

Choices, Changes & Friends: 1970s After Divorce

Alice Parker

AuthorHouse (Aug 10, 2017)

Softcover \$28.99 (576pp)

978-1-5462-0108-3

Parker's book conveys a veteran's sense of what it was like growing up as an independent woman during the latter half of the twentieth century.

Though Alice Parker's *Choices, Changes & Friends* calls itself a memoir, it reads like a novel. It relates the stories of four women and their friendship through the turbulent 1960s, the sexual liberation of the 1970s, and into the twenty-first century.

Beth is the primary narrator, though the point of view routinely shifts into the minds of her friends April, Connie, and Michael. The method proves to be shaky, and the story unfolds without a clear sense of who pilots the narrative.

Much of the book focuses on the women's sexual liberation, seen through their multiple affairs. Many of their trysts, one-night stands, and extended relationships involve married lovers or men who are otherwise unattainable. One of the book's major themes is their related frustrations. They feel stuck, pulled to be faithful, all-American girls who settle for marriage, and also to defy cultural expectations and shake off hastily assumed roles. This is a detailed glimpse of a fading America.

The glimpse comes to assume too much attention, though, as the narration seems compelled to describe all of the women's experiences in minute, excessive detail. The novel becomes an encyclopedic account of their deeds, with the narrative arc buried by details about alcohol, bar-hopping, and the recurring motif of Beth and Connie's conquest of the actor, centerfold, and celebrity Bobby Ryan.

The story works toward an unhappy ending. Still, the conclusion is realistic and leaves tantalizing questions open, while also conveying a veteran's sense of what it was like growing up as an independent woman during the latter half of the twentieth century.

The first two sections of the book contain many errors, while the third and final section is more controlled. Still, sentence fragments and comma splices abound, misplaced modifiers render the prose confusing, and missing words interrupt the narrative flow.

Lyrical poems are interspersed between chapters. Their images are strong, they are slightly ironic, and their rhythms are subtle. They handle the same subject matter as the rest of the book, but with greater visual precision. Poems display most of the book's wit and sophistication, as opposed to the novel's general prose, which overextends itself.

A sentimental novel in the positive sense, *Choices, Changes & Friends* conveys its characters' confused, conflicted emotional states in a realistic and relatable way.

PHILIP J. KOWALSKI (February 1, 2018)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a

positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.