

R E V I E W

Escapist novels make good reading

The Cruise, by Paula Christian

The Love Boat was never like this! Imagine an all lesbian cruise from Los Angeles to Acapulco. Paula Christian has written an absorbing fictional novel about women who love women on a cruise that they will never forget. The cast of fifteen among two hundred passengers will delight many readers with their promiscuity and righteous vir-



tues. Each one boarded the ship with pre-conceived notions of what a lesbian was, and each left learning something about our diversity.

Felice, 34, had always wanted to travel, but the occasion had never seemed appropriate. Seeing an ad for an all lesbian cruise she made reservations on an impulse. She later had second thoughts when a friend of hers told her that the only lesbians fool enough to take such a cruise were militant, rub-it-in-your-face lesbians who carried cigarette packs rolled up in their shirt sleeves. Lynn, a sex-obsessed New York model. Donna, sincere and caring, yet committed to her lover, Sandy. Erika, late with a book deadline, she was only writing for a lover, while sailing through a midlife crisis and needing to find

herself. Bernie, the bartender, a bull dyke through and through. She was always there for Erika in the old days, but people change after twenty years. And then there was Margaret, a senior citizen finally out of the closet since all of her children had grown.

Some of the women on the cruise come to grips with their own expectations of love, while others realize their inability to accept others. Without being trash this is a wonderful escapist novel. It weaves a simple and entertaining story about a floating microcosm of lesbians on a holiday voyage to discovery.

Daughters of a Coral Dawn, by Katherine V. Forrest

Katherine V. Forrest is a new lesbian novelist who has been overlooked by many readers. Her first novel *Curious Wine*, written in 1983, is a candidly erotic and romantic tale of two women finding love. *Daughters of a Coral Dawn*, her newest novel, is an excellent work, one of the best lesbian science fiction to be written in 1984.

Like Charlotte Gilman's *Herland*, Joanna Russ' *The Female Man*, and Rochelle Singer's *The Demeter Flower*, *Daughters of a Coral Dawn* uses the theme of a female (lesbian) utopia. Forrest has developed an entire society created and governed by women, but what is different and arresting about this story are the outsiders who enter their world. Ship-wrecked, three humans, two men and one woman, find themselves among the Vernan Amazon Nation. The earth woman falls in love with the heir to the Vernan throne and learns the secrets of her androgynous captors. Forrest introduces two themes that are persistent elements in lesbian science fiction. The need for inner support and autonomy and the need to be a separatist nation without men.

Lesbian science fiction allows women writers unlimited freedom in both setting and plot. The need for escapist literature is tremendous in our society since we are continuously bombarded by violence against women in our everyday lives.

Readers who enjoy the sensual side of lesbian literature will also delight in the earth

woman's courtship and passion. The last chapters hold unusually arousing episodes for your average lesbian love tale.

—reviewed by Sarah Koehl



Burning, by Jane Chambers.

Originally published in 1978 as *The Burning*, this book has resurfaced following the death of Jane Chambers in 1983.

Burning is a step into the past, into an era of puritanical terror and witch hunts. The story actually takes place in the 20th Century when two women, Cynthia, a mother and wife, and Angela, the children's babysitter, take a vacation to an old farmhouse in New

England. Use of the farmhouse has been offered as partial payment of a debt to Cynthia's husband. He remains behind to clear up some work so Cynthia, Angela, and Cynthia's two children, travel on to the farmhouse.

They are not there long before two women, Abigail and Martha, lovers from the past, begin to live their story through Cynthia and Angela. It is through this possession that they are finally free to love and be together in peace at last.

This is their story, Martha's and Abigail's, Angela's and Cynthia's, but it is also the story of all who have dared to love differently.

—Reviewed by Marty Conway

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