

KATER, Michael — *Hitler Youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004. Pp. 355.

Michael Kater is among the most meticulous scholars of the Third Reich still writing. His ability to synthesize a very wide range of source material, to leave no stone unturned in his investigative scholarship, is a salutary lesson in empirical thoroughness. In his most recent book, *Hitler Youth*, we see the fruits of his methodology come once more to the fore. In his institutional and social overview of one of Nazism's most insidious and successful organizations, Kater mines an incredible amount of source material. Postwar memoirs of their childhoods in the Hitler Youth, written by Germans both notable and minor, are all utilized here. So too are autobiographies of politicians and other public figures whose recollection of years in the Hitler Youth or its female counterpart, the League for German Girls, form only a small part of their memoir. If a German has written even a little about his or her childhood encounter with Nazism, it seems Kater has found it. It is no small achievement to master such a colossal amount of primary source material.

For this reason, *Hitler Youth* serves as an excellent introduction to the topic for an advanced undergraduate audience. The organization of the chapters is straightforward, if conventional. Issues of organizational élan and political intent are tackled in chapter 2, girls and young women in chapter 3, social outsiders among German youth in chapter 4, wartime developments in chapter 5, and the book concludes in chapter 6 with some larger points of summation and argument. In the scope of this treatment, which mostly takes the form of straightforward narrative, Kater hits on all the major themes that a book on this topic should: issues of complicity versus resistance, brainwashing versus individual autonomy, coercion versus consent. It boils down to an issue of what the individual child could have done differently in a regime that, while failing in its ambition to totalitarianism, nonetheless tried with all its means to become totalitarian. Kater shows us with fascinating anecdotes the variety of methods and means which German youth employed to gain acceptance in this enterprise while also taking advantage of it, in more than a few isolated instances, for their own purposes.

Particularly interesting is Kater's treatment of premarital sex and pregnancy among young German girls, all too eager to "give the Führer a child" out of wedlock and without parental consent. Kater's analysis reflects what is by now the commonplace assumption, if not the accepted consensus, about Nazi "modernity": while it struck all the useful chords of tradition and family values for the sake of propaganda, Nazism actually served to dismantle the traditional values and uproot the bourgeois norms it claimed to be defending. Originally an argument touted by the immediate postwar generation of German conservatives, this view of the Nazis as modernizing revolutionaries has recently been given new life by a wave of gender analysis that seeks to recast the debate in ways that the older conservative cohort would have found startling, if nonetheless congenial. What that older generation would most certainly not have appreciated is Kater's rather unambiguous insistence on laying responsibility for the culpability

of German youth squarely on the youths themselves, investing them with sufficient autonomy and agency to argue that they should have known better. What we see are children who gleefully accepted Hitler's invitation to join the club for the power it imparted over parents in particular and adults more generally.

Does Kater convince? There are moments in this work when he speaks as an historian of youth, but his claims are made harder to gauge by the fact that he does not define his terms. For instance, he employs the category of "young adult" without telling the reader what it means or at what age it begins. He tries though this category to grasp the moment when adulthood — and therefore responsibility — comes, and appears interested in exploring the quantitative transformation from being a minor to entering the age of majority. However, he does not sufficiently address the ways in which this very process could have been stunted by the Nazis' carefully crafted "siring" of these children. He argues for the culpability of youth, but the reader is left wondering to what degree those minors who ended up on the wrong side of history's lessons did so because of wrong moral choices as autonomous subjects, or because of the larger socio-economic milieus in which they were raised. Moments of analysis often raise as many questions as they ask: for instance, Kater contends that Hitler had been "oblivious" to the problems of youth at first, and only took an interest in youth later on with much "shoring up" by his associates. However, aside from a quote from Albert Speer, this argument is not particularly well demonstrated. Kater's claim notwithstanding, one wonders how Hitler, who wished to create a 1,000-year empire, could really not comprehend the importance of youth indoctrination.

For all its narrative utility and pedagogical usefulness in the undergraduate classroom, in *Hitler Youth* Kater does not provide a clear theoretical apparatus for interpreting his findings, which leaves the reader uncertain as to whether he believes, for instance, that the Third Reich was truly totalitarian or merely tried to be: at several points, Kater characterizes the Third Reich as such, then shows us all the ways in which it was not. Similarly, Kater leaves the reader wondering whether psychoanalysis is part of his method and, if so, how. He also leaves unexplored the larger question of whether and how often youth were able to co-opt their experience in the Hitler Youth and League of German Girls for their own ends. Must everything a Nazi youth did necessarily be seen as a function of having been Nazified or of wanting to self-Nazify? A high rate of teenage pregnancy, after all, need not be symptomatic of a government-sanctioned promiscuity in the name of racial production — even for those teenagers who, when confronted by their parents, would have offered up such an explanation. As a final example, Kater tells us that in some Hitler Youth troops, masturbation was discouraged to the point of covering hands with thick gloves and tying hands to bed frames, whereas in other troops there were "masturbation contests". The anecdotal nature of his evidence, contradictory and under-analysed as it frequently is, makes it hard for Kater to come to any qualitative conclusions about the attitudes of Nazis and Nazi youth on a variety of subjects.

A larger problem is that Kater never situates himself within the existing literature on the subject. He does not address the previous scholarship on the

Hitler Youth — most obviously but not only that of H. W. Koch — nor tell us why this work is a necessary addition to that scholarship. The book is strong on description, and undergraduates will very much appreciate a comprehensive introduction to the subject, but advanced scholars will wonder what larger analytical and historiographical contribution Kater is making.

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LETT, Didier — *Histoire des frères et sœurs*. Paris, Éditions de la Martinière, 2004, 223 p.

Pourquoi rendre compte d'un ouvrage que nos amis anglo-saxons qualifieraient sans doute de « coffee table book »? En effet, il ne s'agit pas d'une monographie académique, mais d'un ouvrage destiné à un public plus large, comportant nombre d'illustrations couleurs et de photographies. Toutefois, il illustre à merveille l'intérêt que représente un ouvrage écrit par un spécialiste universitaire, dans un langage accessible, permettant ainsi la diffusion à grande échelle des plus récentes avancées dans un domaine. Le problème de la diffusion des travaux universitaires hors du milieu académique est le même partout et la perception populaire des universitaires enfermés dans leur tour d'ivoire est toujours aussi vive. Ce livre représente une partie de la solution, si les éditeurs arrivent à trouver un marché suffisamment large pour ce type de produit. Les Éditions de la Martinière ont opté pour ce créneau et si l'on en juge par cet ouvrage, l'équilibre entre la qualité du contenu et de la présentation est l'un de leurs premiers soucis.

L'auteur, Didier Lett, est un spécialiste confirmé de l'enfance au Moyen Âge. Il a consacré plusieurs livres à ce sujet et il a mis son érudition au service de cette histoire des frères et sœurs du Moyen Âge au temps présent. Il souligne avec justesse dans l'introduction que l'historiographie a privilégié jusqu'à tout récemment les relations familiales verticales, les questions touchant la filiation et la transmission du patrimoine étant au cœur des études sur la famille. Pourtant les rapports entre frères et sœurs sont déterminants, soutient l'auteur, puisqu'ils constituent notre première expérience sociale et affective; amour, amitié, entraide, haine et rivalité, c'est tout un ensemble de sentiments, parfois contradictoires, qui sont expérimentés dès le plus jeune âge et qui continuent tout au long du cycle familial, bien au-delà de l'enfance. Ces rapports sont *genrés* et Lett prend soin de distinguer, tout au long de l'ouvrage, l'expérience des filles et des garçons.

En sept parties composées de courts chapitres, l'auteur couvre les thèmes relatifs aux liens adelphiques. La gémellité fut une source de fascination à toutes les époques et a fortement marqué l'imaginaire occidental, comme le montre la première partie. En effet, les jumeaux, et particulièrement les jumeaux identiques mâles, ont des rôles marquants dans la mythologie — que l'on pense à Romulus et Rémus — ainsi que dans la littérature médiévale et