passionate and impossible figure, and Mamah Cheney, a married woman whom Wright beguiled and led beyond the restraint of convention. It is engrossing, provocative reading."

—Scott Turow

"It takes great courage to write a novel about historical people, and in particular to give voice to someone as mythic as Frank Lloyd Wright. This beautifully written novel about Mamah Cheney and Frank Lloyd Wright's love affair is vivid and intelligent, unsentimental and compassionate."
—Jane Hamilton

"I admire this novel, adore this novel, for so many reasons: The intelligence and lyricism of the prose. The attention to period detail. The epic proportions of this most fascinating love story. Mamah Cheney has been in my head and heart and soul since reading this book; I doubt she'll ever leave."

—Elizabeth Berg

"Loving Frank is one of those novels that takes over your life. It's mesmerizing and fascinating—filled with complex characters, deep passions, tactile descriptions of astonishing architecture, and the colorful immediacy of daily life a hundred years ago—all gathered into a story that unfolds with riveting urgency."

—Lauren Belfer
Partner to Genius
Olgivanna Lloyd Wright (Lazovich, Serbain from Montenegro) wife and companion of famous American architect Frank Lloyd Wright

Olgivanna Lloyd Wright played a crucial role in life and achievements of Frank Lloyd Wright, the greatest architect who ever lived. Olga Ivanovna Lazovich was a Serbian born in Montenegro in 1898, part of the previous Yugoslavia. She was the grand daughter of a famous Serbian/Montenegrin writer, tribe leader, Montenegrin duke and hero.
SONNET 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come:
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
Never writ, nor no man ever loved.

PARAPHRASE

Let me not declare any reasons why two
True-minded people should not be married. Love is not love
Which changes when it finds a change in circumstances,
Or bends from its firm stand even when a lover is unfaithful:
Oh no! it is a lighthouse
That sees storms but it never shaken;
Love is the guiding north star to every lost ship,
Whose value cannot be calculated, although its altitude can be measured.

Love is not at the mercy of Time, though physical beauty
Comes within the compass of his sickle.
Love does not alter with hours and weeks,
But, rather, it endures until the last day of life.
If I am proved wrong about these thoughts on love
Then I recant all that I have written, and no man has ever [truly] loved.

ANALYSIS

marriage...impediments (1-2): T.G. Tucker explains that the first two lines are a "manifest allusion to the words of the Marriage Service: 'If any of you know cause or just impediment why these two persons should not be joined together in holy matrimony'; cf. Much Ado 4.1.12. 'If either of you know any inward impediment why you should not be conjoined.' Where minds are true - in possessing love in the real sense dwell upon in the following lines - there can be no 'impediments' through change of circumstances, outward appearance, or temporary...
lapses in conduct." (Tucker, 192).

**bends with the remover to remove (4):** i.e., deviates ("bends") to alter its course ("remove") with the departure of the lover.

**ever-fixed mark (5):** i.e., a lighthouse (mark = sea-mark). Compare Othello (5.2.305-7):

Be not afraid, though you do see me weapon'd;
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt,
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.

**the star to every wandering bark (7):** i.e., the star that guides every lost ship (guiding star = Polaris).
Shakespeare again mentions Polaris (also known as "the north star") in Much Ado About Nothing (2.1.222) and Julius Caesar (3.1.65).

**Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken (8):**
The subject here is still the north star. The star's true value can never truly be calculated, although its height can be measured.

**Love's not Time's fool (9):** i.e., love is not at the mercy of Time.

**Within his bending sickle's compass come (10):** i.e., physical beauty falls within the range ("compass") of Time's curved blade. Note the comparison of Time to the Grim Reaper, the scythe-wielding personification of death.

**edge of doom (12):** i.e., Doomsday.
Compare 1 Henry IV (4.1.141):

Come, let us take a muster speedily:
Doomsday is near; die all, die merrily.

Sonnet 116 is about love in its most ideal form. It is praising the glories of lovers who have come to each other freely, and enter into a relationship based on trust and understanding. The first four lines reveal the poet's pleasure in love that is constant and strong, and will not "alter when it
alteration finds." The following lines proclaim that true love is indeed an "ever-fix'd mark" which will survive any crisis. In lines 7-8, the poet claims that we may be able to measure love to some degree, but this does not mean we fully understand it. Love's actual worth cannot be known – it remains a mystery. The remaining lines of the third quatrains (9-12), reaffirm the perfect nature of love that is unshakeable throughout time and remains so "ev'n to the edge of doom", or death.

In the final couplet, the poet declares that, if he is mistaken about the constant, unmovable nature of perfect love, then he must take back all his writings on love, truth, and faith. Moreover, he adds that, if he has in fact judged love inappropriately, no man has ever really loved, in the ideal sense that the poet professes. The details of Sonnet 116 are best described by Tucker Brooke in his acclaimed edition of Shakespeare's poems:

[In Sonnet 116] the chief pause in sense is after the twelfth line. Seventy-five per cent of the words are monosyllables; only three contain more syllables than two; none belong in any degree to the vocabulary of 'poetic' diction. There is nothing recondite, exotic, or metaphysical in the thought. There are three run-on lines, one pair of double-endings. There is nothing to remark about the rhyming except the happy blending of open and closed vowels, and of liquids, nasals, and stops; nothing to say about the harmony except to point out how the fluttering accents in the quatrains give place in the couplet to the emphatic march of the almost unrelieved iambic feet. In short, the poet has employed one hundred and ten of the simplest words in the language and the two simplest rhyme-schemes to produce a poem which has about it no strangeness whatever except the strangeness of perfection. (Brooke, 234)

References

How to Cite this Article
Thanks for following up on this for me. I now have found the source in the Gale databases that I was unable to locate. It will take another look at the source to find the quote you are looking for.

The paper is back, and I will go through it one more time.

From: Gale-Power Search [mailto:Annette.Weiss@farmlib.org]
Sent: Tuesday, April 21, 2009 8:13 PM
To: Kuchek, Sheri
Subject: Power Search:Frank Lloyd Wright: the colorful, eventful life of influential American architect Frank Lloyd Wright has long been the subject of biographers. But a highly creative and sometimes scandalous component of that life called "the fellowship" has n


Most people know that Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) designed Fallingwater, the Johnson Wax building, and the Guggenheim Museum, and many people have heard of his Wisconsin estate, Taliesin, and its counterpart in Arizona. But the bizarre world of Wright's Taliesin Fellowship--the reclusive community of live-in apprentices the architect founded in 1932 with his third wife, Olga Hinsenberg--is familiar only to the experts. And even they may not be aware of just how complex, both personally and professionally, the interaction between the Wrights and the Fellowship members actually was.

That relationship is the subject of The Fellowship: The Untold Story of Frank Lloyd Wright & the Taliesin Fellowship, by Roger Friedland and Harold Zellman, due out this month from Regan Books/Harper Collins. In the excerpt below, the authors detail Taliesin's status as "a love colony." The Fellowship was a heavily male organization and, at the same time a place where members were sequestered from the outside world, which limited opportunities for heterosexual expression. Solving this problem was critical to the future of the Fellowship, and it fell on Wright's wife to find an answer. But her solutions came at the expense of many of those the organization most relied on, including its most talented draftsman and its small group of women.

The Fellowship had barely opened when the excursions began. Apprentices would push their cars into the night, turning on the ignition only when they thought they were out of earshot. With their headlights off, they drove off to meet up with local farm girls or to visit a house just outside Spring Green [Wisconsin], where some enterprising prostitutes had set up shop.

In doing so, of course, they were risking expulsion. "Members of the Fellowship," the 1934 regulations read, "are requested not to seek the town for relaxation. If relaxation of this sort is necessary, some quality that should be present in work and fellowship is missing.... Either the life at Taliesin will be for the purpose of membership here, complete, or the member 'town-relaxed' will be invited to return to the life of the town where, manifestly, he belongs."

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Olgivanna Wright had her own unorthodox views on sexuality. A true student of [Greek-Armenian mystic Georgi] Gurdjieff, she considered it an expression of one's essence, a path to spiritual development. And she took an intense interest in the sex lives of the apprentices, both male and female—not only in who was doing what to whom, but in the very mechanics of their relations, in who was a good lover and who was not. She knew "every position, every way, and every problem of intercourse," one former resident claimed. Many an apprentice was shocked when out of nowhere she brought up the importance of orgasms and how they benefited creativity. And not just any orgasm: Gurdjieff taught that masturbation made it impossible for one to develop a soul.

Olgivanna was keenly aware that the shortage of Taliesin women put the boys in a bind. And not long after the Fellowship began, she came up with a bold solution. With no women nearby to satisfy them, she advised, they should "seek each other out rather than creating all this problem in Spring Green."

It was an extraordinary suggestion. Even Gurdjieff had taught her that homosexuality—Athenianism, he called it—prevented spiritual progress. But apparently Mrs. Wright saw no other way to keep the apprentices from looking for satisfaction off-campus.

Olgivanna went well beyond just recommending that the male apprentices start tending to one another's needs. As [Fellowship member] Jack Howe later told apprentice Jim de Long, she called a secret meeting of a number of the unattached male apprentices to teach them how to do it. But she wasn't content with that bit of instruction. Proud of her ability to sense whether two people would make a good couple, Olgivanna ended the gathering with a dramatic flourish: She had the selected apprentices—straight and gay alike—stand in two lines facing one another, paired the incredulous young men off, and sent them off to try it on their own.

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While Olgivanna's "solution" may have served to contain some amount of sexual activity within the Fellowship, for many it was also redundant. For gay men had been thriving at Taliesin, at least discreetly, from the very beginning. Just as many of Wright's oldest and closest personal friends were homosexual—Charles Ashbee, Alexander Woollcott, Charles Laughton, and, probably, Louis Sullivan—the core group of apprentices with whom he surrounded himself, and upon whom he most depended, was disproportionately gay. The master always knew instantly which new apprentices he wanted in his inner sanctum. Many, if not most, were homosexual.

Indeed, without the talents and devotion of this core group, Frank Lloyd Wright's career might not have flourished as it did. They brought in some of his most important clients, photographed his buildings, and
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© 2009 Gale, Cengage Learning.
Frank Lloyd Wright: the colorful, eventful life of influential American architect Frank Lloyd Wright has long been the subject of biographers. But a highly creative and sometimes scandalous component of that life called "the fellowship" has never been fully explored. A new book draws back the curtain. (ARCHITECTURE--BEHIND THE SCENES) Friedland, Roger; Zellman, Harold.


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