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GENERAL

Triumviate of the Damned
Shawna Ryan
Pilchuck Publishing
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Shawna Ryan expertly juxtaposes the supernatural genre with historical fiction in the concluding volume of her Destiny's Damned trilogy. *Triumvirate of the Damned* is a multi-layered story that surpasses the predictable formulaic religious conspiracy thrillers that currently glut the market.

Cutting quickly from scene to scene like an action-adventure movie, Ryan's novel begins in the present-day Vatican City. A faction inside the Church follows an edict called the "Issue." This ancient document contains Emperor Constantine's instructions for setting in motion clandestine machinations to reveal the true nature and purpose of the Church, which is "to see that the Roman Empire survives in the Church" and is one day reborn "to enslave the world." In Ireland, a group of women are imprisoned by the Roman Empire within the stygian depths of the "Sequenti." They maintain a secret that can thwart the Church's insidious plans. A select few of these women know the location of an artifact, called the "Christ's Remnant," that would topple the Church's power structure. A pagan goddess named Sybil gathers her forces to stand against the faction within the Church. She picks individuals like reporter Alex Caldwell and Kevin James, a professor of Mythology. These courageous men search Turkey for the original Christ's Remnant. Also called into Sybil's fold is Alicia Cook. She is investigating the disappearance of Patrick Bodowski, who is being tortured and held as a prisoner by the Church's Inquisition for trumped up heretical practices. Alicia is taken prisoner, and the women in the Sequentia entrust her with their secrets. Unaware of their role as pawns in a kind of predestination, Sybil's chosen ones join together in an epic battle between good and evil.

Ryan's novel is written for sheer entertainment. Pseudoscience and revisionist history is not passed off as fact here. Her prose isn't bogged down with history lessons, and she doesn't require the reader to take silly leaps of faith away from logic. Her characters' actions flow logically and naturally. However, Ryan's writing never realizes its full potential due to terrible errors in grammar and a lack of proper editing. Sentence fragments, misplaced modifiers, and

the excessive use of commas are detrimental to the story.

Still, the premise behind her novel is unique and the characterization is excellent. With better editing and an improved cover design, Ryan’s novel has the potential to be a reader favorite.