



Housewrights

Art Corriveau

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Set in a small Vermont town in the early decades of the twentieth century, **Housewrights** tells the story of Lily Willard, the town librarian, and her relationship with Oren and Ian Pritchard, housewrights who roam New England building houses for others though they themselves are homeless. Lily first meets the twins when they are children, and the boys arrive with their father to build Lily's family a new farmhouse. Ten years later, Oren returns for Lily. He asks her to marry him. She agrees, if he will settle down-for the first time in his life. Always lurking, though, is the question of Ian, off fighting the Great War. But when he returns, shell-shocked and wounded, Lily welcomes him into their home. Eyebrows are raised only silently at this unusual household, until one evening at the Grange Hall dance the three take a heady, impetuous waltz together-with practically the entire town watching.

Rich in detail and emotion, this unforgettable novel marks the debut of a singular storyteller who writes with extraordinary beauty, depth, and clarity.

Housewrights Details

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Author : Art Corriveau

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From Reader Review Housewrights for online ebook

Jenny Lynn says

This is an intriguing book. I liked most of the characters and thought the plot was very interesting, but sometimes the gaps in time between chapters threw me. It wasn't that I minded there being gaps in time, it's just that suddenly a chapter would end and the next chapter would take place three years later but I didn't immediately know that given that I forgot when the chapter before was supposed to be set. Maybe I'm just an inattentive reader. And while I sometimes liked the vagueness of the goings-on of the Pritchard family, sometimes it irritated me, but it was a small irritation. All in all this is a fast read and a pretty interesting story with unique characters.

Vaughn Demont says

Art Corriveau's Housewrights central message seems to be that in order to attain happiness, one must follow their own path without allowing themselves to be influenced by social mores that might disapprove. This is put across throughout the piece as Lily and the Pritchard twins forge a life together that is shown to be rather idyllic until compromises are made in order to save face with the community, as well as the final passages where the impression is given that the happy ending of the piece will be the destruction of The Knolls and the departure of Lily, her daughter, and the Pritchard brothers from their town to live out of their caravan. What strikes me the most about the novel, however, is how women are portrayed as the enemies of the achievement of independence and happiness. The most obvious antagonist is Hallie, who seems the most responsible for the unhappiness in the Pritchard family with her marriage to Ian, breaking up the twins' carpentry business, and splitting The Knolls in half, until Hallie and Ian finally move out into their own house (a house bought from Sears, no less). Hallie seems to be bent on vengeance on Lily for the failure of her own marriage (which ended because her husband extorted money and was more than likely gay) as well as apparently sleeping with her husband while Hallie was visiting her sick mother.

However, it could also be argued that Lily is the villain in the piece, simply because she allows all of the ruin to descend upon her family. It is Lily who arranges the marriage between Hallie and Ian (based on advice from her mother). It is Lily who convinces Oren to allow the splitting of The Knolls, and allow the splitting of the business. It is Lily who continues the charade of a happy family simply for the sake of the townspeople. It is even suggested by Lily's guilt that she is responsible for Oren's hospitalization by confronting him about his silence in an unsteady treehouse in front of their daughter.

The men, however, appear to be without fault. Lily's father is caring, attentive, and forgiving despite everything. Ian's actions that seem to be detrimental to the family (such as marrying Hallie and splitting the house and business) turn out to be sacrifices made for the sake of Lily and her happiness. Oren, who does not speak to anyone in his family for over four years except for his daughter, is excused from blame as his silence is described to be more post-traumatic stress disorder than simply done out of spite.

The rest of the oppressive factors in the piece seem to be genderless. The Selection Board that takes and reinstates Lily's job at the library is simply an institution. Clients of the business who turn on the brothers are either made genderless or representative of institutions. The only remaining oppressors to the Pritchards' happiness and freedom is the local gossips, who are almost all portrayed as farmer's wives, again relegating women to the antagonist column.

It should also be noted that when Lily is happy, and free, she is regarded as more of a tomboy than a proper and normal lady. Also, despite Faith being female, her protagonistic role serves more as a child, an innocent, than a "woman" in literary respects.

While the piece can hardly be considered misogynistic outright, its reliance on women as villains stands as a reason for further examination of the work and its portrayal of femininity in a negative light.

Carolyn F. says

Loved this book - it's about a love triangle but not really. Lily meets Oren & Ian when their father is hired to build Lily's family home. She's 8 and they're about 10. They get to know each other and become friends during that Summer with Oren promising to come back for Lily to marry her. 10 years later he does come back and marry her. Ian went to the Great War and returned shell-shocked. They all live together in a small town which means trouble with gossip. Lily tries to fix things but events seem to become worse.

I read this book in a day because I couldn't put it down. The ending was so good!

This book was one of those Kindle daily deals but I checked my library to see if they had it first. This is the second time I've absolutely loved a book recommendation from Kindle. My first time reading this author and I will definitely read more of his books.

Pamela Pickering says

Maybe more of a 2.75 for me. Although I whipped through this quickly I'm a little ambivalent about it. I was interested fairly early on and then it just sort of lost me. Maybe because I never really understood the full relationship between Lily, Oren, and Ian. And perhaps that's what the writer wanted--for us to come to our own conclusions but I needed just a little bit more clarification. I also felt the author's antagonist character, Hallie, was a little too one dimensional--a caricature, if you will.

Kitty says

Just too short.

Much was unrevealed with the pages of this book. Leaving the reader to paint the unknown in for themselves. Yes, the women are WOMEN in this book. Where others perceived "misogyny", I see simply a portrayal of women and men acting as women and men tend to act.

The magnetism that this book possesses lies in the harsh reality of life decisions. There is rarely a fairly tale ending and people tend to make life choices that they come to regret. Rarely is everything simple with all the lose ends tied up in a bow. Life is weird, people are strange, and emotions are complicated. And yes, you can have deep feelings for more than one person.

I grew to love these characters and the length of this novel seemed like not enough time spent with them. Wish there were more.

Tom McDade says

Praise for *Housewrights*:

Publisher's Weekly

"Corriveau concocts an unusual but convincing romantic triangle in his excellent first novel."

San Francisco Chronicle

"Corriveau skillfully chronicles the torments of those who don't fit in but who have inhabited a magic, separate world since childhood. *Housewrights* is fresh, sweet, spare and wholly satisfying."

Boston Herald

"The 'Wright' Stuff... *Housewrights* is the story of Lily Willard, a young woman who feels stifled by the conservativism of her small-town community. The result is a love story enmeshed in modernization, change and New England history."

Book Sense

"What a well-written, wonderful story. A lovely sad picture of life in an early 1900s Vermont town." (Book Sense 76 summer selection)

Booklist

"Corriveau has written a surprisingly rich novel that offers many pleasures, including the well-realized setting and characters." (featured review)

Library Journal

"The heartfelt ending to this compelling novel presents a convincing finale to one of the better debut novels of this year."

Jodi Picoult, author

"In the most wrenching New England love triangle I've read since *Ethan Frome*, Art Corriveau creates a trio of characters in search of their other halves. Exquisitely drafted, *Housewrights* explores loss and longing, friendship and family, the very nature of physical attraction--and ultimately reminds us that home is always where the heart is."

Charles Baxter, author

"*Housewrights* is a fascinating and intricate novel about doubleness--what can be shown and what has to remain secret--in a small New England town in the early part of the twentieth century. Its prose has a remarkable cleanliness and clarity, as if the novel itself had been built out of new wood. Art Corriveau's attention to the complexity of his characters and their community is deeply impressive, and his novel a wonderful addition to the literature of communities that can both shelter and then un-house their inhabitants."

Nicholas Delbanco, author

"This story of a town, a time and a love triangle borrows its rhythms from those of the seasons; Art Corriveau brings a long-dead way of life--the craftsmen and farmers, the devoted and the venturesome--vividly back to the page."

Nuala O'Faolain, author

"A corner of the past that startles us with its innocence and its passion, tenderly explored."

Katie says

I don't remember where I heard about this book, but I'm glad I did. It was one of the best books I've read recently and maybe even in my top 20 of all time. I adored the way it brought out the innocence of childhood and how that was shown to influence us throughout our lives. It was a fantastic love story, but really so much more than that.

Jackie Wayman says

read years ago enjoyed the intensity of the plot and characters.

Almira says

Housewrights" a novel by Art Corriveau.

I read this several years ago, and have always enjoyed doing reader's advisory on it for library patrons. Several of the staff here at the library have also enjoyed this one very much.

At the beginning of the 1900's in a small town in Vermont, Lily Willard meets twins Oren and Ian Pritchard when her father hires their carpenter father to build the Willard family a new home. Ten years later, Oren returns to claim Lily as his bride. As the town Librarian, Lily has certain moral standards imposed upon her by the powers that be, so that when Ian returns from World War I shell-shocked and injured, he moves in with the the young married couple, only to set tongues awagging at that! But when the three of them dance together at the local Grange dance, with all the town watching, the scandal that it causes, causes them to make changes to their lives - a PROBLEM not easily overcome, especially with twins.

I really enjoyed this story, the writing was very well done. Hope that you will consider this one,

Jewel says

Goodness gracious. I can't rate this book. Yes, this was fantastically written and characterized but it was also ... so... weird. On so many levels. I just... I have no words. I'll never forget the characters, though. I guess that could be considered as the mark of a good book?

Martha says

Housewrights tells the story of a young woman growing up in the first decades of the 20th century. We meet Lily Willard in 1907 when she is age 8, the only daughter of a farmer in Cabot Fields, Vermont. That summer, Lily befriends Oren and Ian, twin sons of an itinerant housewright who has come to build a new home for the Willard family. Ten years later, while Ian is on the battlefields of World War I, Oren returns to Cabot Fields to woo Lily, now the town librarian. When Ian returns from the war and Oren and Lily marry, the three live together, igniting the scorn of townspeople and setting in motion events that change all three of their lives forever.

In Lily and her Martha Stewart-like friend Hallie, Corriveau has created strong, compelling female characters. Twins Oren and Ian, on the other hand, are less fully realized, reinforcing the book's recurring cliché that neither twin is complete without the other.

Lorie says

As a librarian, I am naturally drawn to books about librarians and libraries. This one did not disappoint. It's very well-written, and the plot ~ a strange love triangle ~ is amazingly unpredictable.

Danielle says

I appreciated the author's unique writing style, and I was rooting for Lily's happiness. I was frustrated with the small-mindedness of the other characters and wasn't satisfied in the end. Nothing wrong with the book, just left me feeling low.

Amy says

Housewrights is one of those books that I come back to every couple of years, and get something new each time. The first time I'd read it, I'd just begun working in a library and strongly identified with Lily, the main character who did the same. This most recently time, I found myself drawn into the brothers' (Ian and Owen's) relationship, as much unspoken as overt. I appreciate the subtle weights that each of the characters carry, and how they develop from youth through adulthood.

I am always drawn to read Robb Forman Dew's *The Evidence Against Her* as a companion to *Housewrights*. The two books work well together. They are similar in setting and tone.

Belinda M says

I was actually looking for Corriveau's YA novel, 13 Hangmen, for my son to read when I came across this. It's a lovely and complicated love triangle but there's so much more depth to it than that. I agree with one of the previous reviewers in that's it's also kind of weird, however, it's still impossible to tear yourself away from it. I feel like Lily, Oren and Ian were born in the wrong era. She's so independent and non-conformist, the brothers being twins are so in their own worlds and speak their own language and have their own way of doing things. I need a bit more time to think on what else I want to say. This was an incredible, beautifully written story that I read in one sitting. I'm so glad I picked it up.
