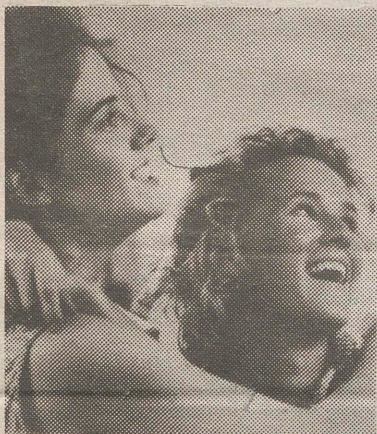


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Dreams & Nightmares

by Deborah Peifer

Fried Green Tomatoes is the lesbian love story we've been hoping the mainstream would produce. Its eroticism is understated yet breathtaking. This is the love story of our dreams.

Any film that teams Jessica Tandy and Kathy Bates is already a wonder. Add to this a pair of stunning performances by Mary Stuart Masterson and Mary-Louise Parker, a pivotal and powerful turn by Cicely Tyson and a celebration of lesbian love that triumphs and delights (not to mention having the bad guy get his, in spades), and the sum total makes *must see* an understatement.

Based on Fannie Flagg's novel *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe*, these *Tomatoes* are tales within tales, stories about the power of stories — history as

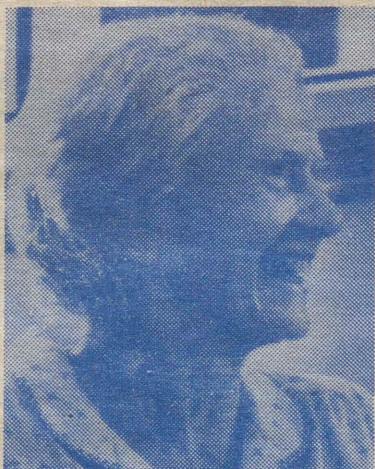
the personal that becomes magnificently and intensely political.

Kathy Bates is Evelyn Couch, a woman who has found small consolation in candy and doughnuts for her pointless marriage and her wasted life. On a visit to her husband's Aunt Vesta (unseen, but cranky), Evelyn meets Miz Threadgoode (Jessica Tandy), an old but alert woman with tales to tell of Fleet Enemas ("You ever have one of those Fleet Enemas they're so wild about? You'd remember if you had"), of gall bladder surgery, of her

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Two New Films
Tone Down
Lesbian/Gay
Elements But
Still Satisfy



Clockwise from top left: Mary-Louise Parker and Mary Stuart Masterson share a lifelong friendship in *Fried Green Tomatoes*; Judy Davis plays two roles in *Naked Lunch*; Peter Weller offers up superb William S. Burroughs imitation in *Lunch*; Kathy Bates, right in bottom photo, grows through friendship with Jessica Tandy.

Film

'Fried'

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childhood in the Alabama town of Whistle Stop, and of two women, Idgie and Ruth.

Entertained, Enthralled And Empowered

Evelyn is at first entertained, then enthralled, then empowered by the stories of Idgie and Ruth. These stories, told in flashback, are woven seamlessly into the fabric of the present narrative of Evelyn's effort, through classes in assertiveness training and the ancient power of the feminine (a scene involving a room full



Although the film does not trumpet the fact, it is clear that these women are in a primary (and sexual) relationship with each other.

of women with hand mirrors is worth the price of admission and more), and finally through the compelling narrative of the love of Idgie and Ruth, for each other, to find meaning and purpose in her life.

Evelyn's small steps, made despite her fear, to realize and claim her value as person, as woman, as friend, are moving, believable and screamingly funny. The growing and significant friendship between Evelyn and Miz

Threadgoode, humanly and humorously realized, is a real pleasure to experience.

The tale within the tale of Idgie and Ruth — of their friendship, their love, their lives together — is erotically charged and entirely lovely, filled with the moments that are at the core of the significant relationships of our lives. Ruth's public declaration of her love for Idgie brought tears and cheers from the audience. It was as powerful a moment as I have seen in film.

Mary-Louise Parker is stunning as Ruth, the loving friend of many, the lover of Idgie, the woman whose life is cherished by all who know her. Mary Stuart Masterson is the exquisite Idgie, saved by the love of a good woman, who insists on the dignity of all and who fights for others with passion and conviction.

I liked this film for so many reasons — its celebration of female friendship, its political astuteness, its warmly humorous look at feminism, its willingness to take risks with our hearts and our minds, its emotionally charged and wonderfully satisfying conclusion — that to make special mention of any aspect is to suggest an imbalance that does not exist within it.

These Are Lesbians

I have heard complaints that the lesbian aspect is underplayed, hidden, even erased. Although the film does not trumpet the fact, it is clear in the film, in little, physically intimate moments, in the public declaration that Ruth makes, in the acceptance of their relationship by the other people in the town, in dozens of ways, that these women are in a primary (and sexual) relationship with each other.

I think that those who object to the portrayal of Ruth and Idgie miss the notion of period. The discussion of vaginas that takes place in the present ("I can't even look at my own vagina," sobs Bates. "Well, I can't help you there," responds Miz Threadgoode) sets up clearly the sea change that has taken place regarding public discussion of intimacy over the past 50 years.

The love story of Ruth and Idgie is extraordinary, and erotic, and wonderfully satisfying. It is a love that transcends time and death, social opprobrium and personal upheaval.

Fried Green Tomatoes is filled with the small moments that make great truths. I laughed, I cried and I had a wonderful time. So will you.

Fried Green Tomatoes
Kabuki
931-9800