ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

HISTORICAL

The Triad Tree
Annette Cass Landis
CreateSpace
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Germany, just prior to the rise of Nazism and through the end of World War II, is the backdrop for the novel *The Triad Tree*. Annette Cass-Landis tells the story of three resilient and courageous German women who struggle to survive among the ruins of their country and their lives.

Melly is a prosperous Jewish shopkeeper—until the Nazi edicts against doing business with Jews destroy the work of generations. Beate, a Catholic girl, abandons her education and defies her parents by joining a Nazi organization as she seeks greater meaning for her life in service to her country. Ursula, born to nonobservant Jewish parents and baptized in the Lutheran Church, is a brilliant student who had high hopes for her future—until her dreams are shattered by Nazi racial classifications and laws prohibiting Jews from obtaining higher education. The novel traces how the complex roots of the relationships between these women increased the challenges they faced and provided them with a climactic means of escape.

The author has crafted an intense and engaging book filled with believable characters for whom the reader comes to care. Cass-Landis's familiarity with the customs and lifestyle of the Germans lends authenticity to the story, and her dialogue skillfully captures the nuances that native Germans might carry over into spoken English. Above all, the author has a deep understanding of human psychology and how unscrupulous leaders can manipulate the physical, emotional, mental, and even spiritual needs of their followers. Especially poignant is Cass-Landis' portrayal of zealous young people who are easily led to perform horrific acts by adults who know how to feed dreams and egos with lies.

The author's pacing is flawless, except for an awkward transition on page ninety-four. The jump from Frau Miller's involvement in raising her employer's young child to her concern for the girl, now twenty-seven years old, could be handled more smoothly. Typographical errors also detract from the reading experience; incorrect punctuation and random errors in the spacing between words require correction.

Cass-Landis has written an emotionally satisfying historical tale that serves as a timely warning. Many of the conditions that allowed a man like Hitler to capture the hearts and minds of his people exist today. As humanity's basic psychological traits remain the same, the danger exists, worldwide, that such a person could again rise to power.

Kristine Morris