

Literary Women



Summer 2009

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CapeWomenOnline serves as a venue for the women of Cape Cod to share their ideas, experiences and resources while inspiring each other in their life's journey.

Book Review

by Pat Bertschy

"LOVING FRANK"

A NOVEL BY NANCY HORAN
RANDOM HOUSE, INC. 2007

The fiction novel *Loving Frank*, by Nancy Horan, 2007, is based on the true story of one woman's love affair with architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Set against the backdrop of the women's movement, in the early twentieth century, Mamah Borthwick Cheney meets Frank when she and her husband, Edwin, hire him to design a house for them.

Mamah falls passionately and recklessly in love with Frank. His art, intellect and his passion excite her like no man has before. She can't stop thinking about him between their clandestine meetings.

Married with 2 small children when she falls in love with Frank, Mamah expresses her dissatisfaction with her life's choices. "Women are part of the problem," she says. "We plan dinner parties and make flowers out of crepe paper. Too many of us make small lives for ourselves."

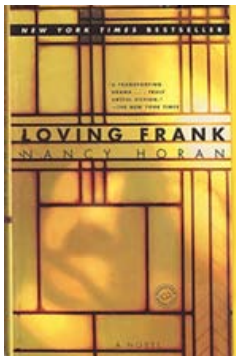
Will she find the freedom she is looking for with a petulant, possessive, egotistical artist? Or would any marriage be limiting for this well educated woman?

The women's movement, such as it was in the 1907 suburb of Oak Park, Illinois, plays a strong role in the story. Mamah belongs to the Nineteenth Century Woman's Club and is an advocate for women's rights.

Although women's suffrage was a hot issue, women still rarely worked outside the home. Mamah's own mother believed that education made women unsuitable for marriage.

Sometimes we hear words that are pivotal in our lives; Mamah hears such words from the noted Swedish feminist Ellen Key: "...love between a man and a woman of the same moral and intellectual level ...has a higher right than other feelings."

Mamah feels Ellen's words are encouragement for her need to pursue the affair. Yet Mamah still struggles with her decision because she misses her children and regrets the diminished role she now has in their lives. The newspapers report the scandalous affair relentlessly, leaving Mamah with little peace.



If Mamah leaves her husband, how will she support herself? How can she desert her children? How will society react?

Nancy Horan had a difficult job in creating the character of Mamah from the very few letters and writings that she left. The result is a complex character whose life leaves us with questions.

Did Mamah yearn for independence and intellectual fulfillment, or did she become dissatisfied with her "simple life" and simply fall in love with Frank? The reader wonders whether Mamah made deliberate choices in her life or allowed circumstances to make them for her.

Loving Frank raises universal questions facing women: what are a woman's rights, what are women's responsibilities, and what can women do when they are in conflict? Is it any easier for us to answer these questions in 2009, than it was in 1907?

Reviewed by Pat Bertschy, an avid reader who lives in Brewster.

The Nubian Lady Told Me

by Rosanne Shapiro

"You're too tall."

Three words that shattered my dream of becoming a ballerina, spinning and leaping in Swan Lake, partnered and held by strong masculine arms, welcoming "bravos" at curtain calls

"You're too tall."

I did not have the body of a ballerina.— tiny, flat-chested, lighter than air. But my 36C hourglass figure overflowed with natural grace and a strong rhythmic sense, embodying complicated routines easily.

"You're too tall."

My dream went underground, joined by others – pianist, model, UN interpreter, Broadway musical star, Ph.D. psychologist – banished from the world of possibility by the words of so-called experts.

Then I saw her – six foot tall Nubian Lady, silhouetted on a backlit stage posture erect head held high, crowned by a skull-embracing afro, ebony skin glowing.

She claimed the space with sensual moves, the curves and planes of her body showing through her long black dress. Her eyes flashed with strength and power. I watched, entranced and close to tears, thinking about what might have been.

Now, my dreams are made of stronger stuff. "Experts" and naysayers have no place in the heart and soul of my longings. I say "Oh, yeah? Watch me!" "Anything is possible."

The Nubian Lady told me so.

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