



Fatherland

Karen Schur-Narula

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Lili von Rittersburg zu Mertz-Tarnekow is no ordinary young woman. Adolf Hitler has named it her life's duty to share her brilliance as a harpsichordist with compatriots in the fatherland.

But, in 1933, Lili's farsighted father moves their family from Berlin to New York. She is furious with him. How can she fulfill her destiny from so far away?

Their relationship grows strained. The more her father claims that the democratically elected Nazis are poisoning their once cultured homeland, the more determine Lili is to prove him wrong.

After all, she trusts Hitler's promise that he will restore the nation to order and prosperity, to strength, dignity and greatness.

Despite her parents' misgivings, Lili wrangles a visit to the Third Reich. There she wilfully engages in everything her father has warned her against...

Will Lili recognize the face of evil before it is too late?

A novel of quietly powerful imagery, Fatherland carefully evokes an era of gathering darkness that must not be forgotten.

Fatherland Details

Date : Published 2016

ISBN :

Author : Karen Schur-Narula

Format : Paperback

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction

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From Reader Review Fatherland for online ebook

Pamela says

A story about a the trickery of Nazism on the youth of Germany. A privilege German born American drawn into the early years of the rise of Nazism. Her romantic, naive outlook tricks her until she is confronted by the savages in the regimen. The story is told by her nephew who traced his aunts story back after discovering her hidden harpsichord. I enjoyed the story from the viewpoint of honest Germans caught in the nightmare of WW2.

Grace says

I received the Kindle edition of this book in a Goodreads giveaway. It is a long, and, at times, tedious book. But I wanted to leave a complete review, so I kept plugging away at it. In many ways I am glad that I stuck with it - I loved the ending and how everything was brought to a conclusion - but it was way too drawn out in many places. It is a haunting book, as so many stories from that period of history are.

Tony Parsons says

Berlin, Germany. 1/1/1925, A gala party was held with lots of family & wealthy guests.

Lililein "Lili" Freiin von Rittersburg zu Mertz-Tärnekow (Prussian, 6, Tante Lili, daughter/sister) will now play the harpsichord for your evening entertainment.

Her other family members are: Mr. Erwin von Rittersburg zu Mertz-Tärnekow (Opa, U.S. Foreign Service, former Naval officer), Mrs. Wilhelmine von Rittersburg zu Mertz-Tärnekow (mother, Embassy), & Mr. Paul Ritter (son/brother, aka Freiherr Paul von Rittersburg zu Mertz-Tärnekow),

Lotte is the housekeeper along with her jack-of-all-trades husband Oskar.

Years later Fräulein Lili would like to join the Bund Deutscher Mädels (BDM).

Paris, France. Saint-Leu-la-Forêt estate. Madame Wanda Landowska (harpsichord music teacher) has decided to take Lili under her wing.

1933, NYC. Lili now goes to the German-American Cultural Club once a week led by Herr Krüger.

Fräulein Lili has her own secret Juilliard School of Music turned her down.

The Camp Siegfried Special is filled with young teens singing/laughing & having a gay time.

Fräulein Lili is supposed to be at school but is with the group as well.

Heidelberg, Germany. Lili had traveled several hundred miles aboard the train.

Great Aunt Aletheia (50+), Frau Brinkmann, & Fragonard (m, cat) greeted her at the house.

Frau Dierck (cook) prepared a wonderful dinner for them.

Great Aunt Aletheia introduced Lili to the other guests: Herr Poppe (government civil servant), Herr Malter (U of Institut for Medical Research, wine firm entrepreneur), & Dr. Hempel (violin, teacher, former music professor).

Marktplatz. Fräulein Lili was at awe; German Nazi soldiers were everywhere.

Great Aunt Aletheia allowed the 40 girls to meet at her house.

Führer Adolf Hitler along with his entourage had come to the citizens of Heidelberg, Germany.

Fräulein Lili is studying law at the Heidelberg U Faculty of Germanistik.

Hildegard (student) & Herr Benno Malter (research student) introduced their-selves to Lila.

Fräulein Lili had joined/attended the BDM girls group.

Herr Malter & Fräulein Lila had been seeing quite a lot of each other. The 1st. kiss.

Robert Wagner Gauleiter (Nazi politician) of Baden was speaking about how great the German composers are.

Fritz von Bieberstein, Fräulein Lili & Freiherr Leopold "Leo" Arnim von Witzleben were listening to him also.

Dr. Morsch is always in grave danger when he comes to treat Frau Dierck.

What news did Dr. Hempel have for the guests & Lili?

7/23/1943, Operation Gomorrah.

Warning: This book contains extremely graphic adult content, violence, or expletive language &/or uncensored sexually explicit material which is only suitable for mature readers. It may be offensive or have potential adverse psychological effects on the reader.

I did not receive any type of compensation for reading & reviewing this book. While I receive free books from publishers & authors, I am under no obligation to write a positive review. Only an honest one.

A very awesome book cover, great font & writing style. A very well written WWII historical fiction book. It was very easy for me to read/follow from start/finish & never a dull moment. There were no grammar/typo errors, nor any repetitive or out of line sequence sentences. Lots of exciting scenarios, with several twists/turns & a huge set of unique characters to keep track of. This could also make another great WWII era movie, or better yet a mini TV series. Not as good as some of the WWII historical fictions, but I am still going to rate it at 5 stars.

Thank you for the free author; Goodreads; MakingConnections; Making Connections discussion group talk; Amazon Digital Services LLC.; book
Tony Parsons MSW (Washburn)

John Wheelles says

What a difficult, and interesting , read! This is a story of the rise of the Third Rich, as seen through the eyes and heart of a German girl. It allows you to understand how the German people were able to support Adolph Hitler, and his atrocious plan for Germany. You see how the German people were led to turn on their friends and neighbors, just because of their religion. We also get to see Lily, the main character, come to the realization that all was not well with the changes taking place in Germany.

Those of us with the luxury of time, separating us from WWII, have long wondered how a nation could be steered so far off course. How did the German people allow this to happen? Read this tale for a glimpse of the answer. And, see that many were opposed but were powerless to stop these changes. Come to understand how a beaten and disillusioned people were able to be misled by a demented tyrant.

This story does not, in any way, attempt to excuse Nazi atrocities. This story is about a patriotic love of country gone astray. It's especially difficult to read because it shows frankly what people are capable of at their worst. It also allows us to see the far reaching effect of those actions, and the sorrow they cause.

This is an excellent read, but I had to take it in measured doses. We have the hindsight to know the ultimate direction of events, thus making it an exercise to read.

Ginger Pollard says

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway. Thank you, Goodreads! This is a very long book. I think it could have been cut a little bit short. We read a lot of the same things over and over. The young lady in the story, Lili, loves her country. We get it, it doesn't need to be repeated every day of this girl's life. Aside from that, Lili's country is Nazi Germany as Adolf Hitler begins his rise. He has promised to "Make Germany Great Again." Yep, that's where those words originally came from. They're nothing new. Young Lili believes this to be true. Her father doesn't, so he moves the family (Lili and her expectant mother-a little brother who is born in the USA) to America. They leave behind family, Lili's grandparents and her great grandmother. Lili can't wait to become of age so she can go back to Germany and join what is quickly becoming the third Reich. This is one young lady's journey into a life she thinks is best for her. It's a long journey, but I enjoyed this book. I couldn't wait to see what would happen next.

Tamara says

I won this book in Goodread's giveaway so I feel compelled to explain my 4 star rating. I am a German history major so I've read many books (fiction and non) regarding different perspectives of the European war. I loved Karen's perspective especially the focus on the 20's and 30's. It is very important to understand what events led to Hitler becoming leader. In saying that, I feel she could've shortened the myriad of details of Lili's love of her homeland and allegiance to it's leader. The book is beautifully written and I enjoyed it immensely. Thank you, Goodreads for introducing me to this author. She needs better publicity!

Alan says

I was pleased to have won this book in a recent Goodreads First Reads giveaway.

I really enjoyed this book and didn't want it to end. I shall be keeping this book on my bookshelf and may read it again one day. I rarely write what a story is about for fear of spoiling for others, but I do recommend.

Jane Willis says

A modern day epic of a book, I loved the combination of the writing quality which so accurately captured both personal and mob moods and feelings and the atmosphere of the towns and countryside, making a subject so emotionally difficult into a compelling read. After reading it, I have a much better understanding of how the Third Reich gathered, and maintained, at least to start with, such a huge amount of support. Never again will I think "How did the German people allow that to happen?".

Katy says

I received my copy free through Goodreads Giveaways,

Birgit says

I was interested in reading this after reading the reviews on Good Reads. I thought the author of this novel chose an engaging way of dealing with the Germany before WWII. The author presents a believable narrator and provides a very different perspective to what we have about Germany today. On reading this I kept I imagined talking to the narrator asking can't you see what is really happening, which is something I asked my parents who grew up in Nazi Germany. As I read I thought she must see what is happening how can someone be so naive? And that's what made the novel a 5 star read, because it is in reality so believable. The only think I didn't like was the ending, just telling the reader what happened to the narrator and other characters was disappointing.

Gina says

I won a Kindle copy of this amazing book in a Goodreads giveaway (thank you!)

The story, which drew me in immediately on the first page and never let go, begins on New Year's Day, 1925 in Germany where Lili, a Prussian aristocratic child, will entertain the party goers by playing her harpsichord. Lili's full name is Lili von Rittersburg zu Mertz-Tärnekow and she is 6 but already shows great musical talent. One of the guests of her parents, the highly thought of Erwin von Rittersburg zu Mertz-Tärnekow and his wife Wilhelmine von Rittersburg zu Mertz-Tärnekow, is none other than Adolf Hitler. Hitler greatly admires young Lili's talent and tells her she must devote her life to sharing her amazing gift with the people of Germany. Though she is but a child, she never forgets those words.

Hitler is elected Head of State in 1933, and Lili's father sees trouble on the horizon. Much to Lili's dismay, he moves his family to New York, where Lili, now 13, is the target of ridicule for being a foreigner and for the way she speaks. While in the States, the family also welcomes a new baby, Paul. Lili resents her father deeply for taking her from Germany, where she was happy living the life of a wealthy child and taking harpsichord lessons. As time goes on, their once loving relationship sours with each passing day.

When she graduates high school, Lili convinces her father to let her return to her beloved Germany to attend University. Reluctantly, he grants her request after much arguing and begging. She is taken in by her Tante (Aunt) in Heidelberg where she begins to make a life for herself. Tante takes in borders and Lili becomes friends with all of them, and even becomes enamored with one scientist. She becomes an avowed supporter of the Fuhrer, and is blind to the truth of what is going on. She attends University, but does not do well in school due to her many hours with the harpsichord and her days spent marching with her pro Hitler girls' group. Lili is also finding huge success with her music and is playing with the best musicians Germany has to offer. She continues to hope that one day the Fuhrer himself will come again to hear her play.

Her parents pressure her to return home but Lili refuses. Her father begs her to open her eyes to the truth, but she is blinded by propoganda and her heart turns to stone when it comes to her father. Her relationship with her mother is a bit better, although her mother wants her back in the US also. She barely knows her little

brother, although she feels so sorry for him growing up in the States with no experience of living in Germany.

At some point, Lili's eyes will be opened and as I was reading, I all but begged her to quit living in her perfect bubble and see what she is supporting. The book opened my eyes to what it was like living in Germany at the beginning of Hitler's rule and through the time he is declared Fuhrer, and how people were misled and slowly brainwashed. Lili is constantly praised for her Aryan beauty, being blonde haired and blue eyed, slim, and in shape. She begins to see others as less than herself.

I highly recommend this book. It is a hard one to put down and at times, a hard one to read, when you know the truth of what is happening that Lili refuses to see. Your heart will break for her Papa, who pines for his lost daughter and is disheartened about what she has become.

Sara says

I want to thank Goodreads First Read and Amazon for a Kindle edition of *Fatherland*.

The book provides an insider look at life in Germany under Hitler's Third Reich. The book's main character, Lili, is the daughter of an aristocratic family living in Berlin. As a child, she is introduced to Hitler, who visits her home, before he comes to power as the leader of Germany. She becomes besotted with him and with all that he represents. Her parents, concerned about the fate of Germany under his rule, move the family to America, settling in New York. Lili resents her father from taking her away from her homeland and after a number of years, convinces him to allow her to return. There she hopes to realize her dream of playing her harpsichord for Hitler and helping to build his Aryan empire. That is, until Kristallnacht, when she realizes how she and her countrymen have been misled.

While the story was interesting, and important, I wish that the author had done more editing. The first part of the book, concerned with the family move to America, and Lili's attempts to adjust to it, was concise. And the end, where we learn what happens to Lili and others during and after the war, is actually too rushed. But the bulk of the book, which follows Lili on her return to Germany, at university, as she perfects her harpsichord, as she finds love, seems to meander without providing the meat and substance that it could have. I think this could have been a shorter read or at least a more engrossing one.

Pun Otakufrenzy says

This book is really promising and very special because it view the situation before the beginning of World War 2 from the eye of the German's people. I think this is really unique and awesome, and it opens my perspective in the matter of Nazi and Germany. But there is just one major drawback that makes me rated this book quite low: the slow-pace of the book.

Everything was great until the middle section of the book that keeps on repeating the daily life of the main protagonist. It drags on too much, making reading seems to be a burden to me. There is too much information about her everyday normal life, it's like reading a diary without definite ending, just keeps on repeating itself over and over again. And soon I lose interested in that. And that was when everything becomes tiring to read any longer. If only the author would cut some excess information out, it would be a

perfect read!

During the last part of the book I just skim it through because I no longer held any interested in reading, I just want to know the ending immediately so that I can start off new book.

I don't want to discredit the book that much--it is definitely a great book with a good topic, it just that the story is too redundant toward the middle of the story that it seems like the plot is not progressing at all.

Cathy Kildall says

This was most excellent except for....

Beautiful, descriptive writing, poetic at times. Really enjoyed, had a hard time putting it down. It really builds a picture of how Hitler manipulated everything, everyone, how people believed in him & how brainwashed everyone became. But, sometimes it went on & on....maybe just a tad too much of Lili's inner thoughts rambling around in her head. The thoughts of a spoiled, entitled teenager who didn't have a clue. And, the author actually blew the chance at making about a 500 page sequel, as this story ends at about the time WWII starts. Instead, a ton of significant happenings are crammed into several pages at the end of this book with many "she didn't know that later..." I was left feeling cheated. The whole time I was reading this, waiting for the other shoe to drop, and just when that proverbial shoe left the foot, the book ended. Its almost like the author got tired of writing & flung all the crazy war time stuff into a half dozen pages at the end & called it good. Maybe, writing about the beauty of Germany, music, nature & love is easy for this author, and the stark contrast of the ugly, horrifying, brutal depravity that follows is just too much to contemplate & put into words. But its not too late to write that sequel! Even though I'm complaining, this book is beautifully written & I do recommend.

Anette Pollner says

This is a long, deep, important book. It tells the story of the emerging Nazi regime in Germany in the 1930s. But it tells that all too familiar story from a new and unique perspective, making it very relevant to today. In the early 1930s, people are already trying to flee Nazi Germany. But Lili, Schur-Narula's protagonist, is running in the opposite direction. A story line that got me hooked immediately.

Lili, a privileged young German aristocrat, grows up protected. First in a grand family in Berlin, and then in New York, when her prescient father decides to emigrate very early in the Nazi regime. Lili also plays the harpsichord and immerses herself in the world of 'early music' throughout the book.

But against all expectations, and certainly against all conventions in story telling, Lili isn't happy in America. On the contrary, she falls under the influence of fascist propaganda right there in New York. And at the age of 17 she manages to convince her reluctant parents to allow her to return to Germany – temporarily at first.

And so we, the readers, travel with Lili into an unknown country to spend the crucial years before 1939 in Heidelberg, a place and time very vividly and poetically brought to life in Schur-Narula's excellent writing. This is a very unusual perspective and it serves the novel well. Lili explores the early years of the Nazi regime in Germany along with early music and many coming-of-age experiences. All the little incidents of growing up that seem normal in another setting feel very uncomfortable in the light of the reader's historic knowledge. Lili is a naïve young girl, but she is actively and enthusiastically joining a fascist movement of

millions that brought death and destruction to the entire world.

The attraction of Hitler's youth organizations and simplistic-aggressive populist ideology is convincingly portrayed. An old uncle once told me this: 'The Nazis had something for everyone. Music and sports activities flourished. And there was a great sense of community, of being all in it together'. Young Lili falls for it, too, in spite of her privileged upbringing in the USA.

This unconventional way of telling the Nazi story made me constantly question my own perspective and check up on my knowledge of history. It was a very active reading experience!

Of course, I wanted Lili to change her mind, while she became a more fanatic Nazi supporter, and I wanted her to escape as I was reading about German refugees being turned back by other countries, only to be murdered in concentration camps later.

But the part that stands out to me the most is the very romantic love story embedded in the novel, and in the frightening yet somehow hypnotic march of Nazi Germany towards a brutal totalitarian regime.

Although never officially studying music, Lili's genius is discovered by a family friend and she performs as a soloist at an early music concert. There she meets her love interest, a young SS officer who very much looks the part, both of romantic hero and of SS officer, and plays the viola da gamba to Lili's harpsichord. Their love story is written very much as a traditional romance between the beautiful, naïve Lili and her more experienced, tall and strong hero.

But this romantic hero is part of the most horrific and powerful para-military organization of Nazi Germany. My knowledge of history tells me that this man will commit horrendous war crimes and is almost certainly already involved in acts of official violence and genocide. The book, set before 1939, tells me a beautiful, sweet and exciting love story between two young, talented musicians set in the stunning mountain scenery of Bavaria, close to Hitler's mountain fortress. I know what the SS really was. Lili has romantic ideas about her hero and about Hitler.

I have never read a book that merged these two genres so boldly. My emotions changed with every sentence I read.

To me, that's a very successful book.

(Lili's SS hero is, by the way, also from an old aristocratic family. It reminded me of how much support the fascists enjoyed from the old conservative ruling elite who believed that they could use and control Hitler and how they ended up being controlled by him.)

This is a book that will make you think. And feel.

And it is beautifully written.

And it will be, unfortunately, very useful in the years ahead.
