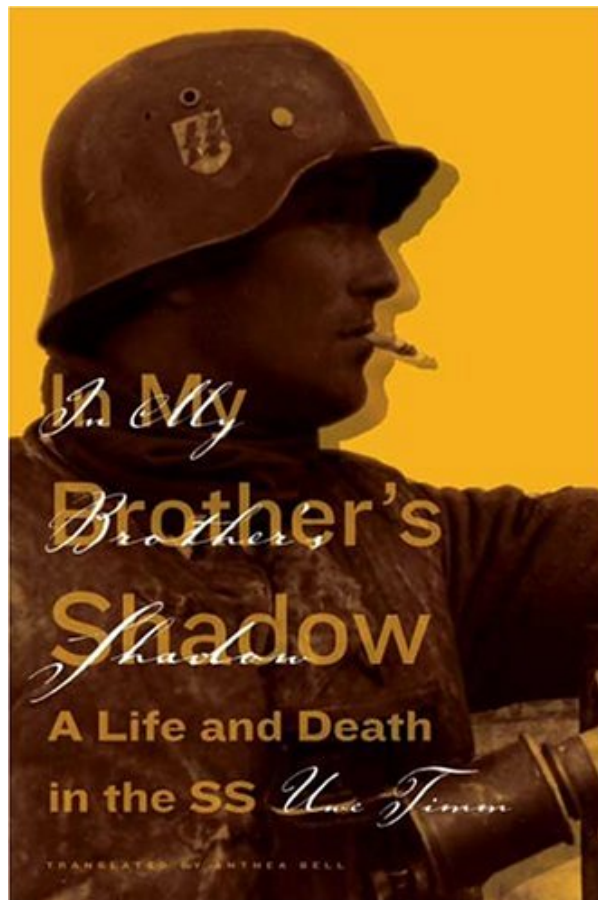
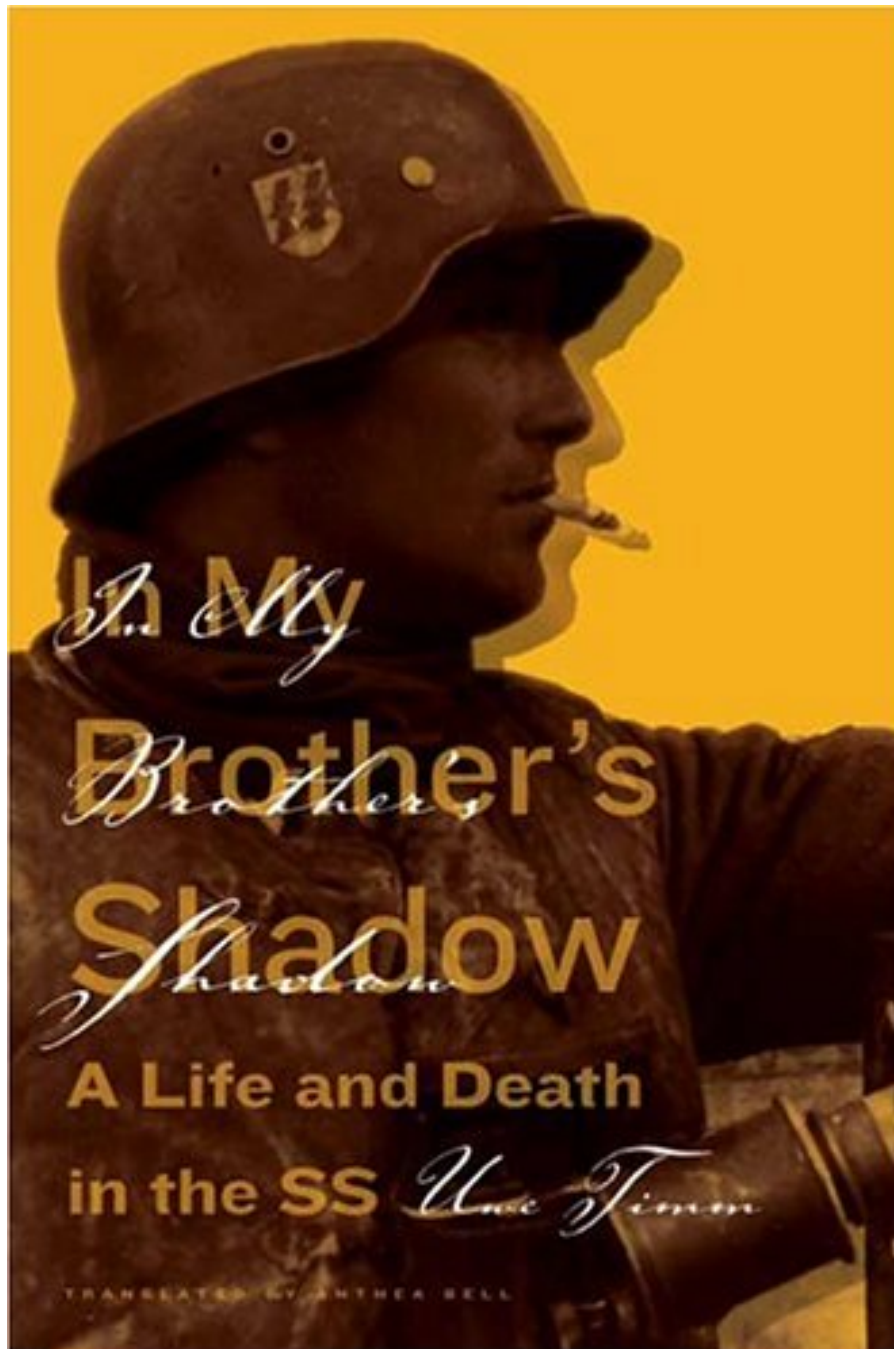


**IN MY BROTHER'S SHADOW: A LIFE AND
DEATH IN THE SS BY UWE TIMM, ANTHEA
BELL**



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IN MY BROTHER'S SHADOW: A LIFE AND DEATH IN THE SS BY UWE TIMM, ANTHEA BELL PDF

A renowned German novelist's memoir of his brother, who joined the SS and was killed at the Russian front.

Uwe Timm was only two years old when in 1942 his older brother, Karl Heinz, announced to his family he had volunteered for service with an elite squadron of the German army, the SS Totenkopf Division, also known as Death's Heads. Little more than a year later Karl Heinz was injured in battle at the Russian front, his legs amputated, and a few weeks after that he died in a military hospital. To their father, Karl Heinz's death only served to immortalize him as the courageous one, the obedient one, the one who upheld the family honor. His childhood was marked by the mythology of his brother's lost life; his absence-the hole he left in the family-just as palpable as if he were still alive. His mother's sadness and his father's rage over the loss of Karl Heinz ultimately defined Uwe's relationship with his parents. But while they eulogized the boy, Uwe wondered: who really had his brother been?

The life and death of his older brother has haunted Uwe Timm for more than sixty years. His parents' silence was one of the most painful aspects of his family history. Not even after the war ended, and details of unspeakable horrors emerged, did his parents ever acknowledge Germany's guilt and Karl Heinz's role in it. They simply said: We didn't know. After the deaths of his parents and older sister Timm set out in search of answers. Using military reports, letters, family photos and cryptic entries from a diary his brother kept during the war, he began to piece together the picture, discovering his brother's story is not just that of one man, but the tragedy of an entire generation. *In the Shadow of My Brother* is a meditation on German history and guilt, one that is both nuanced and measured.

- Sales Rank: #1182324 in Books
- Published on: 2005-04-20
- Released on: 2005-03-31
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .77" w x 5.82" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 160 pages

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In my brother's shadow

By applachian daughter

Received in timely manner. Book in condition stated by seller. Absolutely fascinating read!

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Forbidden door, not opened

By H. Schneider

Uwe Timm was born in Hamburg in 1940. When he was 3, his 19 y old brother died fighting in the Ukraine. The brother had been a soldier in a tank unit of the Waffen SS, in the infamous Totenkopf Division. Naturally, Timm has hardly any own recollections of his brother. What he has are his parents' tales about the brother, then the brother's letters and a small diary, covering half a year of the Russian campaign in 1943.

The diary is partly included in the text. It gives only minimal information.

The subject is a difficult one for Timm. He dares to approach it openly only after his parents and elder sister have died. The book was first published in 2003. Timm compares his shying away from the subject to Blaubart's wife's hesitations in opening the forbidden door. He has the brother's diary and he has the official records of the division's campaign. He wants to compare. Does he dare? After the thrilling Blaubart picture in the early pages, I expected a serious exposure to the horror and analysis of its conditions. It never comes.

This non-fiction book, which is oddly called a novel in the Wikipedia entry on Timm, is more about the author himself and about his parents as it is about the brother. Father was a militarist, clearly. He had been in WW1 and then a 'Freikorps' fighter in the Baltic states after WW1. He joined the Wehrmacht again for WW2. The family was deep into Nazi culture. The brother was father's apple of the eye. That is not the least important facet in Timm's memoirs. Mother was a loyal trooper, never second guessing father. Much of the book deals with the family business and its rise and failure after the war. Father's decay and death, mother's never-ending nostalgia for her son. Reconstruction and rearmament in West Germany. Collective guilt debates. The different approach in the East, where all explanations were pushed to the class struggle corner.

Why did the 18 y old brother join the SS, as a volunteer? Mother's explanation was: out of 'idealism'. That is an essential category in understanding the attitude of many Nazis and sympathizers. It is a success story of brainwashing propaganda. Not all Nazis were primitives or cynics or fearful underlings who either knew or didn't care that their actions were criminal and immoral. Some, maybe many, had been duped into shedding normal human standards of morality. That is scary. It makes dictatorships more successful than could ever be achieved by pure violent state terror.

Who is Uwe Timm? A respected and successful German writer, with a tendency to the left. More a solid craftsman, not a lost genius (like Koeppen), nor an intellectual maverick (like Enzensberger), nor a great talent (like Erpenbeck). Also not a pompous old star of the literary circus, like Grass, nor an overrated taboo-buster like Schlink.

What has the solid craftsman given us? Timm had precious little material about his brother. Alas, he does not succeed in drawing much out of the little he had. His memories of family life are interesting, but not that unusual, and not particularly well told. The book title is an overstatement, it promises more than it can deliver. The original title is something like 'the example of my brother'. I find that as misleading as Anthea Bell's title version with the shadow. Which example, which shadow? The subtitle in the English version is dishonestly misleading: there is very little about 'a life and death in the SS' here.

The book is disappointing because Timm has promised more than he could deliver. There is a lack of focus on the book's promised subject. It is not a stupid book, but an incomplete one.

38 of 39 people found the following review helpful.

great book

By S. Vorstoffel

I was born and raised in Germany. Even though my parents were born after the war and both my grandfathers were dead by the time I started asking questions I can still relate very well to the unease when it comes to talking about WWII.

Where I grew up we had a neighbour whom I only knew as a mild mannered older guy, who loved us kids, would give us sweets and let us play in the big old trees in his garden. At one point I discovered that he was a member of the SS in WWII and had fought somewhere in Russia. He had no family. When he was in his eighties, he started opening up to a few people in the neighbourhood, among them my family. He would talk

about the war, his comrades and generally the hard life they lived. He would always start crying. He would never mention fighting, killing civilians and all the other things he most likely saw and did. We all knew about those things, but we also felt sorry for the old guy and nobody pressed questions. He was a neighbour, not close family after all.

Timm's book perfectly captures the conflict of the - very normal - desire to love and admire a brother (father, uncle, grandfather, neighbour) while at the same time knowing that that person must have consciously participated in something unspeakably atrocious.

Obviously there is no easy solution and that conflict is one that generations of Germans had to deal with after the war. It is impossible to excuse what happened, but it is equally impossible to condemn all these people around you who all might have participated to various degrees, and be it just by keeping silent.

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