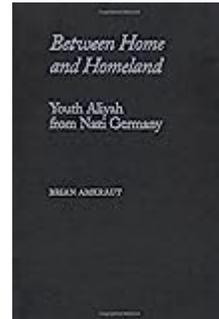




**Brian Amkraut.** *Between Home and Homeland: Youth Aliyah from Nazi Germany.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006. xii + 232 pp. \$37.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8173-1513-9.



**Kjersti Ericsson, Eva Simonson, eds.** *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy.* New York: Berg Publishers, 2005. viii + 296 pp. \$28.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-84520-207-1.



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## Born under a Dark Star

Studies of German children and youth during the Nazi period abound, largely because the regime itself carefully documented its efforts to indoctrinate Germany's youngest human resources. Building on this archival record, scholars of life history, memory, and collective identity have explored the long-term consequences of National Socialist socialization on children and youth. The experiences of children and youth outside the National Socialist movement, however, remain largely unscrutinized.

Amkraut, Ericsson and Simonsen remind us that the Nazis were not alone in perceiving children and youth as both vulnerable and at least potentially valuable. On the contrary, these two volumes remind us that officials across Europe's ethnic and political spectrum understood children as capable of fulfilling, or undermining, particular national projects. While Amkraut details the work of the Zionist youth Aliyah movement, Ericsson and Simonson's collection explores the fate of children conceived in wartime sexual liaisons between occupiers (typically men) and the occupied (women). Both books present

children and youth primarily, although understandably, as objects of state or interest group policy, a fact that may leave students of collective memory and cohort identity somewhat disappointed. That said, the real service of these two books lies in their efforts to shed light on the motivations and mindsets of the religious leaders, political activists, social workers, and state officials whose actions governed the lives and identities of millions of young Europeans in the 1930s and 1940s.

Amkraut's study relies on archival research in Israel and Germany to examine the ever-changing political and financial conditions that complicated Zionist efforts to recruit and prepare young German Jews for resettlement in Palestine during the 1930s. For those unfamiliar with the Zionist movement, Amkraut's introduction contextualizes the youth Aliyah by outlining long-standing ideological divisions within the German Jewish community, the increasingly exclusionist nature of the German youth movement, the National Socialists' often contradictory emigration policies, and international debates about the Jewish settlement of Palestine.

Amkraut then turns to Aliyah leaders' efforts to navigate this ever changing maze of interests groups and regulatory agencies. Chapters 1 and 2 explore the Zionists' efforts to strike a balance between idealism and pragmatism before, during, and immediately after the Nazis' assumption of power. Chapter 3 details how national and international pressures compelled Aliyah leaders to acknowledge that humanitarian concerns exceeded ideological support for their initiative. Organized chronologically, and moving between local, national, and international contexts with ease, these chapters bring to life the chaotic conditions in which Aliyah organizers identified and trained young Jews deemed suitable for resettlement.

Amkraut broadens his scope in chapter 4, describing the sudden oppression of Austria's more assimilated Jewish community after *Reichskristallnacht*. Chapter 5 unpacks the turmoil beneath the surface of the Aliyah movement, which, like the Jewish community at large, was divided into numerous, sometimes even hostile, ideological and generational factions. A somewhat rushed epilogue summarizes the Aliyah's 1939-45 efforts and describes the psychological baggage carried by European Jews who found refuge from Nazi persecution in Palestine. Although these sections lack the fluidity of earlier chapters, they do support Amkraut's argument that Aliyah leaders worked in an extremely volatile sociopolitical environment: just as the emigration policies of national and international bodies shifted, so too did the am-

bitions, fears, and actions of Aliyah recruits and their families.

In contrast to Amkraut's narrow focus, Ericsson and Simonsen draw together thirteen studies of what they call "the dark side of occupation"; that is, the fate of sexual collaborators and their offspring during and after World War II. The collection represents the work of a multi-year European research colloquium, and, as a whole, argues that eugenics, ethnocentrism, malleable citizenship laws, and stereotypical assumptions about female morality combined essentially to demonize the children produced by these relationships. These "war children," contributors agree, were often seen as potential enemy agents. State officials throughout Europe responded to this perceived threat by separating children from their parents, falsifying or "losing" vital records, and stripping them of citizenship. Such strategies rendered children stateless and essentially invisible, while the intentional destruction of a paper trail would deny most the opportunity to reclaim a birth parent or identity later in life.

Ericsson and Simonson organize the collection geographically, beginning with four contributions examining Scandinavian attitudes toward war children and identifying local and national actors who actively suppressed children's ethnic and legal identities. Not surprisingly, these chapters offer the most original and thoroughly documented research in the collection. Kare Olson, for example, examines the Norwegian wing of the Lebensborn organization. Anette Warring highlights popular reactions to Danish women who fraternized with the Wehrmacht, while Arne Oland reveals governmental efforts to hide the German paternity of Danish war children. Lars Borgersrud, along with Ericsson herself and Dag Allingsen, focuses on the postwar period. Borgersrud details how Norwegian officials manipulated deportation guidelines to rid the nation of war children, while Ericsson and Allingsen ask how such traumatic childhood experiences shaped individuals' life histories and identities.

Part 2 is somewhat less coherent, grouping studies of Franco's Spain, Vichy France and the occupied Netherlands under the heading "West." Although all three cultures certainly shared certain general stereotypes about women's promiscuity, little else seems to unite these chapters. They do demonstrate that racial stereotypes crossed territorial boundaries, and that the legal repercussions of intimate fraternization were typically mirrored, or even exceeded, by popular expressions of condemnation. Michael Richards explores how suc-

cessfully Franco's government drove a moral and generational wedge between Spanish war children and their presumably Republican parents, while Fabrice Virgili and Monika Diederichs focus on the collective stigmatization of mothers and children.

Although clearly written and well documented, the two chapters in part 3, which examine war children in eastern Europe, offer little new to scholars familiar with Nazi occupation policies. Still, Regina Muhlhausen and Michal Simunek remind readers that the human cost of occupation and domination extended well beyond individuals' liberation and suggest interesting avenues for further, and potentially interdisciplinary, study.

Part 4 turns to Germany proper, examining the Nazi state's own efforts to racially categorize the progeny of wartime sexual liaisons, as well as the long-term implications of such biological determinism. Dorothee Schmitz-Koester offers a preliminary life history analysis of forty-seven individuals born and raised in German Lebensborn homes, and Ebba Drolshagen raises a question which is at once pragmatic and symbolic: what do the labels applied to these children of war (*Wehrmachtskinder*, *en-*

*fants des Boches*, and so on) imply about the cultures that stripped them of their families, rights, and identities and about postwar society's willingness to acknowledge their plight? Yara-Colette Lemke Muniz De Faria asks more troubling questions, reminding us that the biological-racial model of social anthropology pursued by the Nazi regime not only preceded National Socialism but continued to define European scholarship after the regime's defeat.

As a whole, this collection places in the foreground the uncomfortable reality that racially based notions of citizenship were not limited to Nazi Germany: collaborative and oppositional governments also evaluated inherited traits and considered ethnic lineage when labeling, shunning or deporting children. Taken together, these two volumes constitute highly readable and well-documented contributions to a historical literature that continues to complicate what was once an overly simplified image of Nazi-occupied Europe. Amkraut, Ericsson and Simonsen remind readers that exclusionary ideals of citizenship and ethnicity extended across national borders with discomfiting ease in the 1930s and 1940s.

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