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INCONSTANT UNITY: THE PASSION OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

"A foolish consistency," runs one of Ralph Waldo Emerson's most famous and misquoted aphorisms, "is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do."¹ Rarely has anyone pursued this Emersonian injunction with greater single-mindedness than Frank Lloyd Wright. Intent on proving the greatness of his soul from a very early age, Wright cherished his inconsistencies as if they were among his most beloved creations. The extraordinary talent that enabled him to produce such an astonishing array of architectural forms was matched by an equally extraordinary ability to revel in the polarities of his own soul no matter how incompatible they seemed. Remembering Louis Henri Sullivan's quest for "the rule so broad as to admit of no exception," Wright declared that "for the life of me I could not help . . . being most interested in the exception proving the rule useful or useless."² Rebel, iconoclast, trickster: one might almost say that exception and inconsistency were the unifying passions of Wright's life, the ultimate proofs of an independence he cherished above all other things.

In his personal conduct, for instance, Wright's inconsistencies are as notorious today as they were during his lifetime. Here was a man of great charm and charisma, able, as his son John said, to "win over anyone when he really wanted something," who sooner or later offended, alienated, or infuriated almost everyone who crossed his path.³ The jumble of adjectives that still swirls around his name—arrogant, generous, grandiose, whimsical, bullying, tender, manipulative, playful, and many others no less accurate—suggests how successful he was at leaving his audience perennially off-balance, half-outraged at his bombast and his violation of social norms, half-amused at his unpredictability and his unabashed enthusiasm for his own performance. Here was a man whose self-love seemed limitless, whose ego apparently knew no bounds, who nonetheless hungered for the validation he could only receive from admirers, disciples, and lovers. An extreme proponent of individualism and personal independence, he did his best work only when buttressed by soul mates who believed in his talent even more unshakably than he did. Wright said of himself that "he couldn't live, move and have his being, so it seemed, without a heart-to-heart comrade."⁴ And yet his mistrust for his own dependence on such soul mates helped produce the lurches in his domestic life for which he eventually became infamous. The consummate designer of domestic space, who invariably made the hearth and its fire a metaphor for the sacred family circle, fled that circle when he feared that it threatened his own freedom. For ordinary people who watched Wright's

behavior from afar, inconsistencies such as these often looked like irresponsibility—or worse, dishonor. Even today, when one inquires about Wright's reputation in his home state of Wisconsin, one usually hears, first, that he abandoned his family and, second, that he was not a man of his word—not a man whose honor could be consistently trusted. "You know," people say with considerable feeling almost half a century after the fact, "the man didn't pay his bills."

It would be easy to regard such personal inconsistencies as mere peccadilloes that fade into irrelevancy when set against Wright's undeniably brilliant artistic achievements. Certainly there is much to be learned by moving beyond the distractions of his formidable personality to confront his buildings directly. The trouble, unfortunately, is that Wright himself clearly believed his architecture to be an organic expression of the very personality that, in many ways, seems so problematic. Indeed, his affection for the inconsistent hobgoblins that strike terror in little minds was everywhere apparent in his professional practice. Proclaiming the need for a new "organic" architecture, he argued that buildings should respond to the natural conditions of their sites—and yet one of the most important innovations of his so-called Prairie style was to introduce shallow-pitched roofs into northern climates where winter snow accumulations threatened the integrity of any roof not steep enough to shed its load by force of gravity. The leakiness of Wright's roofs is nothing short of legendary, even to this day. Wright espoused a deep devotion to the "nature of materials," arguing that each should be employed only in ways that were consistent with its innermost qualities, and yet he repeatedly pushed those materials to the extreme limits of their tolerance, to the verge of failure and beyond.

He treated people in much the same way. Although he claimed that an architect should design each house to reflect the individuality of its owner, in fact, he behaved as if the owner's individuality mattered far less than the architect's.⁵ In his view clients simply did not understand their own needs, and so the architect should reeducate their tastes to bring them in line with his own.⁶ "It's their duty," he declared, "to understand, to appreciate, and conform insofar as possible to the idea of the house."⁷ And so we have famous stories of houses with ceilings so low that anyone much taller than Wright—who stretched truth and height alike when he claimed to be five feet, eight inches tall—would regularly bump his head, and of homeowners who, after inviting Wright to spend the night, awoke to discover their living-room furniture completely rearranged, or even discarded, to match his own vision of the room.⁸ (To be fair, many clients were quick to admit that Wright's taste was superior to their own, and

expressed real gratitude for the new aesthetic values he taught them.⁹) His peremptory attitude toward anyone else's individual expression extended beyond his clients to the students who came to learn architecture at his feet. Although he constantly lectured them about the need for artistic independence and the paramount goal of developing their own individuality, in practice he demanded conformity, consistently refusing them the space to articulate any artistic vision at odds with the master's.¹⁰ Indeed, one cannot imagine Frank Lloyd Wright as a student in his own Taliesin Fellowship.

"With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do." If Emerson's preaching is true, then Wright's paradoxes surely seem to confirm the greatness that is everywhere evident in his buildings. And yet our dilemma in this is that Wright's inconsistencies are so endlessly fascinating and seductive (just as he intended them to be) that they get in the way of deeper questions about the sources of his inspiration (just as he intended they should do). The legend of Frank Lloyd Wright is no less masterful a creation than his architecture, and the two buttress each other. No artist has ever worked so hard to claim total originality for himself; none has sought more assiduously to deny the obvious influences that contributed to his special vision. To be inconsistent even in one's own behavior was another way of asserting that ordinary rules could not possibly apply to a genius so unprecedented that it claimed to violate virtually every tradition of Western architecture. Nothing would have pleased Wright more, surely, than for us to draw this lesson from the many paradoxes that he left scattered like red herrings across his path.

And so the historian faces several riddles when confronting Wright's life and work. One is the obvious question about his intellectual roots, the architectural traditions and broader cultural movements that, despite his many denials, did in fact lay the foundations for his own great achievements. In Wright's case, we are also faced with his amazingly prolific output not just of buildings but of *words*, for the man was an indefatigable talker and writer. Rarely has an architect said so much in defense of his own vision or tried harder to articulate a philosophy that would make aesthetic and moral sense of his creations. In reading his many books, lectures, letters, and polemics, one quickly becomes aware of Wright's obsession with certain ideas that he believed underlay all of his work. Over and over again he tells us that a truly great work of architecture must express harmony, simplicity, order, organic beauty, natural integrity, unity—indeed, even "consistency."¹¹ Here the mystery deepens, for this seemingly most inconsistent of men was among the most consistent defenders of consistency as a cardinal virtue in life and art. The challenge he has left us is thus to discover the unifying principles—what Emerson might have called the *unfoolish* consistencies—that can resolve his many apparent contradictions.

In trying to discover the abstract principles that gave order to this disorderly life, one can begin by posing a very concrete riddle: Why did so many of Frank Lloyd Wright's roofs leak? Surely the ability of a roof to keep out water is just about the most basic proof of any building's integrity, and yet sooner or later a remarkable number of Wright's

roofs have failed this simple task. They have not kept organic nature—rain and snow—at bay. Some of the leaks are by now so famous that they have virtually become clichés. The angry phone call that Herbert F. Johnson, the president of S. C. Johnson & Son, Inc., made to Wright in the midst of a dinner party at his new house, Wingspread (see plates 275–277), because that party had been interrupted by a steady drip onto Johnson's bald head, and Wright's suggestion that the irate owner solve the problem by moving his chair, is so familiar that anyone acquainted with Wright will probably have encountered it many times, sometimes even told about completely different houses and owners.¹² The Johnson story may now be too familiar, but only because the experience it describes is so typical. When I recently visited the Unitarian Church in Madison, Wisconsin, of 1945–51 (plates 368–370), I gradually became aware during the sermon of a rather pleasant rhythmic sound from the back of the auditorium. When I turned to discover its source I saw amid the parishioners two garbage cans collecting the steady streams of water dripping from the ceiling.¹³ The Madison Unitarians have learned to take such events in stride, though perhaps with not quite the good humor of Mrs. Richard Lloyd Jones, the wife of Wright's cousin, who responded to an inquiry about her own leaky roof by saying: "This is what happens when you leave a work of art out in the rain."¹⁴

In fact, the leakiness of Wright's roofs is only one item in a long list of structural failings—some of them much more serious—that have plagued his buildings. For this reason, trivial as they may seem, anecdotes about the drip on Johnson's head or about garbage cans catching water amid church pews carry the burden of a much larger question about Wright's work. For his critics, such stories stand as an implicit indictment, suggesting that for all his supposed brilliance he failed to meet some of the most basic obligations of sound architectural practice. His supporters respond defensively by blaming such problems on builders who, through perfidy or incompetence, failed to follow Wright's instructions; alternatively, they argue that *all* roofs eventually leak, no matter how competent the architect. For Wright's defenders his leaky roofs are a persistent embarrassment; for his critics they offer a perennial opportunity to prick his inflated reputation. But the riddle they pose becomes much more interesting if we take them seriously: they are, after all, a perfect symbol of the many other paradoxes in which Wright took such obvious and mischievous delight. If we acknowledge at the outset that Wright was unquestionably among the most brilliant and creative architects in all of human history—and there is no reason to deny him this claim—what then should we make of his leaky roofs? What clues can they give us about the unifying principles that defined order, integrity, and beauty for this strangely inconsistent but consistently visionary man?

THE LLOYD JONES LEGACY

Any investigation of Wright's unifying principles and the sources from which they sprang must begin with one of the more curious paradoxes of his long career: this man who more than any other symbolizes

modern architecture in twentieth-century America was in fact profoundly a child of the nineteenth century in his aesthetic vision and moral philosophy. The architect Philip Johnson was perhaps unfair but not entirely wrong when he described Wright as America's greatest nineteenth-century architect.¹⁵ Born in 1867, Wright was already approaching middle age at the turn of the new century and had long since imbibed the core values that would sustain him for the rest of his career. His longevity and his protean ability even very late in life to keep reinventing new architectural vocabularies should not obscure the fact that his moral compass never wavered from the beliefs he acquired as a young man. To the core of his being, Wright was a nineteenth-century romantic, steeped in idealist traditions that reached back through Louis Sullivan and Walt Whitman to the New England Transcendentalists and beyond.

To say this about him is neither to deny the originality of his genius nor to label him as somehow old-fashioned. Even a genius must speak in the language of his own day, respond to its obsessions, and work with the artistic and cultural resources it makes available to him. Indeed, one might say that the task of genius is to take ideas that are very much "in the air," profoundly a part of their time and place, and demonstrate their possibilities for the future in such strikingly original ways that they suddenly seem innovative and obvious at the same time.¹⁶ This is surely what Wright did with such brilliance. One of the clearest proofs of his ability to speak to the twentieth century in the language of the nineteenth is the very vocabulary in which he did so, as much in his words as in his buildings. When Wright used terms like *organic*, *individualism*, *democracy*, and *nature* he was expressing nineteenth-century values that are subtly but crucially different from our own. All were infused with the values of romantic idealism. Wright shared with his nineteenth-century contemporaries a deep conviction that the chief task of science and art was to discover underlying principles of order—present not just in architecture but in literature, philosophy, music, mathematics, and, indeed, in the entire organic and inorganic universe—which would reveal the hidden unity of humanity and nature. To know these principles was to come as close as humanly possible to a direct encounter with God. Herein lay the meaning of the lines Wright so often quoted from Alfred Lord Tennyson:

*Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.*¹⁷

The nineteenth-century figures to whom Wright turned for inspiration all shared with Tennyson this central conviction, which was far more literal for most of them than it would be for their twentieth-century counterparts: the flower in the crannied wall was as much an ideal as a physical object, and the principle it disclosed was nothing less than the face of God.

Wright learned to embrace this romantic vision of a divinely ordered and principled universe at a very early age. Of this we can be sure, even though his childhood is so shrouded in self-conscious myth-making that it is difficult to extract reliable information from his later accounts of it. His favorite fable—that his mother knew even as she carried him in her womb that he was predestined to be a great architect—has all the earmarks of hagiography, and there is little reason to worry much about its truth or falsehood.¹⁸ Whatever Anna Wright's role in directing him toward architecture, she and her family were unquestionably the most important early source of his romantic idealism. There also can be no doubt about her high ambitions for her son, on whom she lavished far more love and devotion than on her husband William. Wright's father emerges from the record as a rather pathetic figure, a charming, personable, footloose spendthrift, talented but unfulfilled, who could never satisfy his demanding wife. William Wright finally walked out on his family, much as his son would do a quarter of a century later—though William's wife was eager for his departure and Frank's was not. Frank Lloyd Wright seems to have remembered his father chiefly for giving him an enduring love of classical music, especially Bach and Beethoven, and a belief that music was a near perfect metaphor for the principles that informed great architecture. "The composer," Wright later said, "is a builder. My father taught me to listen to a symphony as an edifice of sound. . . . Building is the same thing. It's taking a motif, a theme and constructing from it an edifice that is all consistent and organic—an organism as a whole."¹⁹

William Wright was a popular but discontented preacher, a competent linguist, a fine musician, and a frustrated composer. In his son's eyes—and his wife's—he too often fell short of the very ideals he preached.²⁰ And so he helped set the stage for a classic oedipal drama in which a brilliant son struggled without much difficulty to win his mother from his father's affections. The egotism and arrogance that would so typify Wright in later life were obvious legacies of that early family contest. In the words of his sister Maginel, Anna Wright "gathered all the strands of her yearning, wove them together, and fastened them once and for all to her son. He was more than her child. He was her protégé, her legacy. He would accomplish what she and her husband could not. From the start, her devotion to Frank was overwhelming."²¹ Wright put it more succinctly: "The lad was his mother's adoration. She lived much in him."²² Although her love for him was absolute, so were the standards by which she measured his performance. She served as his teacher, his taskmaster, and his most demanding but adoring audience, becoming his personal archetype of the devoted female companion who would unquestioningly subordinate her life, passion, and sense of mission to his own. Perhaps for this very reason, as his sister also reported, "she was not always easy with him, and she made the mistake of failing to mask her disapproval of the women to whom he was attracted, though sometimes they were strikingly like her in looks and in spirit."²³ From her, surely, he acquired the lifelong habit of regarding himself as a golden boy, an *enfant terrible*, a man-child so used to being forgiven no matter how grievous his



Figure 1: The Lloyd Jones family, 1883. Frank Lloyd Wright's grandfather Richard Lloyd Jones is seated to the left of the empty chair. His parents, Anna and William Carey Wright, are in the back row, third and fourth from the right; in front of them is his sister Jane. He is seated to the right of the empty chair, with sister Maginel on his lap. At the far right, second row, is the Reverend Jenkin Lloyd Jones.

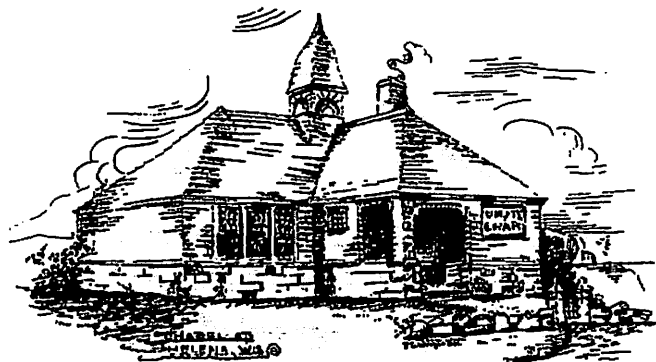
faults—but also so needing to confirm that he still deserved the love his father had so pathetically lost—that he could not resist repeatedly testing the limits of those around him as a way of proving his own worthiness. As Wright's own son would say, Anna helped him become what he would never cease to be, an "overgrown, undisciplined boy with a genius for architecture."²⁴

Anna's contributions to Wright's genius were by no means limited to his basic character and emotional needs. She came from a brilliant, clannish Welsh family, the Lloyd Joneses, and from them much more than from his father's kin Wright acquired his sense of family identity, his religious and philosophical outlook, and his first sustained encounter with what would become for him an ideal human landscape (figure 1). Christened Frank Lincoln Wright at birth, the would-be architect changed his middle name as a teenager to signal his commitment to his mother's family traditions.²⁵ The Lloyd Joneses had migrated to Wisconsin in 1845, eventually settling at a place called Hillside near where the Helena Valley met the Wisconsin River opposite the small town of Spring Green. Anna and her siblings had grown up there, and as a boy her son Frank spent his summers working on his uncles' farms. Despite being farmers, the Lloyd Joneses read widely from the leading thinkers of their day and were deeply committed to education and self-improvement: two of Anna's sisters eventually opened a progressive school near the family homestead, and one of her brothers went on to become a leading liberal theologian in Chicago. Family members were infused with the feeling that to be a Lloyd Jones was to be a person of special talent and conviction, whatever the line of work he or she might follow.

Perhaps most important, the family had a tradition of religious dissent, its members espousing a version of Unitarianism that mingled passionate, Welsh nonconformist beliefs with the more rarefied intellectualism of the New England Transcendentalists. Theirs was an extreme form of liberal Protestantism, suspicious of any institutional religion that got in the way of an individual's search for spiritual truth. "Truth Against the World" was their family motto, implying their belief—so basic to Wright's later sense of his own mission—that anyone who sought the truth and found it would surely have to defend it against the falsehoods of others whose motives and vision were much less pure. "The Unitarianism of the Lloyd-Joneses," Wright wrote, "was an attempt to amplify in the confusion of the creeds of their day, the idea of life as a gift from the Divine Source, one GOD omnipotent, all things at one with HIM. UNITY was their watchword, the sign and symbol that thrilled them, the UNITY of all things!"²⁶ When the family built its own small church in 1886—giving young Frank his first practical building experience as an assistant to the Chicago architect who designed it—they predictably named it Unity Chapel (figure 2).

Wright's own commitment to Unitarianism and to the principles of spiritual unity it espoused continued for the rest of his life.²⁷ One of his first large public buildings was Unity Temple, built in 1905–08 for the Unitarian congregation in Oak Park, Illinois (plates 74–82). In the 1930s he formally joined the First Unitarian Society in Madison, Wisconsin, and a decade later designed its famous meetinghouse (true to his family traditions, it was only with some difficulty that the congregation persuaded him not to carve the word *Unity* on the stone that still serves as its pulpit).²⁸ Wright would later say of it: "There, you see

ECHOING EMERSON



UNITY CHAPEL, HELENA, WIS.

Figure 2: Joseph Lyman Silsbee. Unity Chapel, Helena. 1886. Perspective. Whereabouts unknown. Earliest known published drawing by Frank Lloyd Wright

the Unitarianism of my forefathers found expression in a building by one of the offspring—the idea of unity—Unitarian. Unitarians believed in the unity of all things. Well, I tried to build a building here that expressed that sense of unity.”²⁹ When he died a few years later, his funeral service was conducted by the minister of the Madison congregation, and he was buried in the cemetery of Unity Chapel near the Lloyd Jones farmsteads. Unitarianism’s impatience with traditional Christianity, its refusal to impose any formal doctrinal tests on its adherents (not even the divinity of Christ or the existence of God), its eagerness to ransack all the world’s great religions in its search for sacred meaning, its tolerance of iconoclasm and individual eccentricity, its embrace of science as a necessary part of any modern search for enlightened knowledge, its humanism, and above all its faith in the unity of spiritual truth—all of these values were made to order for the likes of Frank Lloyd Wright.

The faith of the Lloyd Joneses was more than just a religion for Wright; it also schooled him in the moral rhetoric that would forever shape his speech and writing. Wright might have been a great architect even if he had never been exposed to his family’s Unitarianism, but it is hard to imagine his words and ideas without its influence. Reading his essays today, one repeatedly has the sense of listening to a sermon. Here, too, there was a powerful family example close at hand to serve as Wright’s model for the intellectual as preacher, the preacher as intellectual. Wright’s uncle Jenkin Lloyd Jones was one of Chicago’s most popular ministers, a religious liberal who eventually found even Unitarianism too conservative for his humanistic tastes, and the editor of a weekly religious magazine titled—what else?—*Unity*.³⁰ When Wright set up his Taliesin Fellowship in the 1930s, he included as part of its ritual activities a Sunday-morning gathering at which the assembled community listened to classical music, readings from favorite authors, and rambling lectures about architecture, life, and morality by Wright himself. It was like nothing so much as a Unitarian service, a ritual gathering at which his uncle Jenkin and the other Lloyd Joneses would surely have felt right at home.

Unitarianism exercised an influence on the intellectual life of nineteenth-century America that was out of all proportion to the number of people who formally declared their allegiance to its doctrines. This was partly because, as the liberal successor of New England Congregationalism, it dominated the area around Boston, a city that was home to far more than its share of the nation’s intellectual elite. For much of the nineteenth century, many of Boston’s most prominent thinkers and artists called themselves Unitarians; indeed, the Harvard Divinity School essentially served as a Unitarian seminary. Because Unitarians so eagerly embraced the progressive intellectual movements of their day, declaring their confidence that there need be no necessary conflict between liberal religion and the beliefs of an increasingly secular age, it is easy from the perspective of the twentieth century to forget their faith and regard them as merely secular. The denomination aligned itself with romanticism, humanism, and liberalism—the secular trinity that would help lay the foundations for modernity as the twentieth century would know it. Indeed, one of the most important early expressions of American romanticism—the group of writers and artists who called themselves Transcendentalists—began with a technical dispute among New England Unitarians.³¹ Unitarianism served as an important vehicle for introducing romantic idealism into the mainstream of American thought, which is why the convergence of these two movements in the thinking of Frank Lloyd Wright was no accident. Much of his understanding of them in fact flowed from a common source, and the name of that source was Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Nothing serves as a better gauge of how far twentieth-century Americans have drifted from their nineteenth-century roots than the spectacular decline of Emerson’s popularity. Today, he is read mainly as a mandatory assignment in college classrooms on the few occasions when he is read at all, and most people find him far less accessible than such writers as Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, or John Muir, all of whom regarded themselves as his followers. Yet no American writer enjoyed more universal acclaim in the nineteenth century; none was more influential or widely read than this renegade Unitarian minister turned popular lecturer and romantic philosopher. To understand the language and ideas of Frank Lloyd Wright today, one cannot avoid a serious encounter with Ralph Waldo Emerson. This is true despite the fact that Wright himself did not lay great stress on Emerson’s contributions to his thought: following his usual practice of obscuring his greatest intellectual debts lest they seem to diminish his own originality, Wright did not even mention Emerson’s name among the thinkers whose work he had “long ago consulted and occasionally remembered” in writing *An Autobiography*.³²

Some have argued that Wright came to his knowledge of Emersonian ideas only indirectly, through Louis Sullivan’s affection for Walt Whitman. Certainly Wright was himself a fan of Whitman and read the poet’s work regularly to the apprentices in the Taliesin Fellowship.³³ But it was Emerson, not Whitman, who throughout Wright’s childhood had served as high priest in the intellectual and spiritual pan-

theon of the Lloyd Joneses. His sister Maginel tells a wonderful anecdote about the family's piano, which Wright—exaggerating as always—described as a Steinway. She knew with absolute certainty that her brother was wrong about this, because she associated the piano with a revealing childhood confusion on her part. "I know very well that it was an Emerson," she wrote, "because I remember the awe and admiration I felt, believing a man of that name could build pianos and write books, too—books that one's mother, father, aunts, and uncles were always quoting: 'As Mr. Emerson says.'"³⁴ If they agreed about nothing else, William and Anna Wright shared a passion for Emerson, and Anna even taught classes about his work during her years in Oak Park.³⁵ It would hardly seem to matter, then, how Wright acquired his familiarity with the sage of Concord; what does matter is that no voice echoes more resoundingly in Wright's own prose than Emerson's.

Emerson, for instance, gave license to Wright's fiercely defended conception of himself as iconoclast, individualist, genius. The architect's self-centeredness and willful refusal to march to anyone else's beat had powerful roots in his family psychodrama, but also conformed to Emersonian notions of personal integrity. Self-reliance was a favorite Emersonian theme that had deep resonance for Wright. "To believe your own thought," Emerson wrote, "to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men,—that is genius."³⁶ Particularly in the years after 1909, when he abandoned his family to embark on a scandalous love affair with another man's wife, Wright embraced almost to the point of caricature the romantic image of genius that is so much a part of Emerson's thought. The elaborate myth that Wright constructed in his autobiography of a lone genius fighting against great odds and nearly universal opprobrium to defend his architecture against intellectual philistines, as well as the attack he mounted against conventional morality for not accepting his love affairs, his loose ways with money, and his "honest arrogance"³⁷—all of these, in Emersonian terms, could serve as proofs of the independence, originality, and integrity that revealed true genius. "Whoso would be a man," wrote Emerson, "must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind."³⁸

Here was a philosophy that could justify Wright's unconventional lifestyle at the same time that it endorsed his artistic mission. In Emerson's thought, the lone search of individual genius to find original meaning in the world began with the radical Protestant impulse of Unitarianism to know God directly, without reliance on biblical prophecy, but extended far beyond formal religion to all of art and life. "Let me admonish you, first of all," Emerson had told the graduating class of the Harvard Divinity School in 1838, "to go alone; to refuse the good models, even those which are sacred in the imagination of men, and dare to love God without mediator or veil. . . . Thank God for these good men, but say, 'I also am a man.' Imitation cannot go above its model. The imitator dooms himself to hopeless mediocrity."³⁹ To give in to conventional wisdom, to succumb to the opinion of the world, to imitate someone else's creation, could only adulterate and

betray one's own genius. "The objection to conforming to usages that have become dead to you," Emerson wrote, "is, that it scatters your force. It loses your time and blurs the impression of your character."⁴⁰ Wright said much the same thing to his apprentices at Taliesin, declaring that nothing was more detrimental to an architect's vision than "to have deep in his heart one wish and to have to conform to the conditions and demands of another. That's what makes a bad marriage and will also make a bad architect. . . . Really to believe in something is the greatest boon, I think, and to believe wholeheartedly in it and to serve it with all your strength and your might is salvation, really."⁴¹

But Emerson's influence on Wright went much deeper than simply to serve as a role model for romantic genius. When Wright spoke of his search for an "organic" architecture, a way of building that would look to nature for its models and inspiration, he was using the word *nature* in a peculiarly Emersonian sense that is much less familiar today than it was in the nineteenth century. It is precisely here that we are most likely to misunderstand Wright's thought. The crude popular view today is that romantics like Emerson or Thoreau, or for that matter Wright, celebrated the beauty of nature in a literal sense much as many modern environmentalists do, believing that the world's creatures and landscapes are intrinsically beautiful in their own right. In fact, raw nature was much less compelling for most nineteenth-century romantics than it is for modern nature-lovers. The romantics regarded plants and animals and the rest of creation as the outward manifestations of an all-encompassing spiritual unity whose name was God. It is a textbook truism to say of romanticism that one of its principal tasks was to secularize Judeo-Christian values by relocating onto nature the sublime transcendence that had once been reserved for the deity. But this statement can just as easily be inverted, for the secularization of God was also the sacralization of Nature. This is why Wright could declare: "I think Nature should be spelled with a capital 'N,' not because Nature is God but because all that we can learn of God we will learn from the body of God, which we call Nature."⁴²

Once we recognize that romantic conceptions of nature were fundamentally religious, we can begin to understand that for romantics like Emerson and Wright, nature's value was primarily spiritual. Indeed, nature acquired its meaning for them only in relation to the human soul and the divine spirit of which the soul was a manifestation. "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact," said Emerson.⁴³ The multitudes of natural forms were only so much dead matter until touched by spirit, and so it was the role of human beings—especially artists—to breath life into matter by relating it to the whole of creation and thereby giving it spiritual meaning. "Nature is a sea of forms radically alike and even unique," declared Emerson. "A leaf, a sunbeam, a landscape, the ocean, make an analogous impression on the mind. What is common to them all,—that perfectness and harmony, is beauty. The standard of beauty is the entire circuit of natural forms,—the totality of nature. . . . Nothing is quite beautiful alone; nothing but is beautiful in the whole. A single object is only so far beautiful as it suggests this universal grace."⁴⁴

The role of the artist in relation to this all-encompassing univer-

sal spirit was to distill its virtues into a concentrated vision so that the resulting work of art would serve as a microcosm for the beauty of the whole. Emerson's metaphor for this was the alembic, the laboratory glassware that chemists and alchemists had long used to distill and concentrate liquids. "The poet, the painter, the sculptor, the musician, the architect," he wrote, "seek each to concentrate this radiance of the world on one point, and each in his several work to satisfy the love of beauty which stimulates him to produce. Thus is Art, a nature passed through the alembic of man. Thus in art, does nature work through the will of a man filled with the beauty of her first works."⁴⁵ The highest expression of this artistic impulse was the human love of beauty, which found its roots in the graceful forms of organic nature but drew its true inspiration from the spiritual essence that lay behind and beyond those forms. Indeed, Emerson went so far as to argue that the world existed more than anything else to act as a mirror in which the soul could see beauty reflected back as the foremost expression of God's presence in the world. "The world thus exists to the soul," he wrote, "to satisfy the desire of beauty. This element I call an ultimate end. No reason can be asked or given why the soul seeks beauty. Beauty, in its largest and profoundest sense, is one expression for the universe. God is the all-fair. Truth, and goodness, and beauty, are but different faces of the same All."⁴⁶ Natural beauty was of value only insofar as it reflected divine beauty. "Beauty in nature is not ultimate. It is the herald of inward and eternal beauty, and is not alone a solid and satisfactory good. It must stand as a part, and not as yet the last or highest expression of the final cause of Nature."⁴⁷ That final cause was spirit, which could be found only in the soul's awareness of its own divine nature. Following Emerson, one could thus believe that art was a truer, richer, more organic expression of nature's beauty than were the natural forms on which it was modeled: indeed, if one wanted truly to encounter Nature, one could do so more readily in Art than in nature itself.

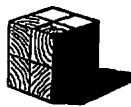
Wright's beliefs about nature and art were wholly congruent with Emerson's, which is why we are so apt to misunderstand his arguments on behalf of an *organic* or *natural* architecture if we interpret these words according to their most common meanings in our own time. The great principle that the Lloyd Joneses had held up in their struggle to defend "Truth Against the World" was Unity. Their offspring would turn their own Emersonian ideas against them by arguing that the family had overemphasized "the beauty of TRUTH" and "did not so well know the truth of BEAUTY."⁴⁸ In the name of truth and beauty alike Wright followed Lloyd Jones traditions in attacking contemporary artists and critics who embraced too literal an understanding of nature's meaning:

I began to see that in spite of all the talk about Nature that "natural" was the last thing in this world they would let you be if they could prevent it. What did they mean when "they" used the word nature? Just some sentimental feeling about animals, grass and trees, the out-of-doors? But how about the nature of wood, glass and iron—internal nature? The nature of boys and girls? The nature of law? Wasn't that Nature? Wasn't nature in this sense the very nature of God?

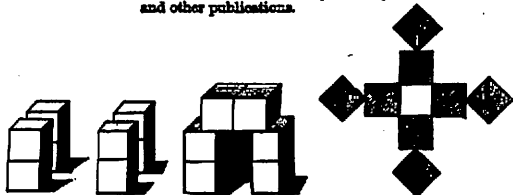
Somehow I had always thought when I read the word "nature" in a book or used it in my own mind that it was meant that interior way. Not the other measly, external way. "Fools!" They have no sentiment for nature. What they really mean by "nature" is just a sentimentalizing of the rudimentary animal.⁴⁹

For Wright, the purpose of art and architecture was not slavishly to copy external nature, but to use it in the way Emerson recommended, as the occasion for exploring inner nature and thereby expressing universal spirit. For the artist, nature was raw material awaiting transformation into some greater vision of a still more divine ideal. "Nature is not fixed but fluid," Emerson had declared. "Spirit alters, moulds, makes it. The immobility or bruteness of nature, is the absence of spirit; to pure spirit, it is fluid, it is volatile, it is obedient. Every spirit builds itself a house; and beyond its house a world; and beyond its world, a heaven. Know then, that the world exists for you. . . . Build, therefore, your own world. As fast as you conform your life to the pure idea in your mind, that will unfold its great proportions."⁵⁰ It would be hard to imagine a clearer statement of the mission—artistic, moral, and religious—that Frank Lloyd Wright pursued with such passion throughout his long life. His house, his world, his heaven, would eventually extend from Taliesin to Broadacre City to produce a visionary statement of the architectural and aesthetic space that, in Wright's eyes, could serve as the ideal canvas for a truly American democracy.

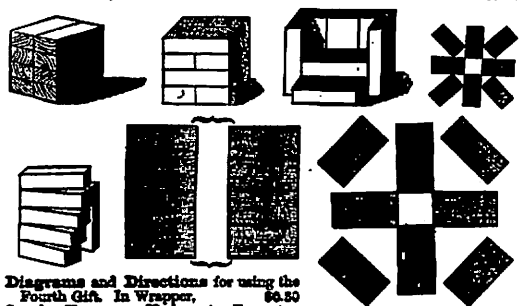
Wright learned from Jenkin Lloyd Jones and other members of his family how to defend his artistic vision in the language of a sermon; he learned from Emerson the sacrament of beauty and spirit, which became for him the moral content of that sermon. It is thus no accident that his polemics on behalf of an "organic architecture" are so often expressed in words that are overtly moralizing. The unity of truth, beauty, nature: this for Wright was the very name of God.⁵¹ "Beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue," Emerson had written. "Every natural action is graceful."⁵² Wright openly expressed his allegiance to this principle by declaring: "I believe that Emerson was right when he said, 'Beauty is the highest and finest kind of morality.' . . . If you are attuned, and you love sincerely, harmony, rhythm and what we call beauty, instinctively what is ugly will become offensive to you."⁵³ Ugliness was not merely a violation of aesthetic values; it was an offense against God, a sin. "There is not, nor ever was, room in right living for the ugly. Ugliness in anything is the incarnation of sin, and sin is death—ugliness is death."⁵⁴ To avoid this sin meant answering to a catechism of unity in which the most sacred terms were all finally synonymous. "The sort of expression we seek," Wright wrote, "is that of harmony, or the good otherwise known as the true, otherwise known as the Beautiful."⁵⁵ These were the principles to which Wright invariably appealed in trying to make sense of his life and work. However much he might stray from them or use them to rationalize actions whose motives were sometimes less pure, however arrogantly and self-righteously he might wield them to condemn those with whom he disagreed, there is no reason to doubt the moral passion with which he embraced them. They were quite literally his religion.

The Third Gift.**Froebel's First Building Box.**

Large Cube, divided into eight small cubes of equal size. Aim: to illustrate form and number; also to give the first idea of fractions.
In Wooden Box, \$0.50
Diagrams and Directions for using the Third Gift. In Wrapper, \$0.30
See also HOWMANN, *Kindergarten Toys*, and other publications.

**The Fourth Gift.****Froebel's Second Building Box.**

Large Cube, divided into eight oblong blocks. — The points of similarity and difference between this and the Third Gift should be indicated.
In Wooden Box, \$0.50



Diagrams and Directions for using the Fourth Gift. In Wrapper, \$0.50
See also HOWMANN, *Kindergarten Toys*, etc.

H. Heidegger, 333 to 24 Franklin St., New York.

Figure 3: Friedrich Froebel's blocks, as depicted in *Kindergarten Gifts and Occupation Material*, 1876

TOWARD A GRAMMAR OF STYLE

Emerson did not, of course, invent romantic idealism. He served as its most prolific and popular missionary in the United States, and was almost surely the ultimate source for Wright's moral philosophy, but he was by no means alone in transmitting romantic ideas to Wright or to American culture generally. Romanticism had many roots on both sides of the Atlantic, permeating nineteenth-century life in so many ways that one encounters it everywhere. It was, for instance, the foundation of the often cited kindergarten training that Anna Wright gave her son. In 1876, while visiting the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, she saw a display of educational playthings called "Gifts"—in the form of colored strips of paper, two-dimensional geometric grids, and wood spheres, blocks, and pyramids (figure 3). All were designed so that mothers and schoolteachers could train children following the educational philosophy of Friedrich Froebel, the German inventor of the kindergarten, who had developed an elaborate series of exercises designed to educate a child's sensory experience of the world. Like other American mothers of her day, Anna was much enamored with Froebel's system and went so far as to seek formal training so that she could educate her son following the German educator's methods. In

later years Frank Lloyd Wright regularly cited the Froebel Gifts as one of the most profound influences on his approach to architecture. "I give you my word," he would say, "all those things are in my hands today—the feeling for those maple forms."⁵⁶

Scholars have spent considerable energy demonstrating that Wright's buildings can be derived from Froebelian forms.⁵⁷ As the architect himself noted—probably in part as a way to claim prior inspiration for a method Le Corbusier had championed—Wright's habit of designing on a modular plan directly paralleled the formal exercises in which Froebel encouraged children to arrange wood blocks on a two-dimensional grid to form geometric patterns and miniature structures. "There," Wright said, "is the modular system that has been back of every design I ever made."⁵⁸ Froebel helped nurture Wright's lifelong fascination with a small collection of geometric shapes, different combinations of which can be used for periodization of almost his entire oeuvre: the line and the spiral, the circle and the sphere, the square and the cube, the triangle and the tetrahedron. Prairie houses, Larkin Building, Unity Temple, California Romanzas, Fallingwater, Johnson Administration Building, Usonian houses, Guggenheim: in the long parade of Wright's prodigiously diverse structures one has little trouble imagining him in a perennial childhood game of combining and recombining simple wood blocks, the most basic of geometric forms, as a way displaying his own incredible ability to push them to the furthest limits of artistic expression. "When you had mastered the interplay of those things upon one another," he said of the Froebel blocks, "when you had taken them by different angles and revolved them to get subordinate shapes, there you got a perfect language of form."⁵⁹

The Froebel blocks cannot by themselves, of course, explain Wright's later brilliance in manipulating interior and exterior space. Not only was it long after his kindergarten training that he eventually developed his mature style, but many other influences were at least as important in shaping the particulars of his aesthetic vision. In this respect, attempts to show that Froebel's blocks can be rearranged to mimic Wright's structures are a little beside the point. The significance of the blocks in fact lies much deeper, as Wright's allusion to a perfect language of form suggests.⁶⁰ Froebel did not design his kindergarten exercises simply to give his young pupils an analytical tool for breaking complex shapes into their constituent parts and assembling them again into new structures. He intended that children begin to associate different shapes with well-defined symbolic meanings. He wrote of the sphere, for instance, that "the spherical is the symbol of diversity in unity and of unity in diversity."⁶¹ Wright was arguing from this general Froebelian perspective when he declared that "certain geometric forms have come to symbolize for us and potently to suggest certain human ideas, moods, and sentiments—as for instance: the circle, infinity; the triangle, structural unity; the spire, aspiration; the spiral, organic progress; the square, integrity."⁶² The Froebel blocks permitted a child to explore not just the innate physical properties of different shapes, but their relationship to the underlying spiritual meaning of the cosmos, and it is here that we will discover their most important influence on Frank Lloyd Wright.

For Froebel, Euclidian geometry expressed a Platonic order, and the endlessly shifting patterns of his blocks were but guises of the Universal One. Listening to him describe the most important goal of his pedagogy, one instantly recognizes the idealist voice of nineteenth-century romanticism:

*In all things there lives and reigns an eternal law. . . . This law has been and is enounced with equal clearness and distinctness in nature (the external), in the spirit (the internal), and in life which unites the two. This all-controlling law is necessarily based on an all-pervading, energetic, living, self-conscious, and hence eternal Unity. . . . A quietly observant human mind, a thoughtful, clear human intellect, has never failed, and will never fail, to recognize this Unity. This Unity is God. All things have come from the Divine Unity, from God, and have their origin in the Divine Unity, in God alone.*⁶³

The American textbooks on which Anna Wright probably relied in transmitting Froebel's ideas to her son made clear that mere geometry was hardly the most important lesson she should be trying to teach. As one declared, the exercises were "intended as an aid to secure the union between mother and child, between God and the world."⁶⁴ Another announced with some frustration: "Hundreds of well-meaning friends of the Kindergarten who have not had time to look beneath its surface, still class Froebel's Gifts with the trivial playthings of the toy-shop. . . . Froebel's Gifts are serious things, freighted with life, endowed with a soul, and not to be handled irreverently without injury to the thoughtless culprit."⁶⁵ Their final, most cosmic lesson was one that young Frank Lloyd Wright had been imbibing from his Unitarian family for as long as he could remember. "This is the soul of Froebel's gifts: *Unity in Universality, and Universality in Unity—One in All, and All in One.*"⁶⁶ We can almost see Anna Wright, Jenkin Lloyd Jones, and Ralph Waldo Emerson nodding in agreement.

Froebel helps us understand yet another important way in which Wright's relationship to nature subtly differs from our own. The German pedagogue was adamant that his young pupils not make drawings or any other artistic representations directly from real objects until after they had spent long months working through his formal geometric exercises. The idea, as Wright described it, was that a child "should not be allowed to draw from nature, to imitate the look of objects until he had mastered the fundamental forms of nature."⁶⁷ In this way kindergarten children would come to understand the ideal Euclidian geometries that organized and structured the exterior surfaces of the world, enabling them to recognize the "shapes that lay hidden behind the appearances all about."⁶⁸ Wright had learned from Emerson the primacy of inner spiritual nature as reflected in his own soul; he learned from Froebel that inner nature had a Euclidian grammar. This helps explain why an architect who consistently described his work as "organic" or "natural" could just as consistently refuse to include naturalistic designs in his structures, apparently preferring highly abstract patterns that on the surface seemed much more artificial. The vast majority of Wright's decorative motifs are geometric abstractions designed not so much to look like the natural forms

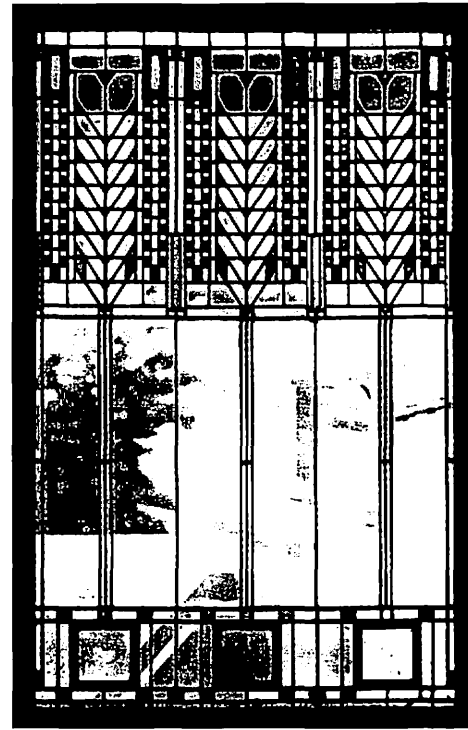


Figure 4: Frank Lloyd Wright. Tree of Life stained-glass window, Darwin D. Martin House, Buffalo. 1902–04

they represent as to capture the *essence* of those forms. The best-known examples are stained-glass, cast-concrete, and copper plant motifs that have come to be associated with individual Wright buildings: the tulips at Wright's Oak Park House and Studio of 1889–98; the sumac at the Susan Lawrence Dana House in Springfield of 1902–04; the hollyhock at the Aline Barnsdall House in Los Angeles of 1916–21; the Spanish moss at Auldbrass Plantation in Yemassee, South Carolina, of 1938–42; the Tree of Life at the Darwin D. Martin House in Buffalo of 1902–04 (figure 4).⁶⁹ In choosing to decorate his "organic" houses with such abstract designs, Wright was declaring his allegiance to Froebel. Both men sought an ideal language that could capture the inner meaning of outward forms to reveal the cosmic unity of nature and spirit.

Euclidian geometry may have been the grammar of that language, but beyond mere grammar—beyond the Froebel blocks—was the more challenging question of the particular vocabulary and the chosen style in which Wright himself would try to speak. Here a number of leading nineteenth-century art critics and architectural theorists helped him add flesh to the bare bones of Froebel's geometry. From the English critic John Ruskin, for instance, he found explicit support for the idea that artists should convey not just the natural appearance of an object, but its meaning for the artist's soul.⁷⁰ Ruskin taught that "all most lovely forms and thoughts are directly taken from natural objects," so that the artist should always turn to nature for inspiration. And yet he also declared that art must abstract from nature to convey its deepest truths.⁷¹ This was especially the case with architecture,

Ruskin wrote, which “delights in Abstraction and fears to complete her forms.”⁷² An artist should distinguish between mere imitation and truth. “There is a moral as well as material truth,” Ruskin wrote, “a truth of impression as well as of form—of thought as well as of matter; and the truth of impression and thought is a thousand times the more important of the two.”⁷³ By using signs and symbols that conveyed deep emotional meaning even though devoid of any natural likeness, an artist could represent the highest truths. Not to strive for those truths was to violate artistic integrity. “Truth,” wrote Ruskin in an aphorism that echoed the Lloyd Jones family motto, “cannot be persisted in without pains; but is worth them.”⁷⁴

Similar lessons came from Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, the great French architect and theorist whose *Dictionnaire raisonné* made such a deep impression on the young Wright that he later called it “the only really sensible book on architecture in the world.”⁷⁵ Unlike Ruskin, who was adamantly opposed to the use of machine-made objects or new construction materials such as cast iron, Viollet-le-Duc encouraged architects to explore any tools and materials that technology had put at their disposal, demanding only that they employ those materials honestly.⁷⁶ When Wright repeatedly wrote of the need for architects to make their work conform to “the nature of materials,” he was relying on Viollet-le-Duc as one of his chief authorities. Most of all, though, the French architect gave Wright a concrete architectural restatement of the abstract idealist philosophies the young man had imbibed from so many sources during his youth. In the long entry on style in the *Dictionnaire raisonné*, for instance, Viollet-le-Duc argued that “no creative work . . . can truly live unless it possesses what we call style.” And how did one achieve this key to artistic greatness? The young Wright would surely have recognized the language in which the French architect stated his response: “Style,” he wrote, “is the manifestation of an ideal based on a principle.”⁷⁷

To achieve style, Viollet-le-Duc declared, the architect must go to nature and observe it closely to discover the principles that already existed in the order of the universe. “Architecture, this most human of creations,” he wrote, “is but an application of principles that are born outside of us. . . . Gravitational force existed before we did; we merely deduced the statics of it. Geometry, too, was already existent in the universal order; we merely took note of its laws, and applied them. The same thing is true of all aspects of the architectural art; proportions—indeed, even decoration—must arise out of the great natural order whose principles we must appropriate in the measure that human intelligence permits us to do so.”⁷⁸ Starting from this premise, Viollet-le-Duc set out to demonstrate how the laws of geometry could be used to derive the structures of natural crystals (Wright would surely have recognized in this an almost identical exercise that Froebel had his kindergarten pupils perform) and that the laws of these crystals could, in turn, be used to discover the most natural and appropriate principles for handling architectural materials.⁷⁹ Applying these basic principles, one could then assemble all of a building’s parts into a unified whole by subordinating them to a common architectural scale. “What is the scale?” Viollet-le-Duc asked. “It is the relation of all the parts to unity.”⁸⁰

One other author whose influence Wright explicitly acknowledged from his early years as an architectural apprentice was the English critic Owen Jones, whose book *The Grammar of Ornament* contained hundreds of sample decorative patterns from the great civilizations of human history. Anna Wright’s kindergarten textbooks had been similarly filled with designs for the child to imitate with his Froebel blocks, but Jones’s designs were far more complex and beautiful, awash in bright colors and geometric patterns. After checking the book out from his uncle’s church library, Wright bought a packet of onionskin paper and traced the ornaments for many evenings. As with Viollet-le-Duc’s *Dictionnaire raisonné*, he was searching in Jones for a vocabulary in which to express his personal vision. But Jones offered more than just a collection of pretty designs. He, too, was in search of principles and offered thirty-seven numbered “propositions” as formal rules for his *Grammar of Ornament*. “I read the ‘propositions,’” Wright wrote forty years later, “and felt the first five were dead right.”⁸¹ Jones argued that the decorative arts existed to serve architecture, which must in turn reflect and serve the material and spiritual needs of its age. Architecture and decoration should be combined so as to produce “fitness, proportion, harmony, the result of all which is repose.” Jones’s fifth proposition had an especially familiar ring to it: “That which is beautiful is true; that which is true must be beautiful.”⁸² Jones also offered more specific advice, which added further syntax to Wright’s own Euclidian grammar. “All ornament,” he argued, “should be based upon a geometrical construction,” and “every assemblage of forms should be arranged on certain definite proportions; the whole and every particular should be a multiple of some simple unit.”⁸³ The specific propositions may have been new, but the principles behind them already seemed quite natural to the young architect.

Wright read these and other authors in his restless search to define his own architectural voice, his own expression of an ideal based on a principle, and in 1900 he synthesized what he had learned in an essay titled “A Philosophy of Fine Art,” one of the least well known but most important of his career. In it he centered his theory of art on the doctrine of “conventionalization.”⁸⁴ The artist, he declared, must do more than merely imitate nature; he must see “with a prophetic eye.” His job was to distill natural beauty into its “conventional” essence, so that, for example, the decorative lotus on an ancient Egyptian temple would long survive the natural flower that had inspired it. Through this “rare and difficult process,” Wright said, the flower’s “natural character was really revealed and intensified in terms of stone, gaining for it an imperishable significance, for the Life principle of the flower is translated to terms of building stone to satisfy the Ideal of a real ‘need.’ This is Conventionalization, and it is Poetry.”⁸⁵ The purpose of such abstract ornamentation was far more than simply to clothe a building with superfluous decoration. In Wright’s view, the task of art was to conventionalize the state of nature—define its symbolic meaning—lest civilization forget its own roots and decay. “Of all Art, whatsoever,” Wright declared, “perhaps Architecture is the Art best fitted to teach this lesson, for in its practices this problem of ‘conventionalizing’ Nature is worked out at its highest and best. . . . A work of Archi-

ecture is a great coordination with a distinct and vital organism, but it is in no sense naturalistic—it is the highest, most subjective, conventionalization of Nature known to man, and at the same time it must be organically true to Nature when it is really a work of Art.”⁸⁶

THE DANCE OF OUTWARD FORMS

Having placed Frank Lloyd Wright in the context of Emerson, Froebel, Viollet-le-Duc, and other romantic idealists, it finally becomes possible to understand what he meant when he called for an “organic” architecture. In arguing that architecture should strive as much as possible to be natural without being naturalistic and should emulate the principles of nature without imitating its forms, he was joining some of the most influential thinkers of his time. Thus he could write in 1896: “Say to yourself: my condition is artificial. So I cannot copy Nature and I will not slavishly imitate her, but I have a mind to control the shaping of artificial things and to learn from Nature her simple truths of form, function, and grace of line. Nature is a good teacher. I am a child of hers, and apart from her precepts cannot flourish.”⁸⁷ One way to think about Wright’s long career is to regard him as a man whose aesthetic theory and moral philosophy were more or less complete by the first decade of the twentieth century. One gets very little sense that he changed his mind thereafter about anything that really mattered to him, despite the fact that his architecture continued to evolve along strikingly diverse lines and his personal life underwent several major upheavals. Throughout it all, his core principles remained rigidly intact. But because the grammar of his thought was ultimately Platonic and sought its expression in the endless multitude of forms in which a shape-shifting nature clothed itself, it could accommodate virtually any vocabulary Wright chose to adopt. And so this most unbending and single-minded of men could also be astonishingly protean in his ability to assimilate new forms. Organic unity was the key to organic diversity: the unchanging inward principles were the still point of a turning world, a stage for the kaleidoscopic dance of outward forms.

For this reason, any search for the specific vocabularies in which Wright designed his buildings means rummaging widely to look for eclectic influences large and small. Some were quite fundamental, constituting such deep obsessions that they operated almost as core principles themselves, changing their form but always recapitulating their deeper meanings. Here one thinks of such basic materials as limestone and raw wood, to which Wright always returned, and of certain spatial devices—the concealed entrance, the central hearth, the constricted passage leading to releasing space, the opposition between tree house and cave, prospect and refuge.⁸⁸ Others seem to have resulted from chance encounters with people or materials or ideas that for whatever reason stuck with Wright long enough to leave a mark on at least a few of his buildings. Some of these were passing fancies, often involving experimental new materials like the individually cast concrete blocks of the California Romanzas, the glass tubing at the Johnson Administration Building, the corrugated fiberglass at Beth Shalom. Others seem

to have been partly the expressions of Wright’s unfailing competitiveness with other architects, as when he sometimes hurried to outdo the European modernists at their own game. But whereas the story of Wright’s design grammar keeps circling back to a common idealist center, any comparable story about his different design vocabularies necessarily wanders over much broader terrain, feeling more like a whimsical treasure hunt in uncharted waters than an unswerving pilgrimage to a known shrine.

Where will we find the chief sources for Wright’s favorite aesthetic tropes? These, too, for the most part came early. One of the most important was the Wisconsin landscape itself, especially the rolling countryside around the Lloyd Jones family farms where Wright eventually built Taliesin.⁸⁹ A region where fields and scattered woodlands mingle easily amid low hills and gentle valleys, southwestern Wisconsin was a classic pastoral landscape, neither wholly artificial nor wholly wild. As a boy, Wright spent long hours exploring the terrain to read in it “this marvelous book-of-books, Experience, the only true reading, the book of Creation.” For the rest of his life he believed that “from sunrise to sunset there can be nothing so surpassingly beautiful in any cultivated garden as in these wild Wisconsin pastures.”⁹⁰ The boy learned the common weeds and trees he encountered, and later declared—following Emerson and Viollet-le-Duc—that “the secret of all styles in architecture was the same secret that gave *character* to the trees.”⁹¹ Despite repeated rebellion at the hard physical labor his uncles demanded of him, Wright’s later descriptions of his summers in the Helena Valley are openly sentimental. Even the repetitive farm work, which he often hated, eventually became a kind of metaphor for the rhythmic patterns of music and of “the obvious poetry in the mathematics of this universe”⁹²—though he also not so sentimentally told an apprentice that farming was “all pulling tits and shoveling shit.”⁹³

Southwestern Wisconsin is, first and foremost, a sedimentary landscape in which limestone and sandstone take turns serving as bedrock for the general topography.⁹⁴ The limestone in particular has thin horizontal bedding planes that fracture the rock and give it a rectilinear appearance that resembles nothing so much as rough masonry. For a child already accustomed to looking for the underlying geometries of nature, the lesson of this blocklike stone must have seemed a striking confirmation of Wright’s kindergarten training. “See the principle that ‘builds,’ in nature, at work in stone,” he wrote. “Geometry the principle, busy with materials. . . . Read the grammar of the Earth in a particle of stone!”⁹⁵ No building material was more evocative for Wright than limestone. He had his masons lay it according to a regularly irregular formula so that the resulting walls would mimic the original strata of the quarries from which it came (figure 5).⁹⁶ So strong was his attraction to this effect that he sometimes forced other materials into the same pattern. Thus, the sandstone at Fallingwater, which in its original form has little horizontal bedding, is laid in such a way as to make it virtually indistinguishable from a Wisconsin limestone.⁹⁷ One could argue that the same is true of Wright’s favorite trick in masonry walls of using brick-colored mortar to disguise vertical joints and raking out horizontal joints to mimic the natural strata of sedi-



Figure 5: Frank Lloyd Wright. Detail of house and steps, Taliesin III, Spring Green. 1925

mentary rock.⁹⁸ Indeed, the much-vaunted horizontality that characterizes the buildings of Wright's Prairie period surely owes at least as much to the geology of midwestern limestones as it does to the flatness of midwestern prairies.

But there is another property, subtler and less obvious than horizontal bedding planes, which limestone and sandstone share. Both rocks erode easily, so that when they appear as outcrops on the crests of hills, they have a weathered, ancient appearance. "In Wisconsin," Wright said, "erosion has, by way of age, softened everything."⁹⁹ This soft quality is familiar to anyone who has lived in a well-weathered sedimentary landscape, lending it a gentle, homelike feel that can only be described as domestic. No one has described this quality more movingly than W. H. Auden in his poem "In Praise of Limestone," which begins: "If it form the one landscape that we the inconstant ones / Are consistently homesick for, this is chiefly / Because it dissolves in water."¹⁰⁰ The result, Auden wrote, is a region of "short distances and definite places," whose inhabitants, "accustomed to a stone that responds," easily become "Adjusted to the local needs of valleys / Where everything can be touched or reached by walking."¹⁰¹ This was Wright's ideal landscape, where one could gaze from atop the weathered outcrops across woodlots and cornfields to farms nestled in their protective valleys. The themes of prospect and refuge that recur so frequently and profoundly in his mature architecture are everywhere present in such a place. When Wright built Taliesin on a hillside near his uncles' farms, he placed it—the shining brow—to make it seem like

an outcrop itself. To inhabit a limestone landscape was to be surrounded by bubbling springs, meandering streams, eroding slopes, dissolving stone, the signs of a terrain visibly responding to the flow of time and malleable to human hands and human dreams—a fundamentally forgiving, nurturing place. One of Auden's most striking passages about the homelike qualities of this landscape could almost have been written to describe Wright himself:

*What could be more like Mother or a fitter background
For her son, the flirtatious male who lounges
Against a rock in the sunlight, never doubting
That for all his faults he is loved; whose works are but
Extensions of his power to charm? From weathered outcrop
To hill-top temple, from appearing waters to
Conspicuous fountains, from a wild to a formal vineyard,
Are ingenious but short steps that a child's wish
To receive more attention than his brothers, whether
By pleasing or teasing, can easily take.¹⁰²*

There is one other aspect of this scene that speaks to Wright's aesthetic vision and his larger attitudes toward nature. When Wright first knew the Helena Valley as a child, it was still on the cusp of a closing frontier, a place that had ceased to be wild during the lives of Wright's own grandparents. The human and the natural seemed comfortable neighbors here, and this came to be Wright's model as well. If one arranges American cultural conceptions of landscape along an abstract continuum—from city to suburb to pastoral to wild—then Wright's preferred spaces lay between the two poles, shifting from suburb toward pastoral in the years after his ignominious flight from Oak Park.¹⁰³ Wright had little use for nature in the raw but was also increasingly hostile to cities, and so he was drawn to middle landscapes, to worked countrysides that had been domesticated and made beautiful by the human labors upon them. When forced to build in any other setting, his impulse was to turn his buildings inward, sheltering them with protective walls, recessed windows, and overhanging eaves as in his suburban Prairie houses. In the case of truly urban sites such as those of Unity Temple, the Johnson Administration Building, or the Guggenheim Museum, he shut out the surrounding environment altogether and replaced it with a beautiful inner space that was wholly artificial.

Only in places like the Helena Valley did he wholly open his structures to their surroundings.¹⁰⁴ Taliesin looked out not on wild nature, but on fields and pastures—a classic pastoral retreat. Wright devoted almost as much attention to shaping the grounds of his estate—planting orchards, adding a millpond, constructing new farm buildings, maintaining the fields—as he did on the house itself.¹⁰⁵ For the whole of his life, he tried to situate his structures in an ideal space that mimicked this one. "When selecting a site for your house," he advised his clients, "there is always the question of how close to the city you should be, and that depends on what kind of slave you are. The best thing to do is go as far out as you can get. . . . Go way out into the country—what you regard as 'too far'—and when others follow . . . move on."¹⁰⁶

In thus recommending a pastoral landscape as the ideal site for his houses, he was also recapitulating the contradictions of the American frontier experience, in which the migrations of those who sought new homes and wide open spaces eventually reproduced the very crowding they sought to flee. His urban utopia, Broadacre City, would be the ultimate embodiment of this paradox, proposing a complete decentralization of urban life. "We can go forward to the ground," he wrote, "not the city going to the country but the country and city becoming one."¹⁰⁷ That in such a setting Wright himself would almost surely have felt compelled to move on as his neighbors pressed in on every side was a contradiction he never resolved, perhaps because he did not live long enough to see it happen to the valley that had inspired this vision of a natural city.

Wright did not, of course, launch his architectural career in the Helena Valley, despite his early efforts helping construct the Lloyd Jones family chapel. For his first quarter-century of professional practice he worked in a far more urban setting, Chicago, and this too certainly left its marks on his aesthetic vocabulary. When he arrived there in 1887, it was very much a city on the make, its downtown still enjoying the extraordinary building boom that followed the Great Fire of 1871. No doubt because of that boom Chicago was a place where architects often seemed larger than life, veritable culture heroes who were single-handedly remaking the city in their own image. When Henry Blake Fuller wrote his classic novel *With the Procession* about Chicago in the 1890s, he included an architect among its principal characters to reflect the special role such men were playing in the city.¹⁰⁸ Among those who embraced this romantic image of the architect as hero, none did so more self-consciously than Louis Sullivan. The young Wright soon managed to gain a position with Sullivan's firm, which was then at work on the Auditorium Building of 1886–90, one of the most famous of the tall office buildings that were transforming the Chicago skyline. For the next half-decade, Wright served as chief assistant to the man whom he would call *Lieber Meister* for the rest of his life.

The extent of Sullivan's influence on Wright is today rather difficult to assess. Certainly Wright is unusually generous in acknowledging the training he received from Sullivan, who gave him his first extensive experience in running a large architectural firm. It was Sullivan and his partner Dankmar Adler who introduced Wright to the engineering technologies that were so dramatically transforming architecture in the late nineteenth century. Sullivan's own most distinguishing trademark—the almost erotically florid vegetative surface decorations with which he covered his buildings—appeared only briefly in Wright's work. One sees echoes of this ornamental influence in Wright's William H. Winslow House in River Forest, Illinois, of 1893–94 (plates 9–13), but he rapidly moved on to the much more geometric patterns for which he later became famous—patterns that would seem to owe more to Froebel, Owen Jones, and the Arts and Crafts movement than to Sullivan's ornamental practice. But stripped of their surface decorations, Sullivan's buildings shared this basic concern for geometric expression and so were of a piece with the other intellectual influences that were shaping Wright's aesthetic sensibility.

Sullivan's most important influence on Wright may have been both more mundane and more cosmic. He educated his young protégé in the nitty-gritty details of architectural practice, helped finance the construction of Wright's House in Oak Park of 1889–90 (plates 5–7, 21–26), and unintentionally launched his independent career. In the realm of ideas, Sullivan was as steeped as Wright in Emersonian romanticism, regarding himself as a disciple of Walt Whitman. His own dearest wish was to fulfill the romantic vision of the architect as universal artist, heroic individual, and prophet of democracy, while also embodying the no less romantic role of the artist as cultural critic. For Wright, Sullivan was first and foremost a model of the artist striving for original style, refusing to compromise with the reigning orthodoxies of his day (in this, both men looked for inspiration to the example of Henry Hobson Richardson). Sullivan also spoke and wrote in an oracular prose that tried to emulate Whitman—admittedly with modest success—and it is perhaps from him that Wright acquired some of his own literary style and ambition. Although Wright later asserted that he never actually read Sullivan's 1924 *Autobiography of an Idea* (a statement that is itself evidence to the contrary), its parallels with Wright's *An Autobiography* are striking enough to make this claim almost laughable.¹⁰⁹ In Sullivan, Wright recognized a kindred spirit who also worshipped where nature and spirit met—at the divine altar of Unity.

Sullivan gained his fame by designing tall office buildings; Wright, by designing houses. In fact, both were contributing to the new urban landscape of late-nineteenth-century America, for the downtown in which Sullivan worked was the necessary counterpart to Wright's suburban neighborhoods. The commercial buildings of the central business district provided the workplaces for commuters (most of them men), who left their children and spouses (most of them women) in the comfortable houses on large lots that distinguished new suburbs such as Oak Park, River Forest, and Riverside. Even the names of these places suggested the image of pastoral retreat that their developers were trying to promote. The suburb was meant to embody domesticity, a place to which harried businessmen could retreat at day's end, where families could nurture children in isolation from the crowds, dangers, and vices of the city. Wright's houses were intended to serve this domestic ideal, and many of their most familiar features—the central hearth, the sheltering eaves, the windows from which a person could see without being seen—were metaphors for enclosure to protect the sanctity of the family. In 1896–97 Wright embellished and helped publish a book titled *The House Beautiful*, written by William C. Gannett, a Unitarian minister who was a close friend of his uncle Jenkin. In that book Gannett described an ideal house whose purpose was to embody the principle of family love, and situated that house in "A world of care without; / A world of strife shut out; / A world of love shut in!"¹¹⁰ He argued that it should nurture the spirit no less than it sheltered the body. "A home," Gannett declared, "should be home for all our parts. Eyes and ears are eager to be fed with harmonies in color and form and sound; these are their natural food as much as bread and meat are food for other parts." If an architect could feed the soul in

these ways, he would make of the home “a building of God, a house not made with hands.”¹¹¹ Wright’s lifelong architectural commitment to the domestic ideal is surely, in part, a product of the Chicago suburbs where he raised—and then abandoned—his own family.

Gannett’s book reflected another influence that touched Wright in Chicago. By the 1890s the city was home to a group of artists who were deeply influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement that William Morris and others were promoting in England.¹¹² Dedicated to preserving traditional artisanal relationships to craft production, Morris’s movement had fostered communities of artists who worked together in all mediums—printing, glassware, pottery, textiles, furniture, and not least architecture—as a way of retrieving skills that might otherwise be lost to machine technologies. Their collective work had a profound effect on Wright, and *The House Beautiful*, which he produced on a handpress with his client William H. Winslow, was an expression of that influence. Although Wright never embraced Morris’s communitarian values or his socialist politics, he did gather around himself a group of artists working in different mediums to produce the sculptures, murals, and stained glass that so distinguished his Prairie school houses. Later, the Taliesin Fellowship upheld this early commitment to the decorative arts, and Wright’s books echoed Arts and Crafts printing traditions right up to the end of his life. Wright, of course, broke with Morris (and with John Ruskin) in defending the virtues of machine production, but he did so in the service of more fundamental values—the integrity of materials, the unity of form and function, the belief that even the most mundane object should be made beautiful—that he shared with the Arts and Crafts movement.¹¹³ Wright’s furniture and ornamentation clearly owed much to Arts and Crafts influences, and even his early houses owed something: flatten the roof of a Tudor revival building, remove its vertical members, and it is not hard to see what is left as a transitional step on the way to a Prairie house.

Among the most important Chicago influences on Wright’s design vocabulary, however, is one he tried hard to hide and for which we therefore have the least documentation. In 1893 Chicago played host to the World’s Columbian Exposition, one of the most remarkable fairs ever held in America. Under the influence of the architect Daniel H. Burnham, one of Sullivan’s leading rivals, the fair’s managers adopted neoclassical Beaux-Arts motifs for the buildings of its central Court of Honor. The result was the “White City,” a magnificent vision of architectural beauty that would help spur a classical revival throughout the United States for at least the next three decades. Architectural historians ever since have used the fair as a benchmark in the story of modern architecture. Most have agreed with Louis Sullivan that it represented a kind of setback—Sullivan would have called it an unmitigated disaster—for the new forms of architecture that he and other members of the Chicago school had tried to pioneer.¹¹⁴ Wright himself certainly agreed that the fair’s aesthetic was a step in the wrong direction, and he opposed all such revivalism as essentially hostile to his own search for an organic architecture that would spring from American soil.¹¹⁵

But whereas Sullivan always viewed the fair as the beginning of the end for his own career, it was much more of a starting point for Wright, in two important ways. One is by now well known. At the World’s Columbian Exposition, Wright almost surely visited Japan’s Ho-o-den exhibit (figure 6), a reconstructed temple on a rustic island set well off from the formal axes of the classical main fairgrounds. Wright had already encountered Japanese art in the print collection of his first employer, the Chicago architect Joseph Lyman Silsbee, and probably elsewhere as well, given the general Western interest in Japanese culture during the late nineteenth century. Until then, though, he had never actually seen a Japanese building. We will never know how he reacted to the Ho-o-den, whether it came as a sudden revelation of new architectural possibilities, or simply planted the seed of an idea that would not finally flower for another seven years. But there can be no doubt about the many parallels between Wright’s mature style and Japanese domestic architecture. The open floor plan, the flowing interior space partitioned with movable screens, the light-colored panels outlined with dark wooden strips, the generous fenestration with its attendant abundance of light, the overhanging eaves, the shallow roof, and the overall feeling of a building half-tempted to float free from its foundations with apparent indifference to the ordinary demands of gravity—all of these were elements that Wright surely absorbed into the core vocabulary of his Prairie houses.¹¹⁶

Wright himself went well out of his way to deny all this, which in his case is usually a good sign that the thing being denied may represent an influence so deep that it threatened his own heavily defended sense of originality. Perhaps as a way of acknowledging his debt without admitting its direct architectural significance, Wright repeatedly asserted that it was Japanese *prints*, not buildings, that had affected his mature style. “I have never confided to you,” he told the Taliesin Fellowship in 1954, “the extent to which the Japanese print per se as such has inspired me. I never got over my first experience with it and I shall never probably recover. I hope I shan’t. It was the great gospel of simplification that came over, the elimination of all that was insignifi-



Figure 6: Ho-o-den, World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893

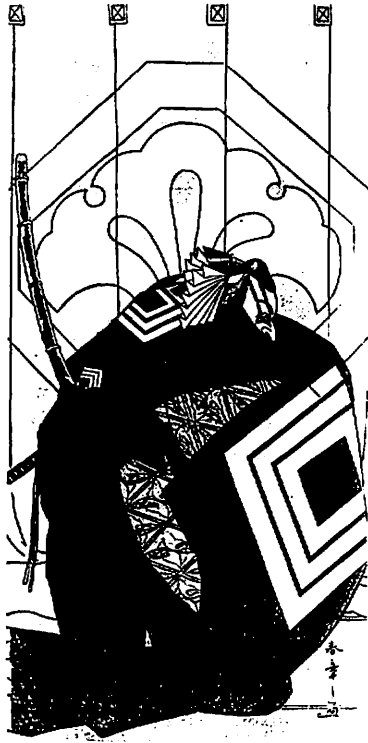


Figure 7: Katsukawa Shunsho. The Actor Ichikawa Danjuro V. c. 1777–86. Brocade print. Formerly collection Frank Lloyd Wright

cant."¹¹⁷ Wright became a great collector of Japanese art (figure 7) and published a major essay on its significance in 1912, claiming for it the same lessons of antinaturalism and formalism that he associated with Froebel's pedagogy. "A Japanese artist," he declared, "grasps form always by reaching underneath for its geometry. . . . The forms, for instance, in the pine tree (as of every natural object on earth), the geometry that underlies and constitutes the peculiar pine character of the tree—what Plato meant by the eternal idea—he knows familiarly. The unseen is to him visible."¹¹⁸ No other people, he argued, had more completely committed themselves to conventionalizing their morals and their vision of nature into an integrated whole, making the entirety of Japanese civilization "a true work of Art."¹¹⁹ In this, Japan served as the most perfect possible example of the integrity and unity that Wright believed to be the object of his own art. "No more valuable object lesson was ever afforded civilization than this instance of a people who have made of their land and the buildings upon it, of their gardens, their manners and garb, their utensils, adornments, and their very gods, a single consistent whole, inspired by a living sympathy with Nature as spontaneous as it was inevitable."¹²⁰

The Ho-o-den would have been lesson enough for Wright to take away from the World's Columbian Exposition, but there may have been one other lesson so deep that it has not heretofore been much noticed by scholars. It was simply this: the fair was *temporary*. The extraordinary buildings that arose beside Lake Michigan on the south side of Chicago had been called into being to realize an ideal vision of

perfect architectural beauty (figure 8). Whether or not one agreed with that vision—whether one was drawn to the Beaux-Arts classicism of the Court of Honor, or to Louis Sullivan's polychromatic Transportation Building (figure 9) or to the exotic Oriental structures of the Midway Plaisance or to the elegant Ho-o-den itself—was almost beside the point. If there was no concern about the permanence of such structures, one could call them into being as if by the wave of a magician's wand, constructed of steel and clad in plaster to give them the appearance, if not the substance, of eternal beauty. Wright later objected to such illusions as a dishonest use of materials, but he can hardly have failed to notice the extraordinary effects that could be achieved architecturally—the amazing array of forms that could be paraded before the eyes of an awestruck audience—if solidity and permanence were not the paramount goals. The materials used at the fair would, for the most part, never have survived a midwestern winter, but that hardly mattered to the millions who were struck dumb by what the architects had achieved there. Virtually everyone who saw the White City regarded it as one of the wonders of the age. A British journalist who visited it just before it was scheduled to be torn down was typical in declaring, "Nothing that I have ever seen in Paris, in London, in St. Petersburg, or in Rome, could equal the effect produced by the illumination of these great white palaces that autumn night." They left on the mind "an impression of perfect beauty."¹²¹

For all their grandeur and glory, the buildings of the fair were meant to express an ideal that could not have been realized had they been required to last for a long time. Like all the great nineteenth-century fair architecture, from the 1851 Crystal Palace forward, they were follies, achieving wonderful effects at the expense of permanence.¹²² They enabled their builders to play with the latest materials and technologies, showcasing the miracles that new ideas and inventions could achieve. As such, they expressed a number of high ideals: progress, improvement, the achievements of science and art, the genius of heroically creative individuals, the onward march of civilization, and the triumph of mind, spirit, and will. But among the most profound lessons of the fair was one that could be expressed only as a paradox. On the one hand, the Exposition's goal was to point toward the future by inventing a fantasy world—a White City—that was as yet beyond the outer limits of human possibility: it attempted to embody, however briefly and beguilingly, an eternal ideal. On the other hand, the very fact that the fair's buildings could not survive, that they would be dismantled once the crowds had left and would henceforth live only in memory, was itself a metaphor for all human creation. However gloriously one might seek an ideal, one could never finally and permanently attain it. Even the Acropolis was now a noble ruin. Since all architecture would eventually suffer a similar fate, one could reasonably ask whether it was better to strive after the illusory hope of designing a building that would last forever, or to point toward an ideal so compelling that it would survive the building that expressed it. Certainly Japanese architecture did not include permanence among its highest goals, and the same was true of the White City. Its purpose was to showcase technological and aesthetic possibilities that would influence

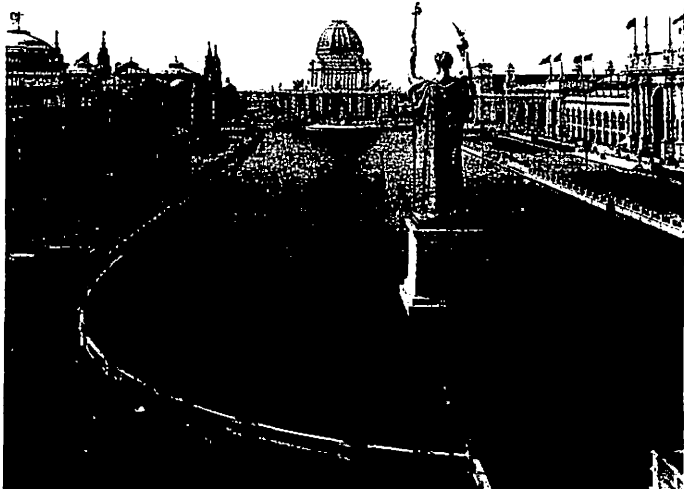


Figure 8: View from the Peristyle, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago. 1893

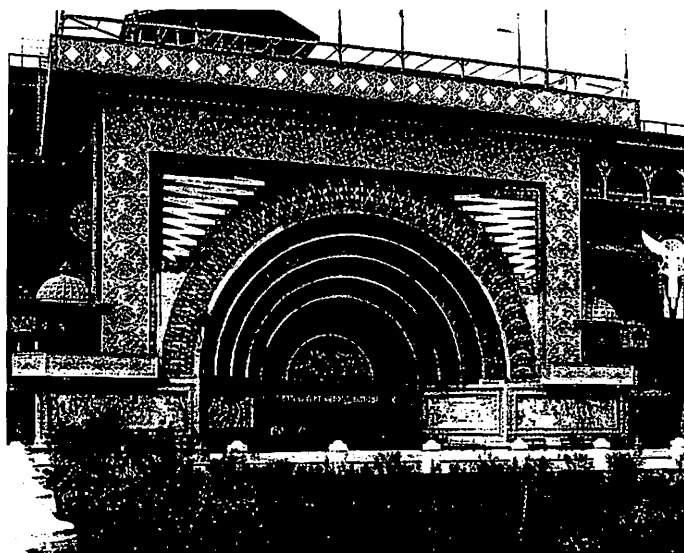


Figure 9: Adler and Sullivan. Golden Doorway, Transportation Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago. 1893

the course of history itself. In so doing, it implicitly asked whether the architect's most important achievement should be the physical structure or the impact that such a structure might make upon the human mind. The fair suggested that it might be possible to leave a profound impression on the collective cultural memory with "demonstration" buildings capable of resonating through a thousand subsequent works even if they did not themselves survive the ebb and flow of time.¹²³ We will never know whether Frank Lloyd Wright consciously pondered such questions as he stood before the Ho-o-den and wandered about the Court of Honor, but his later practice suggests that he knew full well the expressive possibilities of an architecture that flirted, follylike, with impermanence.

THE RIDDLE OF A LEAKY ROOF

One great legacy of the World's Columbian Exposition for Wright, therefore, was the lesson that every building, no matter how humble or small, could enjoy the expressive freedom of the folly and also profoundly influence the structures of architects working far in the future. The buildings of the Exposition had achieved a unique playfulness and freedom by pretending that time did not exist, and they did so in such a way as to affect the course of American architecture for the next thirty years. Like all follies—like all temporary buildings that revel in their own evanescent opportunities—the fair gave its builders the chance to try experimental ideas, explore extreme effects, and express their most exuberant visions in ways that would not have been possible under any other circumstances. Certainly Sullivan's grand entrance to the Transportation Building went beyond anything he had attempted in more permanent structures, and the same was true for many other architects and engineers whose works ranged from the great Ferris Wheel to the Court of Honor itself. Wright himself experienced the pleasures of folly

architecture when, less than three years after the fair, he erected the Romeo and Juliet Windmill near his aunts' school in the Helena Valley (plate 49). Although he intended the structure to be permanent and it held up reasonably well over the years—albeit with significant restoration and eventual reconstruction—it shared with the buildings of the fair a clear sense that its utilitarian function was merely an excuse for its extravagantly elegant, playful, even ribald form. It would have been right at home on the Midway Plaisance in Chicago.

Throughout his career Wright was drawn to fantasies such as this one, many of which he must have known were not likely to be realized. Some, like the wildly exaggerated Tudor of the Nathan G. Moore House in Oak Park of 1895, or the vaulting Crystal Palace–like skeleton of the remodeled Rookery Building lobby of 1905, or the explicit follies of Chicago's Midway Gardens of 1913–14 (plates 133–144), actually did come into being. Many more remained ideas on paper, memories without physical expression: The Mile High Illinois skyscraper of 1956, the Doheny Ranch Resort of 1923, the Cottage Group Hotel and Sports Club for Huntington Hartford of 1946–48, the Marin County Fair Pavilion of 1957–59 (see plates 198–199, 316–318, 341–342, 388). Broadacre City and the Usonian houses were more constrained in their impulses, but they too sought to serve as visionary templates transmitting a Wrightian legacy to the landscapes and memories of the future. Built or unbuilt, all such designs expressed the visionary joy of folly architecture, all were made as much of memory as of masonry or mortar, and all served as demonstration buildings whose purpose was to leave Wright's unmistakably personal mark on all who would follow in his footsteps.

Looking at Wright's drawings of such projects today, it is hard to believe that he really imagined they would ever be built. But because one could easily say the same of so many other Wright buildings that *did* come to fruition, one must be very careful not to draw the wrong

conclusion about the meaning of these fantasy projects. Above all, Wright sought the freedom to express his own creative genius as an artist. During his years at Oak Park, when he was still trying to uphold a conservative suburban lifestyle not unlike that of his bourgeois neighbors, Wright for the most part reined in his more playful side. He built structures that for all their originality still upheld Gannett's traditional family values, still conformed to many ordinary expectations about domestic architecture, still usually managed to be built more or less within his clients' budgets. After fleeing the staid environs of Oak Park, however, Wright's impulse toward more exuberant structures began to play a greater role in his work. The possibilities that he had first discovered in the follies of the 1893 Exposition increasingly encouraged him to explore the endlessly plastic manipulations of geometry and form that were the core of his idealism. If we wish to answer the riddle of his leaky roofs, it is here, to the folly and the imperatives of romantic individualism, that we must finally turn.

As I suggested at the outset, the riddle is more profound than it first seems. The practical failings of Wright's buildings are so numerous that one cannot hope to catalogue them in an essay of this size. Although the interruption of Herbert Johnson's dinner party by Wingspread's leaking roof is undoubtedly the most famous example of these failings, it is hardly the most dramatic. When members of the Beth Sholom Synagogue (plates 372–375) held their first High Holy Days celebration in 1960, water literally poured onto their heads from the rain outside, requiring the congregation to move elsewhere. The rabbi confessed that he was a nervous wreck each time he had to plan a service or a wedding, and jokesters in Philadelphia began to ask, "Why go on the Water Wagon? Join Wright's Beth Sholom and get your water free."¹²⁴ Workers at the Johnson Administration Building became so accustomed to the leaks from its Pyrex glass-tubing skylight that they were never without five-gallon buckets near their desks to catch the drips—though buckets could not protect them when the glass itself occasionally descended to the floor.¹²⁵ And yet falling tubing was nothing compared to the problems that parishioners faced at Wauwatosa's Greek Orthodox Church (plates 376–379). There, Wright's blue tiled dome experienced frost heaving within a few years of its being completed and began to leak. The roof's accumulated moisture gradually loosened the two-inch asbestos insulation behind the church's interior ceiling, which began to sag in 1965. On Easter Sunday 1966, a large section of the ceiling collapsed, fortunately at a time when the sanctuary was unoccupied. The asbestos insulation was eventually replaced with urethane foam, which provided a more effective vapor barrier, but not before so much moisture damage had been done to the dome's exterior tiles that they too had to be replaced with a more durable material at considerable expense.¹²⁶

Such stories, alas, are only the tip of the iceberg. In the case of these three buildings, Wright was working with unusual materials, so it is hardly surprising that they did not perform quite as originally anticipated. But leaks occurred even when he worked with more traditional materials, especially when he wished to stress a building's horizontality. We have already seen that by diminishing the pitches of the

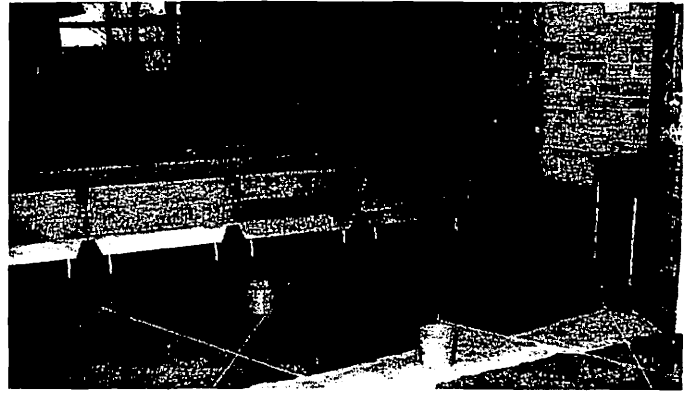


Figure 10: Frank Lloyd Wright. Unitarian Church, Madison. 1945–51. Interior view with buckets for collecting water

roofs for houses in temperate latitudes, he increased the likelihood that they would have to carry their winter snow burdens for longer periods. At the same time, he eliminated the attic so as to increase the height of public rooms, which could now soar right to the top of the building—through the space that the attic had formerly occupied.¹²⁷ In the process, he failed to recognize that the attic existed in vernacular architecture to serve several important functions. Most obviously, it enabled the roof to be more steeply pitched—but then, Wright was no fan of pitched roofs during his Prairie years. (Later, he sometimes used steep pitched roofs for aesthetic effect, as at Beth Sholom and the Unitarian Church, but leaks remained a persistent problem.) The attic provided extra storage space—but Wright was generally opposed to cluttering his designs with the kind of chaos that usually accompanies storage. Finally, it served to contain the extreme swings of temperature and moisture that occur at the tops of most buildings—but Wright was for some reason not always attentive to the importance of vapor barriers and ventilation in the outer shell of his houses. The result was that Wright's roofs could experience problems from many different sources. The copper roof of the Unitarian Church (figure 10) has leaked from rain and snow, and sometimes simply from the moisture that the congregation itself exhales while breathing in the room beneath this natural vapor barrier. The flat-roofed Usonian houses have had moisture problems as well. When, for instance, the new owner of the first Herbert Jacobs House in Madison of 1936–37 (plates 241–245) sought to restore it in the 1980s, he discovered severe structural damage in the roof where inadequate insulation had encouraged frequent leaks and condensation from the repeated freezing and thawing of poorly drained snow.¹²⁸

Roofs were not the only places where these sorts of design problems could occur. Wright's frequent wish to make his buildings appear to defy gravity produced a lifelong love affair with the cantilever, which he often extended farther from its structural supports than conservative engineering practice advised. Although he loved to boast that he knew more about such matters than the engineers, and although few of his cantilevers have actually failed, deflections have been common and occasionally severe. Edgar J. Kaufmann nervously commissioned sev-

eral engineering studies to determine whether the sags and cracks in Fallingwater's famous cantilevers (plates 234–240) might pose a serious threat to the building's safety, and one gets the feeling that he was never completely reassured on this point.¹²⁹ Not long after it was completed, the choir loft in Madison's Unitarian Church had deflected downward by more than a foot and needed extensive structural repair; the cantilevered eave over the building's entrance today sags so much that those over six feet are in serious danger of bumping their heads on it. The third-floor roof of the Robie House is similarly deflected downward by many inches.¹³⁰ Any number of Wright buildings have had to have discreet props added to hold up their sagging cantilevers. Some of the worst problems are at Taliesin itself, where Wright's lack of money often led him to adopt less than optimal solutions to the design problems he faced. Walking along the building's eastern terraces, for instance, which initially appear to be made of solid stone, one detects an odd springiness underfoot. The reason becomes clear when one looks below and sees that flagstones have been laid directly on wooden joists, which have not fared well from this treatment. The south terrace beyond Wright's own bedroom, as of 1992, was on the verge of collapse and required extensive reconstruction before it could safely be used again. Sags and deflections such as these are the norm at Taliesin, and the total bill for repairing them is estimated in the tens of millions of dollars.

Wright's game of chicken with the force of gravity was matched by other refusals to accommodate the surrounding environment. These seem especially perplexing when one considers his reputation as an "organic" architect whose highest goal was to design buildings that would be "naturally" suited to their sites. On the one hand, Wright could display extraordinary environmental sensitivity in the siting of his buildings, practicing passive solar architecture long before it even had a name. Whenever possible, he oriented his houses so that three of their four sides would receive full sun for part of the day; moreover, he tried to extend his eaves just far enough so that they would provide shade in summer but permit direct lighting from the lower midwinter sun.¹³¹ On the other hand, he was also capable of introducing at the Jacobs House an innovation called the carport which did away with the four walls of a garage as a way of saving money (and presumably of using yet another cantilever—which has, inevitably, sagged and needed repair). To introduce a garage without walls to the cold winter climate of Wisconsin, and worse, to place it on the northwest corner of its building, where it must bear the brunt of winds and drifting snow, does not seem a particularly sensitive response to the environment.

Similar indifference to winter cold is reflected in Wright's regular use of single-paned glass, his intense dislike for double-hung windows, his habit of butting glass directly against stone or masonry, where caulking will regularly fail, and the general difficulty of keeping his buildings warm. Herbert and Katherine Jacobs reported that their house could be *very* cold in the early years, and Wright's decision in the 1930s to migrate semiannually between Wisconsin and Arizona must surely reflect his tacit admission that it was a losing battle to try to keep Taliesin warm.¹³² Environmental problems such as these were

by no means limited to houses that had to survive a northern winter. Wright placed La Miniatura, his beautiful house for Mrs. George Madison Millard, on the floor of a desert arroyo despite being warned of the attendant danger of floods (plates 178–181). When the inevitable happened, he excused himself by declaring that no one had seen such rain "in fifty years."¹³³ The danger at Fallingwater was more calculated, and most visitors would probably agree that the risk was well worth running, but it too has suffered damage from floods.¹³⁴

When his mind was set on a particular architectural effect, Wright could be as unwilling to compromise with a building's inhabitants—his clients—as he was with its natural environment. The uncomfatableness of his furniture is so legendary that even he complained of having been "black and blue in some spot, somewhere, almost all my life from too intimate contact with my own early furniture."¹³⁵ Owners of Wright houses frequently found them difficult to decorate because their architect had so forcefully imposed his unitary vision upon them. Ordinary furniture and ornament just did not look right, and even Wright's own furniture could be arranged in only a limited number of ways to suit the space. When owners did the best they could with the furniture they possessed, Wright complained that "very few of the houses . . . were anything but painful to me after the clients brought in their belongings."¹³⁶ His preferred solution was for them to throw most of their old things away. He told Herbert and Katherine Jacobs, when he saw their original possessions: "This stuff is all prehistoric, and it will have to go."¹³⁷

But perhaps Wright's most important refusal to compromise with the needs of his clients was financial. His frequent and seemingly willful inability to complete his buildings within their promised budgets was nothing less than extraordinary. Wright was quite shameless about underestimating costs. When told that the original architect for the Johnson Administration Building had estimated that it might cost about \$300,000, Wright "snorted and said it was too damn much money for the job and he could do a better functional job in more appropriate manner for a lot less."¹³⁸ In the end, his building cost nearly \$900,000, admittedly for reasons that were not entirely in the architect's control.¹³⁹ The most extreme cases of Wright's exploding budgets—the Johnson Building, Fallingwater, the Guggenheim Museum—involved clients who could afford to pay Wright's ballooning expenses, but others were by no means spared. He promised the Madison Unitarians that their new church would cost \$60,000; the final bill was \$213,487.61, and that did not include the large amounts of volunteer and donated labor that were needed to finish it.¹⁴⁰ Beth Shalom and the Wauwatosa Greek Orthodox Church experienced comparable increases.¹⁴¹ In the case of the Usonian houses, which were designed to carry a much lower price tag, Wright was somewhat more successful at coming in close to budget, though even there he frequently set up circumstances that pushed his clients into paying more than they had intended. When, for instance, he designed the first house for the lot that Herbert and Katherine Jacobs had purchased for it, he so filled the property that they instantly recognized they would have to double the size of their lot.¹⁴² Later, he frequently fell into the

habit of blaming any problems with such buildings on his clients' inability to pay for better materials or more features. Some were so persuaded by this argument that they felt apologetic about complaining.¹⁴³

The reasons for Wright's cost overruns were manifold. Some were common to virtually all modern architecture. The impulse to design innovative forms using radically new materials could hardly help but entail steep learning curves that were bound to be costly, which is why Wright was hardly alone among major modern architects in underestimating expenses (or in designing roofs that leaked, for that matter)—he merely committed the sin more consistently and unapologetically than most. His blueprints could be notoriously difficult to interpret, and this, combined with his unusual designs, meant that contractors wasted much time and money trying to figure out how to work from them. Worse, Wright constantly modified his plans as new ideas occurred to him on the construction site, and this too inevitably jacked up costs. He did not hesitate to offer an extremely low estimate in order to gain a contract; then, once the client was hooked, he offered any number of reasons why changes in the plan would entail increased costs. Money apparently meant very little to him, as his son's description makes clear: "He carried his paper money crumpled in any pocket—trousers, vest, coat or overcoat. He would have to uncrumple a bill to see its denomination. He never counted his change. He never put his money into interest-bearing investments. . . . He either paid too much or too little for everything"—if, one might add, he paid at all.¹⁴⁴ In Wright's view, apparently, the client's money was a means to the artist's end, with consequences that could be expensive only for the client. One early Wright patron summed up the problem with the following advice: "Better take warning and be *very* careful in your dealings with him. If he is sane, he is *dangerous*."¹⁴⁵

It is worth mentioning one additional problem with Wright's buildings that also has important financial implications. They were not just expensive to build; they also have proved to be remarkably costly to keep up. All their many problems—the leaks, the sags, the failing materials—of course entail repair costs. Wright's affection for using expensive or unusual building materials that are not easily replaced has not helped either. Jeffrey Chusid, the architect in charge of restoring the Samuel Freeman House in Los Angeles of 1923–24 (plates 187–191), described the problems he is facing in trying to deal with its twelve thousand concrete blocks, of which perhaps a thousand or more have experienced serious deterioration: "Remember how Tolstoy begins *Anna Karenina* by saying that every happy family is alike, but every unhappy family is unhappy in its own special way? Well, in this house we have twelve thousand unhappy families."¹⁴⁶

But there is another source of costs that is more surprising and more interesting. In many instances, Wright apparently did not try to anticipate the ways in which his buildings would require regular maintenance of their mechanical systems. As a result, he rendered some of their most basic utilities almost inaccessible, dramatically escalating costs when something did in fact go wrong with them. Even so simple a matter as changing a light bulb could cause problems. At the Johnson Building, for instance, the incandescent bulbs of the Great

Workroom were located between two layers of glass tubing with no easy way to gain access to them; a fifteen-foot-high wheeled scaffold had to be kept in the room so that tubes could be removed and bulbs replaced.¹⁴⁷ At the first Jacobs House, the radiant heating system beneath the floor had never been wholly successful, but when its cast-iron pipes finally began to leak, there was no way to gain access to them. The only solution was to remove the entire floor and start over.

The Greek Orthodox Church's congregation made a similar discovery when it sought to clean the ventilation conduits in its building: the conduits were more constricted than usual, had unexpected bends in them, and Wright had left no way to get at them. Special devices had to be employed to clean them mechanically. Many other problems have surfaced as well. The congregation holds one of the nation's largest fund-raising festivals each year, and the bulk of the money it raises goes toward maintaining Wright's difficult structure. As a result of experiences like these, many of the church's members are more than a little jaded about Frank Lloyd Wright, and some even regard their building as a great albatross. They are surely not alone. Surveying the hundreds of Wright buildings that still stand and seeing the many ways in which they are now decaying, one realizes that the cost of fully restoring them is astronomical. It would unquestionably run to hundreds of millions of dollars, and could easily exceed a billion.

And so one returns to the riddle of these many leaky roofs. What do they tell us about this greatest of all American architects? Surely Wright's high Emersonian ideals—his pleas for honesty and truth in the service of an organic architecture whose integrity would rest on nature's own principles—are more than a little inconsistent with his personal behavior and the practical failings of his buildings. How could an organic architect fail to respond to so basic an environmental constraint as the need for a house to fend off winter's cold or the need for its roof to shed water? How could a man of integrity so frequently fail to pay his bills and so often mislead his clients about the bills they themselves would have to pay? How could an artist so devoted to nature surround himself with so much artifice? How could a man so committed to truth so frequently lie? Were these mere inconsistencies, foolish and otherwise, or were they deep contradictions, hypocrisies even, in the very soul of Frank Lloyd Wright?

By now, the answers to such questions should be reasonably clear. Wright remained throughout his life the romantic he had been since childhood. As such, he brought a romantic's vision and romantic's scale of values to the practical challenges of his life. "Trust thyself," Emerson had taught. "Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being."¹⁴⁸ More than anyone or anything else, Wright trusted himself. Steeped in a tradition that saw the genius as a visionary individual doing battle with the forces of blind convention (Truth Against the World), he felt wholly justified in ignoring the niceties of conventional behavior—the foolish consistencies—if they got in the way of his higher truths. Lesser men might think him arrogant, but in his own eyes he was bearing righteous witness to the

truth of his own vision. "I am telling you now the truth," he declared in the final year of his life:

No man who believes in himself and who is not pretentious, who is not trying to swindle you out of your eyeteeth pretending that he is something that he isn't, no such man, if he is sincere, is arrogant. We have come to mistake this thing we call arrogance, mistake the sureness of one's self, the faith in one's self which rejects the inferior, which will not countenance interference or destruction. . . . It is not arrogance. I am not an arrogant person and I never was. But I am a person who believes in what I believe in, and I am always willing to fight for what I believe in, and I am never willing to take less than what, to me, is the best.¹⁴⁹

Romantic genius, artistic iconoclast, heroic individualist: these were the labels Wright attached to himself, these the standards against which he measured his own behavior. When he told clients to throw away their belongings or when he cajoled them into spending far more than they had ever intended on their houses, he was serving his vision of an ideal truth. Given his own perennial indifference to money, one can almost imagine that he literally had trouble regarding it as real. When he underestimated costs, he may sometimes have fooled himself as much as he did his clients, for the money (perhaps even the client) was just a means to an end. Indeed, Wright went so far as to suggest that money actually acquired its value by enabling his genius to create, and was as good as worthless if not pressed into the service of some higher good. "Money," he told his apprentices, "becomes valuable because you can do something with it. If you take away all the creative individuals, all the men of ideas who have projected into the arena of our lives substantial contributions, money would not be worth anything."¹⁵⁰ All of his behavior is consistent with this principle, however convenient and self-serving the uses to which it could be put. From his own point of view, much of what is most troubling about Wright can be explained as part of his single-minded struggle to overcome any obstacle that might prevent his vision from being realized.

Above all else, Wright's vision served beauty. When he quibbled with Sullivan's dictum that "form follows function," suggesting instead that "form and function are one," he was in fact revealing that when push came to shove his own true passion was form more than function.¹⁵¹ What he admired in the Arts and Crafts movement was its commitment to crafting all objects in such a way as to render them beautiful. What he loved about Japan was the idea of a culture in which every human action and every human object were integrated so as to make of an entire civilization a work of art. In pursuit of beauty, he sought to subordinate all elements of his architecture to a consistent style that would express their underlying unity. No matter how radically his individual buildings may differ from each other, they all express his struggle for aesthetic consistency, his habit of seizing a single abstract theme and recapitulating it with endless variations as if in a Beethoven symphony. This man who could sometimes seem so inconsistent in his personal and professional life in fact held up consistency as the highest ideal of his architecture. "Consistency from first to last," Wright declared, "will give you the result you seek and con-

sistency alone."¹⁵² The vocabulary in which he sought to achieve this consistency was geometrical, so that Fallingwater, to take an obvious case, is an almost obsessive rumination on the possibilities of the cantilever, from the basic structure of the suspended floors right down to the treatment of the bookshelves. "You must be consistently grammatical," Wright said, for a building "to be understood as a work of Art."¹⁵³ Geometry was the key to grammatical consistency, which was in turn the key to aesthetic unity, which was in turn the key to beauty, which was in turn the key to God.

But consistency alone was not enough; it was only of value if coupled with the new. By itself, consistency would kill creativity, producing yet another of the lifeless, backward-looking traditions that were the death of art. Newness was proof of creative genius, and *consistent* newness was the best proof of all. Just as he tried hard not to seem influenced by anyone else's style, Wright had a restless urge to keep inventing new styles lest he start repeating his own too often. His boastfulness and his competitive need to claim priority over all other architects were surely tied to this horror of repetition. So was his love affair with new technologies, his willingness to experiment with virtually any new material that came his way so he could claim that he, Frank Lloyd Wright, was the first architect ever to have employed it. Describing to his apprentices the many innovations he had supposedly made in constructing the Larkin Building—air conditioning, plate-glass windows, integral desk furniture, suspended toilet bowls, and so on—he concluded, "I was a real Leonardo da Vinci when I built that building, everything in it was my invention."¹⁵⁴

Wright's love of new technologies was matched by a desire to use old technologies in new ways. His fascination for the new and his need to show off his unsurpassed talents as an architectural virtuoso undoubtedly help explain his tendency to demand so much of his materials, daring to test their limits almost to the point of failure if it meant achieving effects he could claim as uniquely his own. The sags in Wright's cantilevers are but the logical complement to his perennial testing of limits in the search for new expression. Wright's defenders sometimes claim that he was simply ahead of his time, that the materials did not yet exist that could do what he wished them to do, and that this explains some of the problems with his buildings. Nothing in Wright's career supports this argument. Had he lived to be able to take advantage of the newer technologies and stronger materials of our own day, he would surely have pushed them to their limits as well. The proof he demanded of his genius was to go where no architect had ever gone before, and that meant accepting risks that few others were willing to take. If the cost of gambling on greatness was some leaky roofs, badly heated rooms, sagging cantilevers, and unhappy clients, then Wright was more than willing to pay the price.

Wright combined all these creative qualities—his exploration of new technologies, his invention of new styles, his striving for maximum expressive effect, his search for grammatical consistency in all his buildings—with a remarkable playfulness. There was something childlike about the man even in his late eighties—a powerful sense of romance and an unabashed enthusiasm for his own creations. In one

sense, he never ceased being the flirtatious male of Auden's poem, lounging in the sunlight and performing for mother with seemingly effortless grace. But for all his self-centeredness, he also had a remarkable ability to sweep others up in his vision. Long before the ground for a new building had even been broken, Wright had conjured for his audience a beguiling fantasy of the ideal form that building would represent. No one has described this seductive power of Wright's better than his son John. His father's talent, he said, was to build "a romance about you, who will live in it—and you get the House of Houses, in which everyone lives a better life because of it. It may have a crack, a leak, or both, but you wouldn't trade it for one that didn't." This would be true, John said, even if Wright were building you a chicken coop. "He weaves a romance around the gullibility of the chicken and the chicanery of the human being—and you get the Coup of Coops in which every chicken lives a better life on its own plot of ground. You may crack your head or bump your shins on some projecting romanticism, but life will seem richer, the air clearer, the sunshine brighter, the shadows a lighter violet. You will gather the eggs with a dance in your feet and a song in your heart, for your coop will be a work of art, not the cold logical form chasing the cold logical function."¹⁵⁵

The romantic spirit that Wright brought to all his buildings may point at once to the deepest secret of his architecture and the most profound reason for his leaky roofs. In the end, the leaks and sags did not much matter to him. Although his practical goal was to strive as hard as he could to make his structures conform to the vision in his mind, form mattered more than function to him, and the vision behind form mattered most of all, far more than did its physical incarnation. The building itself would invariably fall short, and could only be an approximation of the Platonic ideal that lay behind it. This may explain why Wright was so willing to modify his buildings even when they were under construction, and why he apparently felt no compunction about altering them once they were complete. Taliesin itself underwent innumerable revisions, with walls and windows and doors and rooms being added and subtracted on an almost monthly basis. No building seemed permanent to Wright, because none could reflect for more than an instant the multifaceted geometric ideal that was in his mind. Perhaps this is why he was apparently so undisturbed when one or another of his buildings was torn down. "I have learned not to grieve long," he wrote, "now that some work of mine has met its end." He took comfort from the fact that its image would survive in photographs, and these would spread its memory "as an idea of form, to the mind's eye of all the world."¹⁵⁶ It was the lesson of the folly: the architect could

not help but be a builder in the sand, and his works could not hope to escape what Wright called "the mortgage of time . . . on human fallibility foreclosed."¹⁵⁷ Buildings, like their architects, were mortal, and so they leaked and sagged and aged and eventually passed away. But like the White City, which had leapt into being for but a single summer to realize a dream on the shore of Lake Michigan, it was possible for "an idea of form" to live far longer in "the mind's eye of all the world." If an architect aspired to immortality, he had best seek it in the realm of memory, spirit, and eternal ideals, not mortal matter.

Wright finally staked his claim to greatness on the mind's eye as his best defense against the mortgage of time. "The product of a principle," he declared, "never dies. The fellows who practise it do, but the principle doesn't."¹⁵⁸ However inconsistent he may have been about other aspects of his life, he never wavered from this chief article of faith: an organic architecture, like a life well lived, must serve the principles that give order to nature and meaning to the human spirit. "We learn," Emerson had written, "that the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all things exist, and that by which they are."¹⁵⁹ However cleverly an architect might manipulate natural materials, however brilliantly he might combine wood and stone and mortar to create breathtakingly beautiful space, his truest creation was not material but spiritual. "Spirit creates," wrote Emerson. It "does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old."¹⁶⁰ Where nature and spirit met, there one would find the principles one sought, the lessons that would reveal the secrets of trees and flowers and buildings and even of the architect's own soul. "The principles that build the tree," declared Wright, "will build the man."¹⁶¹ If such language today seems alien to us, if architectural critics now sometimes dismiss Wright's high-blown romantic words as unreliable guides to his architectural practice, this may be because we have forgotten the ideals that were ultimately more important to him even than buildings. The secret of Wright's architecture, he would surely have reminded us, will not be found on its surface but in its heart. If we wish to find it for ourselves, we must make our own way to the unity he managed to discover in so many corners of his universe: in the romantic words of a Concord preacher, in the geometric lessons of a kindergarten toy, in the gentle prospects of a Wisconsin landscape, in the evanescent beauty of a Japanese temple that was also a playful folly in the midst of a dream city—perhaps even in the persistent leaks of Wright's own roofs.

NOTES

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1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," in *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), p. 265. It is consistent with the spirit of this famous remark that it is often misquoted as referring to a foolish inconsistency.
2. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (1932; rev. ed., New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943), pp. 107-08.
3. John Lloyd Wright, *My Father Who Is on Earth* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1946); reprint ed., *My Father, Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: Dover, 1992), p. 74.
4. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 31.
5. In one of his earliest pronouncements on the goals of domestic architecture, Wright argued: "There should be as many types of homes as there are types of people, for it is the individuality of the occupants that should give character and color to the building and furnishings." Frank Lloyd Wright, "The Architect and the Machine" (1894), in Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright: Collected Writings*, vol. 1 (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), p. 23.
6. Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Natural House* (1954; reprint ed., New York: New American Library, 1970), p. 68.
7. Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright: His Living Voice* (Fresno: Press at California State University, 1987), p. 186.
8. The most famous furniture-rearranging story is that of Herbert Johnson, whose wife Irene Johnson never forgave Wright for the insult. See Samuel C. Johnson, "Mr. Wright and the Johnsons of Racine, Wis.: Reminiscences of 'Wingspread' and Its Architect," *AIA Journal* (January 1979), reprinted by the Johnson Foundation. Herbert and Katherine Jacobs were told by Wright that most of their existing furniture was "prehistoric" and would "have to go." Herbert Jacobs with Katherine Jacobs, *Building with Frank Lloyd Wright: An Illustrated Memoir* (1978; reprint ed., Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), p. 1.
9. For clients' reports on the experience of working with Wright, see Jacobs and Jacobs, *Building with Frank Lloyd Wright*; and Paul R. and Jean S. Hanna, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Hanna House: The Client's Report*, 2nd ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987). See also Brendan Gill, *Many Masks: A Life of Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1987), pp. 189-90.
10. For a sample of Wright's lectures on this theme, see Pfeiffer, *His Living Voice*, passim, but esp. p. 78. Wright's son John has described his father's teaching abilities as follows: "Dad, with his uncanny genius in architecture, is not a good teacher. . . . Dad has always told his students that they could learn from his school but that he could not teach them anything. But I can see now that his teaching, even though apparently without method, had a very definite one. He taught me not to say 'Old Antique' by laughing at me when I said it. I had to analyze the phrase myself before I knew why he laughed." John Lloyd Wright, *My Father*, p. 131.
11. This last word occurs in Wright's earliest extant essay, "The Architect and the Machine"; see Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 26.
12. For an authoritative telling, see Johnson, "Mr. Wright and the Johnsons."
13. When I inquired about whether the church had any photographs of such leaks, the minister replied that I was welcome to come take one myself "on any rainy day."
14. Cited in Gill, *Many Masks*, p. 375.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 335.
16. On this theme, see Emerson, "Self-Reliance," *Essays and Lectures*, p. 260: "Trust [thy]self: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being."
17. Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Flower in the Crannied Wall," in *The Poems and Plays of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (New York: Modern Library, 1938), p. 721. Wright used these lines as the frontispiece for his design of the fine-art edition of William C. Gannett, *The House Beautiful* (River Forest, Ill.: Auvergne Press, 1896-97; he also had Richard Bock inscribe them on the famous statue of the muse of architecture that Wright originally designed for the Susan Lawrence Dana House in Springfield and later reproduced as a central icon at Taliesin. Narciso G. Menocal has discussed the poem in a way that complements my own argument in "Taliesin, the Gilmore House, and the 'Flower in the Crannied Wall,'" in Narciso G. Menocal, ed., *Wright Studies*, Vol. 1: *Taliesin 1911-1914* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), pp. 66-69.
18. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 11.
19. Pfeiffer, *His Living Voice*, pp. 69-70; see also pp. 169-70. Wright used almost exactly these words to describe his father's teachings about music; see, for instance, Wright, *Autobiography*, pp. 12-13, and also p. 47.
20. Wright described his father "composing" (the editorializing quotation marks are Wright's), pencil in his mouth, "weird" black smudges on his face, and asked: "Was music made in such heat and haste as this, the boy wondered?" Wright's own answer to this rhetorical question was clearly no. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 13.
21. Maginel Wright Barney, *The Valley of the God-Almighty Joneses: Reminiscences of Frank Lloyd Wright's Sister* (1965; reprint ed., Spring Green: Unity Chapel Publications, 1986), p. 64.
22. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 49.
23. Barney, *Valley of the God-Almighty Joneses*, p. 151.
24. John Lloyd Wright, *My Father*, p. 100.
25. Meryle Secrest, *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), p. 79.
26. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 16.
27. John O. Holzhueter has discussed Wright's relationship to Unitarianism in an unpublished lecture, "Frank Lloyd Wright, Unitarianism, and Community," delivered at the First Unitarian Society, Madison, Wisconsin, September 29, 1992. Meryle Secrest also emphasizes this theme in her biography.
28. The Reverend Max Gaebler, longtime minister of the First Unitarian Society in Madison, is my source for the story about Wright's wanting the word *Unity* to appear on its pulpit. After being persuaded by his wife to abandon his Baptist beliefs for Unitarianism, Wright's father served for a brief time as the founding secretary of the Madison congregation; consistent with the rest of his troubled career, though, he failed to receive the call to a Unitarian pulpit.
29. "Meet Mr. Frank Lloyd Wright: A Conversation with Hugh Downs," broadcast May 17, 1953, reprinted in Patrick J. Meehan, ed., *The Master Architect: Conversations with Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1984), p. 49; a slightly different version appears in "A Conversation," reprinted in Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (1953; reprint ed., New York: New American Library, n.d.), p. 29.
30. Wright's sister Maginel remembered Jenkin's "sonorous voice in the pulpit, august and cadenced with magnificent rolling r's. We children used to play church and imitate him." Barney, *Valley of the God-Almighty Joneses*, p. 99. To compare Jenkin's rhetorical style with that of his nephew, see Thomas E. Graham, ed., *The Agricultural Social Gospel in America: The Gospel of the Farm by Jenkin Lloyd Jones*. Studies in American Religion, vol. 19 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986). Many of Wright's Taliesin "sermons" have been recorded, and a sample can be heard as well as read in Pfeiffer, *His Living Voice*.
31. A key event in the Transcendentalist revolt against more traditional Congregationalist and Unitarian beliefs was Ralph Waldo Emerson's scandalous address to the graduating class of the Harvard Divinity School (then called Divinity College), delivered on July 15, 1838. It is today read primarily as a document of American romanticism, but in fact it was mainly written to contribute to a very particular theological debate about biblical authority versus direct personal revelation as the best source of religious inspiration. Emerson, "An Address Delivered Before the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge," *Essays and Lectures*, pp. 73-92.
32. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 561; for one of Wright's few references to Emerson, see p. 17. Wright did go so far as to include a long passage from Emerson's essay on farming as an appendix to *The Living City*, and Emerson's name appears among the great thinkers Wright listed on his Broadacre City display as having been among its inspirations.
33. Pfeiffer, *His Living Voice*, p. 65, says Whitman was "a prime favorite" of Wright's; see also Randolph C. Henning, ed., *"At Taliesin": Newspaper Columns by Frank Lloyd Wright and the Taliesin Fellowship, 1934-1937* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992). Brendan Gill also seems to think that Whitman was more important than Emerson in influencing Wright's thought, though he arrives at this conclusion because he finds both Whitman and Wright muddled and sloppy in their intellectual reasoning; he apparently believes Emerson to have been a much more rigorous thinker. Anyone who knows Emerson well will probably find this a curious description of so mystical, protean, and shape-shifting a philosopher. Gill, *Many Masks*, p. 339. Vincent Scully also emphasizes the poet's influence; see Vincent Scully, Jr., *Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: Braziller, 1960), p. 12.
34. Barney, *Valley of the God-Almighty Joneses*, pp. 59-60.
35. Gill, *Many Masks*, p. 39; Secrest, *A Biography*, p. 225.
36. Emerson, "Self-Reliance," *Essays and Lectures*, p. 259.
37. Meehan, *Master Architect*, p. 55.
38. Emerson, "Self-Reliance," *Essays and Lectures*, p. 261.
39. Emerson, "An Address," *Essays and Lectures*, p. 89.
40. Emerson, "Self-Reliance," *Essays and Lectures*, p. 263.
41. Pfeiffer, *His Living Voice*, p. 203.
42. Gill, *Many Masks*, p. 22.
43. Emerson, "Nature," *Essays and Lectures*, p. 20.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
47. *Ibid.* The Unitarian basis for these Emersonian ideas, and hence their links to the principles Wright imbibed from the Lloyd Jones family religion, can be clearly seen in the following passage: "Each creature is only a modification of the other: the likeness in them is more than the difference, and their radical law is one and the same. A rule of one art, or a law of one organization, holds true throughout nature. So intimate is this Unity, that, it is easily seen, it lies under the undermost garment of Nature, and betrays its source in Universal Spirit. For it pervades Thought also. Every universal truth which we express in words, implies or supposes every other truth. *Omne verum vero consonat*. It is like a great circle on a sphere, comprising all possible circles; which, however, may be drawn and comprise it in like manner. Every such truth is the absolute Ens [Absolute Being] seen from one side. But it has innumerable sides." *Ibid.*, p. 30.
48. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 16.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 89. The year before he died, Wright was still saying much the same thing: "We use the word 'nature' in a very careless way. Nature to us is the cows in the fields and the winds and the bees and the trees, unfortunately. But the theory of nature goes deep into the character of whatever it is. What is the nature of this thumb of mine—or anything else you want to

take to investigate—what is the nature of it? There lies the very essence of its character: the very essence of that thing, which by study, you come to know." Meehan, *Master Architect*, p. 234.

50. Emerson, "Nature," *Essays and Lectures*, p. 48.

51. Carl Sandburg once chided Wright for using words such as *beauty*, *truth*, and *ideal*, which made his prose so abstract and difficult to follow, arguing that Wright would be more readily understood if he would get "down to brass tacks and talk about barns and nails and barn doors." Wright's reply was revealingly Emersonian: "Those words—romance, poetry, beauty, truth, ideal—are not precious words nor should they be *specious* words. They are elemental human symbols and we must be brought back again to respect them by using them significantly if we use them at all, or go to jail." Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture. IX: The Terms," *Architectural Record* 64 (December 1928); reprinted in Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 310.

52. Emerson, "Nature," *Lectures and Essays*, p. 16.

53. Pfeiffer, *His Living Voice*, p. 68.

54. Frank Lloyd Wright, "A Philosophy of Fine Art" (1900), in Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 39.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

56. Cited in Meehan, *Master Architect*, p. 216. See also Wright, *Autobiography*, pp. 14–15.

57. The early work on this subject is by Grant Carpenter Manson: "Wright in the Nursery: The Influence of Froebel Education on the Work of Frank Lloyd Wright," *Architectural Review* 113 (June 1953), pp. 349–51; and *idem*, *Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910: The First Golden Age* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1958), pp. 5–10. It has been discussed more recently in greater detail in R. C. MacCormac, "Froebel's Kindergarten Gifts and the Early Work of Frank Lloyd Wright," *Environment and Planning B*, no. 1 (1974), pp. 29–50; and *idem*, "Form and Philosophy: Froebel's Kindergarten Training and the Early Work of Frank Lloyd Wright," in Robert McCarter, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Primer on Architectural Principles* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991), pp. 99–123. See also Jeanne S. Rubin, "The Froebel-Wright Kindergarten Connection: A New Perspective," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 48 (March 1989), pp. 24–37, and letters responding to same, *ibid.* (December 1989), pp. 413–17. Manson and McCarter are usefully criticized in Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., "Form Became Feeling: A New View of Froebel and Wright," in Kaufmann, *9 Commentaries on Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1989), pp. 1–6. The link between Froebel's system and Wright's architecture was discussed as early as 1900: see Robert C. Spencer, Jr., "The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright," *Architectural Review* 7 (June 1900), pp. 61–72; reprinted in H. Allen Brooks, ed., *Writings on Wright: Selected Comment on Frank Lloyd Wright* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), pp. 105–10.

58. Meehan, *Master Architect*, p. 217.

59. Pfeiffer, *His Living Voice*, p. 32.

60. Despite problems with his historical argumentation, Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. is right to stress this point in his "Form Became Feeling."

61. Friedrich Froebel, *The Education of Man*, trans. W. N. Hailmann (New York: D. Appleton, 1899), p. 169.

62. Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Japanese Print: An Interpretation* (Chicago: Ralph Fletcher Seymour, 1912); reprinted in Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 117.

63. Froebel, *Education of Man*, pp. 1–2.

64. Maria Kraus-Boelte and John Kraus, *The Kindergarten Guide, Vol. 1: The Gifts* (New York: E. Steiger, 1877), p. 37. It seems likely that this book may best reflect the particular methods that Anna Wright followed in performing Froebelian exercises with her son. See Manson, *Wright to 1910*, p. 5.

65. W. N. Hailmann, *Law of Childhood, and Other Papers* (Chicago: Alice B. Stockham, 1889), p. 43.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 42; italics in original. That Frank Lloyd Wright

fully understood this idealist goal of Froebel's system is suggested by his description of it in the very last interview he ever gave, just six days before he died: "All teachers," he declared, "should study and learn Plato, and then take it on to the children. A child should begin to work with materials just as soon as he is able to hold a ball. By holding a ball, a child gets a sense of the universe and there is a closeness to God. The ball or sphere leads the child to other geometric shapes: the cone, the triangle, the cylinder. Now he is on the threshold of nature: herself. . . . A new world is opened to him." Cited in Meehan, *Master Architect*, p. 313.

67. Pfeiffer, *His Living Voice*, p. 32.

68. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 14.

69. The most thorough discussion of Wright's decorative style is by David A. Hanks, *The Decorative Designs of Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: Dutton, 1979). Less analytical, but lavishly illustrated, is Carla Lind, *The Wright Style: Re-creating the Spirit of Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

70. References to Ruskin are relatively few in Wright's work—more often than not, Wright linked him with William Morris as a representative of the Arts and Crafts ambivalence about the machine—so that it is hard to judge how direct the English critic's influence on the young architect may have been. Wright may have been covering his tracks in this case, or he may have been exposed to Ruskinian ideas indirectly, for instance, in the writings of Viollet-le-Duc, which we know he read closely. My own inclination is to suspect that Wright read some of Ruskin's work and acquired some of it indirectly, but that it was so much of a piece with so many other idealist sources one detects in Wright's work that general osmosis may be as likely an explanation as any.

71. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (2nd ed., 1880; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1989), p. 105.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

73. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 1 (1843), quoted in Robert L. Herbert, ed., *The Art Criticism of John Ruskin* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 10–11.

74. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, p. 31.

75. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 75; cf. John Lloyd Wright, *My Father*, p. 69, which also includes a long extract from Viollet-le-Duc's *Discourses on Architecture*.

76. See, for instance, M. F. Hearn, ed., *The Architectural Theory of Viollet-le-Duc: Readings and Commentary* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), p. 187. For Ruskin's belief that cast iron and any machine-made ornament represented "deceits," see Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, p. 35.

77. Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *The Foundations of Architecture: Selections from the Dictionnaire raisonné* (1854), trans. Kenneth D. Whitehead (New York: Braziller, 1990), p. 233; italics in original.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

79. "Crystals are proof of nature's architectural principle," Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture III: The Meaning of Materials—Stone" (1928); reprinted in Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 270; this passage was omitted from the original *Architectural Record* article.

80. Hearn, *Architectural Theory of Viollet-le-Duc*, p. 229.

81. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 75.

82. Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856; reprint ed., London: B. Quaritch, 1910), p. 5.

83. *Ibid.*

84. Wright, "A Philosophy of Fine Art" in Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 39–44. The *Oxford English Dictionary* attributes the first occurrence of the verb "conventionalize" to John Ruskin in 1854.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 43. In this passage, Wright was echoing Owen Jones's thirteenth proposition: "Flowers or other natural objects should not be used as ornaments, but conventional representations founded upon them sufficiently suggestive to convey the

intended image to the mind, without destroying the unity of the object they are employed to decorate." Jones, *Grammar of Ornament*, p. 6.

86. Wright, "A Philosophy of Fine Art," in Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 43.

87. Frank Lloyd Wright, "Architect, Architecture, and the Client" (1896), in Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 31.

88. One of the most suggestive analyses of these devices is by Grant Hildebrand, *The Wright Space: Pattern and Meaning in Frank Lloyd Wright's Houses* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991). The literature here is enormous; other important works surveying these very general Wrightian themes include Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1887–1941* (1942; reprint ed., New York: DaCapo, 1973); Manson, *Wright to 1910*; Scully, *Frank Lloyd Wright: H. Allen Brooks, The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1972); John Sergeant, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses: The Case for Organic Architecture* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1976); McCarter, *A Primer on Architectural Principles*; and Paul Laseau and James Tice, *Frank Lloyd Wright: Between Principle and Form* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1992).

89. An ahistorical but provocative Jungian reading of this subject is given by Thomas H. Beeby, "Wright and Landscape: A Mythical Interpretation," in Carol R. Bolton, Robert S. Nelson, and Linda Seidel, eds., *The Nature of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 154–72. A more historicized interpretation is that of Jonathan Lipman, "The Architecture of Arcadia," in *The Wright State: Frank Lloyd Wright in Wisconsin* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1992), pp. 11–31. Wright's biographers emphasize his relationship to the Wisconsin landscape as well.

90. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 26.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

93. Gill, *Many Masks*, p. 48.

94. Wisconsin limestones have a high magnesium content and are technically known as dolomites; in the text I use the more familiar, generic term.

95. Wright, "Meaning of Materials—Stone," in Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 275.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

97. For illustrations of the effect and of the original appearance of the sandstone, see Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., *Fallingwater: A Frank Lloyd Wright Country House* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), esp. pp. 29, 31, 36–45, 58, 76–77. Wright explicitly compared Fallingwater with Taliesin in his interview with Hugh Downs (see Meehan, *Master Architect*, p. 37), and Donald Hoffmann, writing of Fallingwater, was so taken by the similar stonework of the two buildings that he mistakenly assumed Taliesin's masonry to be sandstone. See Donald Hoffmann, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater: The House and Its History* (New York: Dover, 1978), p. 18.

98. The Heurtley House (1902) is a particularly striking example of this effect, which is very common in Wright's brick buildings.

99. Meehan, *Master Architect*, p. 44.

100. W. H. Auden, "In Praise of Limestone," *Selected Poetry of W. H. Auden* (New York: Modern Library, 1959), pp. 114–17.

101. *Ibid.*

102. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

103. A polemical and now quite dated reading of Wright's antiurbanism can be found in Morton and Lucia White, *The Intellectual Versus the City: From Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press and MIT Press, 1962), pp. 189–208. A more balanced view can be found in Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), pp. 89–160.

104. Taliesin achieves privacy despite the openness of its plan and fenestration by its height and distance from prying neighbors; Fallingwater, which is perhaps the least private of Wright's houses, relies on its remote site to perform the same service.
105. On the landscape of Taliesin, see Walter L. Creese, *The Crowning of the American Landscape: Eight Great Spaces and Their Buildings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 241–78.
106. Wright, *Natural House*, p. 134.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
108. Henry Blake Fuller, *With the Procession* (1895; reprint ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).
109. Wright, *Autobiography*, 561; Louis Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea* (1924; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1956).
110. Gannett, *The House Beautiful*. In the first and last of these excerpts Gannett is quoting another author, but I have been unable to determine the original source. Wright was still quoting Gannett as late as the 1950s, when he prominently displayed a passage from *The House Beautiful* in the auditorium of the Unitarian Church in Madison.
111. *Ibid.*
112. The best essay on Chicago's Arts and Crafts community is by Richard Guy Wilson, "Chicago and the International Arts and Crafts Movements: Progressive and Conservative Tendencies," in John Zukowsky, ed., *Chicago Architecture, 1872–1922: Birth of a Metropolis* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1987), pp. 209–27. See also Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Penguin, 1936; 1975); Peter Szansky, *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s, and the Arts and Crafts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Gillian Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: A Study of Its Sources, Ideals and Influence on Design Theory* (1971; reprint ed., London: Trefoil Publications, 1990); Leslie Greene Bowman, *American Arts and Crafts: Virtue in Design* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1990); and Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991).
113. As its very title suggests, Wright's most famous single essay, "The Art and Craft of the Machine" (1901), is at once a criticism of the Arts and Crafts movement for its hostility to the machine, and a defense of the movement's underlying values. Wright reprinted the essay throughout his career and revised it many times, but the standard version is probably the one printed in Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 58–69.
114. Sullivan's classic account can be found in his *Autobiography of an Idea*, pp. 317ff.
115. Wright, *Autobiography*, pp. 125–28.
116. Grant Carpenter Manson's discussion of the Ho-o-den influence (*Wright to 1910*, pp. 34–41) remains among the best we have, despite his evident discomfiture at the heated denials of his still-living subject. See also Dimitri Tselos, "Exotic Influences in the Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright," *Magazine of Art* 46 (April 1953), pp. 160–84. Vincent Scully followed Tselos in pointing out the parallels between the Ho-o-den and the Ward W. Willits House (1902–03), which many regard as Wright's first true Prairie style house (Scully, *Frank Lloyd Wright*, p. 17). At the Susan Lawrence Dana House (1902–04), Wright's debt to Japan seems explicitly acknowledged in his treatment of the roof. For a classic discussion of Japanese domestic architecture itself, see Atsushi Ueda, *The Inner Harmony of the Japanese House* (1974), trans. Iwanami Shoten (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1990).
117. Pfeiffer, *His Living Voice*, p. 32.
118. Wright, *The Japanese Print*, in Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 118.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
120. *Ibid.*
121. William T. Stread, "My First Visit to America: An Open Letter to My Readers," *Review of Reviews* 9 (1894), pp. 414–15.
122. The word *folly* today carries mainly a negative meaning in English, so that the *Penguin Dictionary of Architecture* defines it as "a costly but useless structure built to satisfy the whim of some eccentric and thought to show his folly; usually a tower or a sham Gothic or classical ruin in a landscaped park intended to enhance the view or picturesque effect." John Fleming, Hugh Honour, and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Penguin Dictionary of Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 100. Nineteenth-century usage of the word still carried more of the sense that its French cognate, *la folie*, maintains as one of its standard meanings: a structure built solely for pleasure at a villa or rural retreat, intended to express a caprice and serve as the site for romantic rendezvous. In the text, I intend my usage to convey some of this older, more favorable connotation.
123. Terence Riley rightly encouraged me to stress the role of the Exposition in teaching Wright the importance of "model" or "demonstration" buildings as a way of influencing public memory and cultural values.
124. Patricia Talbot Davis, *Together They Built a Mountain* (Lititz, Penn.: Sutter House, 1974), p. 147.
125. Jonathan Lipman, *Frank Lloyd Wright and the Johnson Wax Buildings* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), p. 169.
126. John Gurda, *New World Odyssey: Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church and Frank Lloyd Wright* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Hellenic Community, 1986), p. 114.
127. Grant Hildebrand describes these changes well in *The Wright Space*, pp. 15–27; for Wright's own celebration of these innovations, see Wright, *Natural House*, pp. 32–33.
128. James Dennis, "Restoring Jacobs I," lecture delivered in Madison, Wisconsin, September 24, 1992. Sergeant, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses*, pp. 27–30, says that the overall experience of most Usonian owners has been positive, but for some reason fails to mention the roofs. Eugene R. Streich, "An Original-Owner Interview Survey of Frank Lloyd Wright's Residential Architecture" (1972), in Brooks, *Writings on Wright*, pp. 35–45, claims that the thirty-three original owners of Wright buildings he interviewed complained of "very few" leaks.
129. Kaufmann, *Fallingwater*, pp. 49–54; Hoffmann, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater*, pp. 41–48, 56–57.
130. Hildebrand, *The Wright Space*, p. 177; on pp. 176–77 Hildebrand supplies a long list of significant deflections in Wright structures.
131. Wright, *Natural House*, p. 150.
132. On heating problems at the first Jacobs House, see Jacobs and Jacobs, *Building with Frank Lloyd Wright*, pp. 54, 59–60.
133. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 249.
134. Kaufmann, *Fallingwater*, pp. 62–63.
135. Wright, *Natural House*, p. 37.
136. *Ibid.*
137. Jacobs and Jacobs, *Building with Frank Lloyd Wright*, p. 15.
138. Jack Ramsey to Herbert Johnson, July 19, 1936, as quoted in Lipman, *Johnson Wax Buildings*, p. 12.
139. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
140. Mary Jane Hamilton, *The Meeting House: Heritage and Vision* (Madison: Friends of the Meeting House, 1991), p. 26.
141. See Davis, *Together They Built a Mountain*; and Gurda, *New World Odyssey*.
142. Jacobs and Jacobs, *Building with Frank Lloyd Wright*, p. 17.
143. *Ibid.*, p. 60. The standard explanation for leaks at the Unitarian Church is that the roof is supposedly a thinner gauge of copper than Wright originally intended, and this rationale has been offered for other leaky Wright roofs as well. But an engineering report in 1993 revealed that the roof was built precisely to Wright's specifications, which were well below industry standards of the day.
144. John Lloyd Wright, *My Father*, p. 92.
145. W. E. Martin to D. D. Martin, September 19, 1905, as quoted in Gill, *Many Masks*, p. 159.
146. Jeffrey Chusid, conversation with author, November 9, 1992.
147. Lipman, *Johnson Wax Buildings*, p. 169.
148. Emerson, "Self-Reliance," *Essays and Lectures*, p. 260.
149. Meehan, *Master Architect*, p. 240.
150. Pfeiffer, *His Living Voice*, p. 74.
151. John Lloyd Wright, *My Father*, p. 120.
152. Wright, "The Architect and the Machine," in Pfeiffer, *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p. 22.
153. Wright, *Natural House*, p. 182.
154. Pfeiffer, *His Living Voice*, p. 31.
155. John Lloyd Wright, *My Father*, p. 121.
156. Wright, *Autobiography*, p. 312.
157. *Ibid.*, p. 31. Wright was here referring not to the fair but to two domed buildings he had known as a student in Madison, both of which he saw destroyed within a few years of each other.
158. Pfeiffer, *His Living Voice*, p. 28.
159. Emerson, "Nature," *Essays and Lectures*, p. 41.
160. *Ibid.*
161. Frank Lloyd Wright, as quoted in Gill, *Many Masks*, p. 22.