

Book Review: December 2005

by Lori L. Lake (author of *Have Gun We'll Travel* and reviewer at [MBR](#))



The Temple at Landfall, **The Celaeno Series**

Jane Fletcher

ISBN: 1-933110-27-9

Trade paper, 296 pp, \$15.95

October, 2005

Lesbian Speculative Fiction/Adventure

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

Midwest Book Review

278 Orchard Drive
Oregon, WI 53575-1129
Phone: 1-608-835-7937
E-mail: mwbookrevw@aol.com

James A. Cox
Editor-in-Chief

In the Temple in the city of Fairfield, a young woman named Lynn does the important work of helping women reproduce. She is a sort of psychic DNA-knitting doctor/priest and is called an imprinter. Imprinters are chosen very young for their psychic abilities and are taken from the families to serve Celaeno, the great goddess of the people. Everything about Lynn's world is focused on prayer, imprinting, and the teachings of Celaeno. The imprinting skill she shares brings in a fortune in "offerings" (required by the Church) from eager women desperate for children.. There is no separation of Church and State; they are one and the same.

After a couple of decades of this mind-numbing, psychologically draining work, the book opens with Lynn in a state of depression. Once a month during a religious ritual on the steps of the Temple, she sees the outdoors. Otherwise, she is locked into the tomb-like environment of the Temple, never to have a lover, never to have freedom, never to know anything but a life of service. She is basically held captive, a prisoner of her own abilities—until the day Sister Smith, from the larger Temple in Landfall, appears and wrangles with the authorities to take the talented imprinter far away to a bigger, more powerful Temple. Lynn is excited to make the long journey during which, perhaps for the last time, she can enjoy the forests, the cool air at night, and the freedom to walk on the woodland paths and see the moon.

A squadron of Rangers, including Lt. Kimberly Ramon, is assigned to escort the Sisters and Lynn on the long journey over the mountains and to the south. And this is where the adventure begins. For the first time since childhood, Lynn is among real and interesting women, and she is quite taken with Ramon, who has her own secrets and griefs. "As much as anything, Lynn enjoyed the honest, open banter, although the jokes were frequently bawdy. To Lynn's mind they were far less offensive than the conversation of the sisters; the intimidation by pious quotes, the political backstabbing disguised in religious platitudes. The soldiers spoke of a world Lynn would never know, but it didn't matter. Their stories were like breathing fresh air after years of choking in incense" (p. 76).

The soldiers are also brave, and when they are attacked on the journey, everything about the trip changes. Lynn's ability to envision herself as a free woman begins to grow. But can she shake free of the grip of the Church? How far will the powers-that-be go in order to keep her to themselves?

This fundamentalist society, operating based upon bits and pieces of lore, abridged history, inaccurate facts, and misguided good intentions, is all the more frightening because it is peopled only by women. In Fletcher's world of Celaeno, it's not men with the compulsion to render matters of life into simplistic and often bone-crushing black and white; women can be and are just as dangerous.

With rich, glorious prose, Jane Fletcher has created a spell-binding world and a variety of fascinating and multi-dimensional characters. The world is so compelling that I couldn't help but wish I could quite literally go there! Lynn's quest, as well as Kim Ramon's quest, make for exciting reading. At its heart, the book is an adventure/quest, but it is also a mystery. Who are these people? Where did they come from? What happened to the men, if, indeed, there ever were any? The back story of the previous 533 years is unraveled slowly, but surely, for the reader so that by the end of the book, all is revealed.

THE TEMPLE AT LANDFALL (which was originally published in England as *THE WORLD CELAENO CHOSE*) is absorbing and engrossing tale-telling of the highest order, and the really exciting thing is that although this novel is complete and "finished," the door is left open to explore more of this world, which the author has done in subsequent books. I can't wait to read the next Celaeno volumes, and this book is a keeper that I will re-read again and again. I highly recommend it.

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by Cheri Rosenberg (reviewer at [MBR](#) and [JAW](#))



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Jane Fletcher is the consummate storyteller and plot wizard. Getting caught up in the action happens as if by magic and the fantasy elements are long forgotten. The world Fletcher creates, the characters she brings to life, and the rich detail described in eloquent prose, all serve to keep the reader enchanted, satisfied, yet wanting more. A 2005 Lammy finalist, *The Temple at Landfall* is surely a winner in this reader's book, and as an author, Jane Fletcher is the Goddess herself.

What could be more important than creating new life and reveling in the joy of having the gifts to perform such miracles? In the world of Celaeno, without men to procreate, women rely on the Imprinters for continuation of the species. Lynn, chosen by the Goddess to function as an Imprinter, also has healing talents and a heart of gold. At the tender age of twelve, the Sisters claimed her for the temple at Fairfield where she soon learned the ropes and proved to be their greatest asset. Before long, word of Lynn's gift spreads and she is whisked away to the temple at Landfall by Sister Smith—an ambitious political fool who longs to be the Chief Consultant at any cost. Only, instead of feeling privileged, Lynn feels like a slave destined for a celibate, hapless, and exhausting life under the rule and watchful eye of the Sisters who truly believe they are doing the Goddess's will. The leaders use religion to justify their less than pious actions where greed, backstabbing, political maneuverings, and ignorance prove the inner sanctum is less than holy. Lynn wonders if the Guards (the Sister's army) are there to protect her or to keep her from running away.

When Lynn meets the fearless, handsome, and brilliant heroine Lieutenant Kim Ramon of the 23rd Squadron of Rangers, the soldier is brusque surmising the Imprinter is asking silly questions. However, Lynn soon finds that she can't deny her lustful thoughts and profound attraction for the noble warrior. Kim knows all too well the prohibition of mingling with the holy ones, but Lynn is not your average Imprinter. She makes it hard for Kim to ignore the woman behind the title.

Fletcher's claim to fame is her compelling narrative, plot twists, intense action sequences, vivid scenery, and the reader's hope that against all odds the heroines will live happily ever after. The intelligence with which Fletcher writes about imprinting versus cloning, religion versus science, religious leaders versus heretics, and her attempt to show the sort of biased, unsupported dogma that religious fanatics pass off as rational unquestionable fact makes *The Temple at Landfall* not only entertaining but thought-provoking as well. Don't miss it. Once you visit Celaeno, you won't want to leave. *The Temple at Landfall* is a pleasure to read, hard to put down, and is the perfect addition to any library. I recommend everything this 2005 Golden Crown Literary Society winner, for *The Walls of Westernfort*, has penned.

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