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Women's potpourri

Space travelers, a poor black woman struggling against odds Southern women, white and black — heroines all.

BY KELLY MASEK

This article could be entitled, "Looking for a Heroine on Earth and Other Planets." It encompasses a diverse selection of books about a diverse group of women who are not all Earth-bound. Most importantly, this selection represents women as heroines. These fictional characters mirror back to us images of women who are independent, resourceful, adventuresome and human.

If you enjoy escaping the boundaries of ordinary Earth when you read, join Marion Zimmer Bradley on the planet Darkover of the adventures of the Free Amazons. Bradley is well known among science fiction aficionados for her many books detailing the life and times of that mysterious planet. Darkover. Woven among this series is a trilogy focusing on the lives of the women known as the Guild of Free Amazons.

In particular, the trilogy is the story of two women, Magda Lorne, a Terran, and Jaella n'ha Melora (Zayella, daughter of Melora), a Free Amazon, whose lives first become entangled in "The Shattered Chain" when Magda, in great confusion and under less than ideal circumstances, takes the Oath of the Free Amazons.

The binding oath requires Magda to live in a Guild House with many other women and undergo a rigorous apprenticeship to learn the way of life of a Free Amazon. Magda is challenged in many ways at the Thendara Guild House — to the delight of readers and Guild sisters she discovers she is definitely woman-identified. This discovery, and the impact it has on both Magda and Jaella, is detailed in *Thendara House* (some wonderful

love scenes) and comes to its conclusion in *City of Sorcery*. The Darkover series is published by DAW Books, Inc.

A second trilogy, well-known among lesbian science fiction fans, is the Titan trilogy by John Varley. The Titan trilogy is similar to the Darkover series in its adventuresome pace and thorough detailing of another world. The world is Gaea, but what or who is Gaea? The question plummets Cirroco Jones, commander of the spaceship *Ringmaster* and her crew into their first Gaeian adventure. Cirroco is the epitome of the brave space captain; but she loses all courage when she discovers that her science officer, Gaby Plauget, is in love with her. Does Gaby's persistent romancing of Cirroco result in love, friendship and wonderful sex? Read *Titan*, *Wizard*, and *Demon* to learn this and much more about living, loving, and surviving in the strange world of Gaea. Berkley Books publishes the Titan trilogy.

Leaving all these wonderful lesbians in space is difficult to do, but down on the planet Earth there are more heroines. One of them is Janie, a black woman living in the rural South in the early 1920s and '30s. Janie is the heroine of Zora Neale Hurston's classic story *Their Eyes Were Watching God* [University of Illinois Press]. Early in life Janie learns what awaits her in this world as a black woman. Her grandmother explains: "Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don't know nothin' but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks.

De nigger woman is de mule uh do world so fur as Ah can see. Ah been prayin' fuh it tuh be different wid you. Lawd, Lawd, Lawd!" Life will be different for Janie, but not without great doses of courage, humor, and self-determination. This woman and her story will stay in your heart.

Sometimes it takes courage plus that little something extra to make it in this world. It's called sass, chutzpah, a spit-in-their-eye kind of attitude. The women who speak through author Ellen Gilchrist are these kinds of women. There's Rhoda, wild, stubborn, and spoiled rotten by her very southern daddy; and Nora Jane Whittington, a "nineteen-year-old self-taught anarchist"; and Traceleen taking care of wealthy Miss Crystal and the baby, Crystal Anne.

These women begin their adventures in Gilchrist's book *Victory Over Japan* and continue on in the next two collections of stories *In the Land of Dreamy Dreams* and *Drunk with Love*.

We meet Nora Jane after she has robbed a bar in the Irish Channel section of New Orleans disguised as a Dominican nun. She flees to San Francisco in search of Sandy, her former boyfriend, and eventually becomes a heroine on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge during a San Francisco earthquake. Rhoda is introduced in a series of three tales in *Victory Over Japan*. The first is told in first person singular, a perfect way to introduce the self-centered Rhoda.

And finally, we meet Traceleen, wise young woman, maid, and best friend to Miss Crystal. Traceleen begins her record of all their mishaps in the aptly titled "Miss Crystal's Maid Name Traceleen - She's Talking. She's Telling Everything She Knows." When Traceleen talks, you'll want to listen.

Ellen Gilchrist's short story collections are published by Little, Brown and Company. •

You can't go home again

Driven from his native homeland by the Nazi barbarians, Klaus Mann wandered the world in disillusionment and died, by his own hand, a foreigner.

BY JOEL REDON

Klaus Mann, author of the novel *Mephisto*, committed suicide in 1949. The son of Thomas Mann, Klaus Mann, a homosexual, left Germany forever in 1933 during the rise of the Third Reich. He explained later: "Since I was 19 I have never ceased to protest — though with too weak a voice and with inadequate arguments — against reaction, imperialism, militarism, against nationalism and exploitation." Like his French counterpart Rene Crevel, Mann wrote several novels before his ultimate political disillusionment set in. Mann and his sister Erika Auden (married to poet W. H. Auden in order to obtain foreign citizenship) performed a cabaret act together in Berlin during the so-called decadent period of the twenties — the period Christopher Isherwood wrote of in *The Berlin Stories*.

Dorothy Thompson said: "Practically everybody who in world opinion had stood for what was currently called German culture prior to 1933 is now a refugee." Klaus Mann was at the forefront of German culture throughout the twenties. In 1925 he published his first novel, *The Pious Dance: The Adventure Story of a Young Man*. The protagonist, Andreas, goes out into the world, sees the nightlife of Berlin and Paris, peopled with Firbankian characters and situations; he sees the passions that exist between two men, the disappointments and the virtues. Then when he has exhausted his capacity for passion, he goes on to travel the world, determined in the end to return home and marry his childhood sweetheart. *The Pious Dance* is a

naive book but it is richly evocative of the period in which it was written. At 19, Mann had yet to write his greatest works.

When the Nazis deprived Klaus Mann of his citizenship he became a citizen of the Czechoslovakian Republic in the days just before it fell under Nazi domination. He also lived in France, Switzerland and Holland. In Amsterdam, Mann edited a journal which he used not only for literary purposes, but also to fight fascism. His patrons were Auden, Isherwood, Sartre, and Gide. Publication was suspended when his father, still in Germany, was threatened by the Nazis.

Klaus Mann came to America in 1936 and began to make the lecture tour with his sister. Klaus and Erika had been to America only once before — in 1927, at which time they wrote: "Prohibition we find absurd and the speakeasies very amusing and interesting." But in the late thirties the Manns were talking and writing books about other things. In *The Other Germany*, published in 1940, they wrote: "... it is essential and necessary to explain, if not to justify, the tragic failure of our people. ... Alas, we shall not always be able to find gentle and understanding words for the deeds and attitudes of our brooding nation. We shall have much to complain of, and on occasion we shall have to indict it." They wrote that their homeland had been lost to them, for as long as the "barbarian" ruled, it could be their homeland no more. While they asked people that "under no circumstances must you accept the monstrous thing that Fascism as something which 'just happens to exist,' which 'unfortunately cannot be changed.' It can

be changed — but only if the resistance to this evil remains as strong as does the evil itself." They also asked people in America to see that Hitler did not represent the German nation: "like satanic caricature, he merely embodies its worst and most dangerous qualities. Thus we call out to our American friends: DO NOT HATE THE GERMANS!"

In *Escape to Life*, published in 1939, Mann wrote: "In the autumn of 1939 I shall be thirty-three. Looking back, it seems a long way to have come, yet what is ahead may be twice as long, if nothing untoward happens. The end might come with startling suddenness and in horrible guise. It's always good to count on a sudden ending. For that matter, the circumstances we grew up in, and are living in today, have robbed us of any confidence in the stability of things. It was a gruesome feeling, which had its amusing side all the same, not unlike the amused yet profound terror people feel in an earthquake. If at the end someone were to ask me: Are you glad you lived? then, still exhausted by the wear and tear of earthly life, or already refreshed by joys no mortal can conceive I would reply: Life on earth was a vile business. I shall be eternally grateful for having been allowed to share it. For, very strange to say, a human being, that transient creature who has to live minute by minute, year by year, as an unending ordeal, can imagine nothing worse and nothing more glorious than his life."

Why did Mann kill himself? Not all of the exiles from Hitler's Germany were able to adapt to other countries easily. There would come a time, after World War II when many would want to return to their homelands. But as Mann wrote in the essay "An American Soldier Revisiting his Former Homeland: 'Yes, I felt a stranger in my former fatherland. There was an abyss separating me from those who used to be my countrymen. Whenever I went to Germany, the melancholy tune and nostalgic leitmotiv followed me: YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN."

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