

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: January 1, 2009

The Rose Variations.

Chamberlain, Marisha (Author)

Feb 2009. 352 p. Soho, hardcover, \$24.00. (9781569475386).

Rose MacGregor, 25 years old and fresh out of graduate school in the mid-1970s, takes a temporary position as a professor in the music department at a college in St. Paul, intending to develop her skills as a composer. Headstrong yet introspective, Rose quickly becomes friends with Francis, the mousy music department secretary, and Alan, a handsome fellow professor, both of whom teach her, in their unique way, the lifestyle of academe. Soon thereafter, Rose falls into a passionate, sensual relationship with the older, pensive Guy Robbins. When the liaison with Guy crumbles, however, Rose flees from the university to an isolated farm headed by a reclusive female composer, Lila. Rose is soon joined by her younger sister Natalie, nine months pregnant and unwieldy. Upon the birth of Natalie's daughter, Meggy, Rose's life becomes a complex, unpredictable braid of familial, sexual, and professional relationships. Told in two parts, the narrative's measured pace allows the reader to linger as Rose comes into her own as a composer, lover, and independent woman.

— *Leah Strauss*