

## **Refugee Children at Sea: Kinder auf der Flucht Then (1939) and Now (2018)**

Two historic waves of child refugees frame German public memory about asylum: the Kindertransport that sent Jewish children away from Nazi Germany in the months leading up to World War II, and the mass migration of young, predominantly Muslim asylum seekers toward democratic, multicultural Germany in recent years. Though separated by nearly eighty years and dissimilar in scale, the two events are intrinsically related. Germany's response to the latter crisis is, in part, a response to the first. Both put Germany at the center of geopolitical catastrophes epitomized by the ordeal of child refugees threatened by state violence and cast across perilous waters toward safety on foreign shores. In the case of the Kindertransport, Germany was the source of danger that resulted in the flight of Jewish refugee children to the United Kingdom. Since 2015, by contrast, Germany has been a haven, accepting more child refugees from Syria, Iraq, and other areas of conflict than any other country. German children's literature has emerged as a crucial site of engagement with these events. Reading children's accounts of the Kindertransport against books about the current refugee crisis opens an indispensable window into changes in German norms surrounding identity. This paper sets these texts in conversation while attending to the significance of international borders, linguistic hybridity, and cultural assimilation in books about the Kindertransport, such as *Postkarten für einen kleinen Jungen* (2013) by Henry Foner and *Ich war ein Glückskind* (2013) by Marion Charles, and the refugee crisis, such as *Bestimmt wird alles gut* (2016) by Kirsten Boie and *Djadi, Flüchtlingsjunge* (2016) by Peter Härtling. Through picture books and young adult novels, these texts portray the tribulations of young asylum seekers who survive harrowing maritime crossings and shed light on how the story of child refugees has become a symbolic narrative exemplifying modern German ideals.