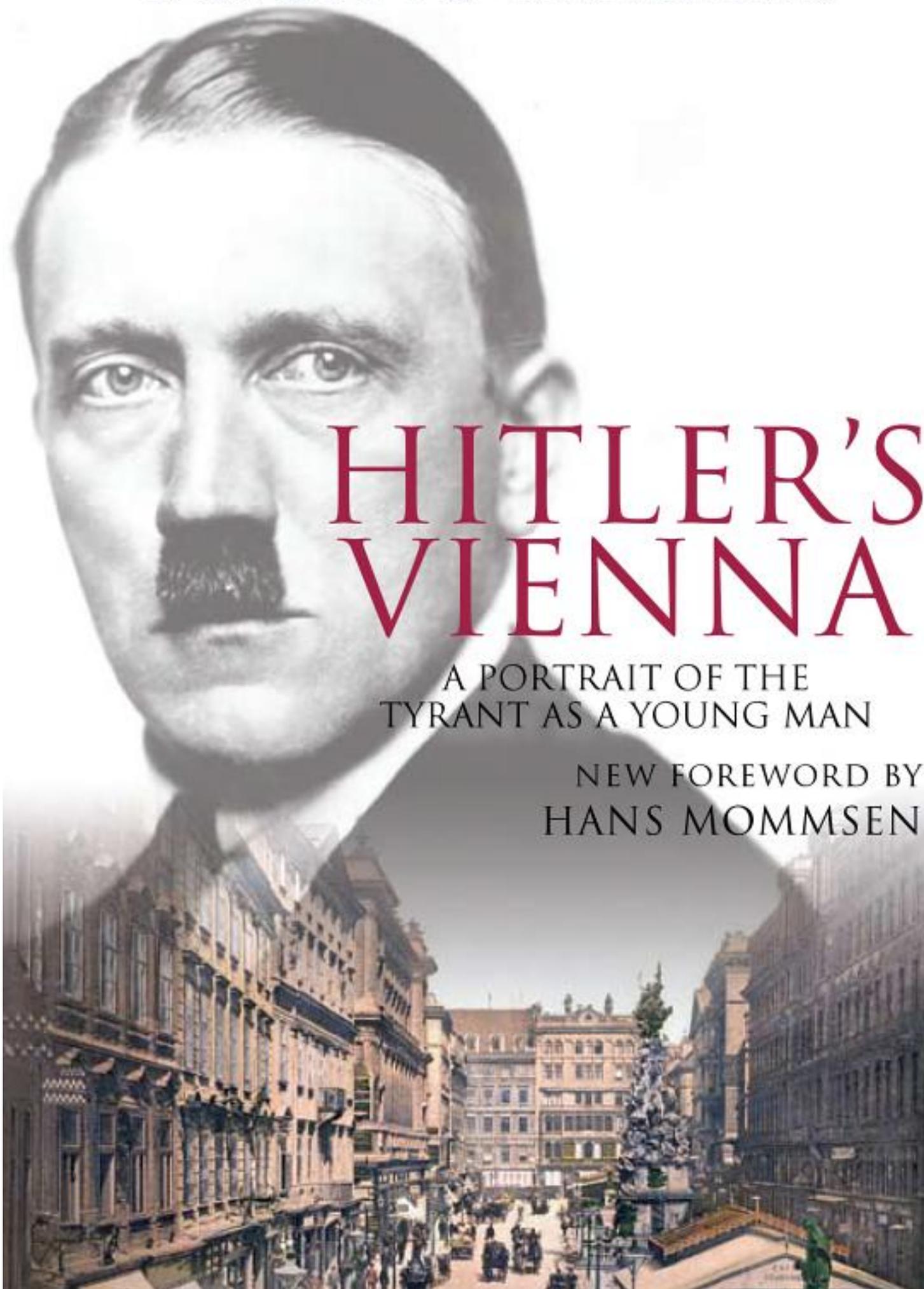


BRIGITTE HAMANN



# HITLER'S VIENNA

A PORTRAIT OF THE  
TYRANT AS A YOUNG MAN

NEW FOREWORD BY  
HANS MOMMSEN

Hitler's Vienna: A Portrait of the Tyrant as a Young Man, Brigitte Hamann, Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2010, 1848852770, 9781848852778, 482 pages. What turned Adolf Hitler, a relatively normal and apparently unexceptional young man, into the very personification of evil? To answer this question, acclaimed historian Brigitte Hamann has turned to the critical, formative, years that the young Hitler spent in Vienna. As a failing, bitter, and desperately poor artist, Hitler experienced only the dark underbelly of Vienna, which was seething with fear, racial prejudice, anti-Semitism and conservatism. Drawing on previously untapped sources—from personal reminiscences to the records of shelters where Hitler slept—Hamann vividly recreates the dark side of fin de siècle Vienna and paints the fullest and most disturbing portrait of the young Hitler to date..

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Anmerkungen Zu Hitler. English , Sebastian Haffner, 1979, Biography & Autobiography, 165 pages. A noted German journalist explains why Hitler's campaign to transform the crippled republic of the 1930s into a military and industrial power convinced Germans at all levels of ....

What turned Adolf Hitler, a relatively normal and apparently unexceptional young man, into the very personification of evil? To answer this question, acclaimed historian Brigitte Hamann has turned to the critical, formative, years that the young Hitler spent in Vienna. As a failing, bitter, and desperately poor artist, Hitler experienced only the dark underbelly of Vienna, which was seething with fear, racial prejudice, anti-Semitism and conservatism. Drawing on previously untapped sources&#8212;from personal reminiscences to the records of shelters where Hitler slept&#8212;Hamann vividly recreates the dark side of fin de siècle Vienna and paints the fullest and most disturbing portrait of the young Hitler to date.

Usually, accounts of Hitler start with WWI and his subsequent rise to power in Munich. And usually, histories of Vienna in the early part of this century focus on the Secession, on Freud, on Viktor Adler. But in her carefully argued and smartly written book, Hamann (*The Reluctant Empress*) creates a portrait that shows the evolution of a far different city, one that for five years, between 1908 and 1913, shaped one young provincial. This is a Vienna of poor laborers who live in men's hostels and are the willing fodder of Social Democrats and Pan-Germans alike. Waves of immigrants (among them Jews fleeing Russian pogroms) and the introduction of equal suffrage in 1906 gave rise to a virulent crop of chauvinistic German politicians and theoreticians who shaped Hitler's worldview, from his racism to his use of "Führer" and "Heil," both adopted from Pan-German activist Georg Schonerer. Unlike many biographers, Hamann finds the roots of Hitler's anti-Semitism here, rather than in run-ins with Jewish professors at the Academy of Visual Arts (there were none), a Jewish grandfather (the evidence, she convincingly argues, is lacking) or a syphilitic Jewish prostitute (Hitler was inordinately afraid of both infection and women). Hamann also traces other crucial aspects of Hitler's development to his time in Vienna: his fascination with the mechanics of theater and the political symbolism of architecture, and his hatred of parliamentarianism. Hamann's deep knowledge of Vienna and her skeptical approach to previous sources results in a double-sided portrait that will help readers understand both the Dual Monarchy and WWI and the Third Reich and WWII. Photos.

"A valuable social history of Vienna's netherworld and an attempt at explaining Hitler's anti-Semitism. We get a meticulous portrait of everyday life in the artistically and philosophically modernist metropolis. Hamann concludes that Vienna's fin-de-siecle malaise was a critical ingredient in the madness that became Nazi Germany." -- Kirkus Reviews

I thought I knew a lot about Adolf Hitler's life, even his youth, until I stumbled upon this book. Hitler's Vienna provides a fascinating glimpse into the social, economic, and political milieu in which young Hitler found himself immersed when he came from the provinces to the capital of the crumbling Austro-Hungarian empire in order to pursue his dream of a career in art or architecture.

As I engrossed myself in the book, my thoughts often wandered to comparing the identity politics and quota demands of Austro-Hungarian politicians with the increasing ethnic balkanization here in the United States and wondered whether such a man as Hitler could not one day spring from our political landscape.

One of the chief things I learned is that political and ethnic anti-Semitism was already a very potent force among both the more radical German-nationalist followers of Georg Schoenerer as well as among the more mainstream supporters of the enormously popular mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger. There was also a large groundswell of anti-Czech sentiment due to a heavy flow of Czechs into Vienna and to the mistreatment by Czechs of Germans in Sudetenland, a situation that Hitler was later to temporarily rectify.

The most surprising fact about Hitler brought to light is that he had many Jewish friends during his Vienna days. And I had to laugh at the part where he was described by a former fellow boarder at the men's hostel as having arrived wearing shoulder-length hair and wearing nothing but a coat because he didn't have a shirt.

Though the book adds much to what we knew of Hitler, it comes no closer than any other of really getting inside his head to explain his true motivations. After all, hundreds of thousands of Europeans hated Jews and lived through the same hardships that young Hitler did, but only Hitler took that extra step and made the end of Jewry his life's work. Nevertheless, this book is a very valuable study and is an easy and fascinating read that comes highly recommended to all those who yearn to know more about the life and times of Adolf Hitler. [Read more &rsaquo;](#)

Brigitte Hamann has done a remarkable thing with this book. By examining Vienna during Hitler's formative years, she has unlocked a lot of mystery surrounding the great man himself. While it is true that she uncovered discrepancies in Hitler's description of those years in *Mein Kampf*, her real contribution is in helping the reader to understand what Hitler was talking about, and why he said the things he said.

Particularly useful is Hamann's analysis of the prominent politicians of the day. She first described these leaders and their political ups and downs. Then, with the testimony of the witnesses who knew Hitler during those years, she deftly draws a picture of the formative influences that helped shape the mature dictator. Hitler was obsessed with politics and he learned what worked and what did not work during those early years in Vienna. Many of his later policies first saw the light of day in the Vienna of his youth. There is a chilling passage about the problem of gypsy pickpockets expected for the 60 Anniversary Parade in honor of Emperor Franz Joseph, in 1908. One solution, seriously presented in Parliament at the time, was to tattoo a number on the forearm of every gypsy.

Hamann also provides an in-depth analysis of the Austro-Hungarian attempt at a multi-ethnic parliamentarism, the chaos and the inefficiency that it brought, and the consequent neglect for the common people. The Pan-German movement, which clearly influenced the young Hitler is clearly explained in considerable detail. At times while reading this book, I had to pause and remind myself that the period under review presaged the rise of Adolf Hitler to power by some 20 years!

Out of the murk emerges Hitler as a young man obsessed by politics, hot tempered, forceful in argument, with poor work habits, odd hours, and a penchant for talk. Hamann's decision to look at the politics that helped him to formulate his world view is brilliant history. This fascinating book is very worthy of your attention. [Read more &rsaquo;](#)

This excellent volume, which suffers from a poor translator, demonstrates that the overwhelmingly anti-semitic atmosphere of Vienna when Hitler lived there did not turn him into an anti-semite. It is surprising how little it seemed to influence him at that time; he seems to have successfully resisted becoming an anti-semite. Thus his war experience and the influence of post-WWI Munich must be seen as more decisive. One needs more concentration on the growth of anti-semitism in Germany and in Bavaria in particular during and shortly after the World War. However unfairly Hitler concluded that the Jews were responsible for all Germany's ills, his reaction must have been somewhat less irrational than has previously been thought. His equation of Jews and Bolshevism was widespread in Europe in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution and must not be underestimated in assessing the growth of Fascism and anti-Semitism. Hamann's book makes Hitler both more and less an enigma.

Though this book is better in the original German (it loses something in the translation), Hamann is a diligent researcher who has unearthed some new facts about Hitler's period in Vienna. She uses primary sources and archive material without merely rehashing what other biographies have written in the past. The Franz Jetzinger book from the 50's is still the standard, definitive version of Hitler's Vienna years, but Hamann does a nice job and weaves in some new material. She also adroitly dismisses some claims from other German authors who have inaccurately written about Hitler's relationship with early roommate, August (Gustl) Kubizek. Thankfully, Hamann doesn't indulge in psychoanalyzing Hitler, which is sort of a deranged cottage industry amongst more recent Hitler biographers.

One small criticism is that Hamann veers away from Hitler too frequently. There is a plethora of material about Vienna's political climate in the 1910's, its mayor, the origin of anti-Semitism in the city and other ancillary details. Though all of this is relevant to Hitler, one wishes she would have stayed a bit more on topic. Still, the book is interesting, informative and devoid of errors. If you want to learn more about the young Hitler, this is an acceptable choice.

Hitler's Vienna explores the critical years that the young Adolf Hitler spent in Vienna, the city that in so many ways furnished the future dictator's education. It is both a cultural and political portrait of the Austrian capital and a biography of Hitler during his years there, from 1906 until his departure for Munich in 1913 at the age of twenty-four. Hitler's was not t...more Hitler's Vienna explores the critical years that the young Adolf Hitler spent in Vienna, the city that in so many ways furnished the future dictator's education. It is both a cultural and political portrait of the Austrian capital and a biography of Hitler during his years there, from 1906 until his departure for Munich in 1913 at the age of twenty-four. Hitler's was not the modern, artistic "fin-de-siecle Vienna" we associate with Freud, Mahler, Schnitzler, and Wittgenstein. Instead, it was a cauldron of fear and ethnic rivalry, a metropolis teeming with "little people" who rejected Viennese modernity as too international, too libertine, and too Jewish. It was a breeding ground for racist political theories, where one leading member of parliament said, to the cheers of his colleagues, "I would like to see all Jews ground to artificial fertilizer." Brigitte Hamann vividly depicts the undercurrent of disturbing ideologies that flowed beneath the glitter of the Hapsburg capital. Against this background, Hamann tells the story of the moody, curious, intense, painfully shy young man from the provinces, Adolf Hitler. Drawing on previously untapped sources that range from personal reminiscences to the records of homeless shelters where the unemployed Hitler spent his nights, Hamann gives us the fullest account ever rendered of this period of Hitler's life and shows us how profoundly his years in Vienna influenced his later career. Hitler's Vienna is a major addition to present Hitler scholarship.(less)

Very good book, but more for academic than general readers. What I didn't like - the author spend too much time writing about turn of the century Viennese politicians, most of whom were minor. While I understood the point - to show the sources of certain of Hitler's techniques, I felt the author got bogged down to often on minutiae. There were annoying typos in the book, also - when a German book title was translated in to English, only the first word of the English translation was capitalized,...more Very good book, but more for academic than general readers. What I didn't like - the author spend too much time writing about turn of the century Viennese politicians, most of whom were minor. While I understood the point - to show the sources of certain of Hitler's techniques, I felt the author got bogged down to often on minutiae. There were annoying typos in the book, also - when a German book title was translated in to English, only the first word of the English translation was capitalized, and some of the spacing in the text was off, leading to word mash-ups. Sloppy proofreading.

That said, the rest of it was very good. It dispelled a great deal of Hitler myths, for example, he could not have caught syphilis from a Jewish prostitute, as is so often reported, since he had a negative Wasserman test in 1940, and often the author cites the basis for the myths. It seems that Hitler, upon coming to power, made an effort to erase as much as possible about the 1907-1913 period he spent in Vienna. Notwithstanding, the author diligently recreates as much as possible and we learn that Hitler had an aversion to working, harangued the few friends he had for hours on end, had seemingly friendly relations with Vienna's numerous Jews, was the beneficiary of Jewish

philanthropy at men's shelters, and soup kitchens, earned a pittance as an artist drawing scenes to be used as inserts into picture frames, had an obsessive love of opera, and as far as can be determined, was completely asexual. Seemed like a weirdo by anybody's standards, now or then. The sections of the book dealing with the presence and influence of Jews and (surprisingly to me) Czechs in Vienna were revelatory. Also nice detail on Hitler's family background.(less)

This was a good, informative book about Hitler's birth, up and until the time he left Vienna to go to Munich; so it covers from 1889- ~1914. Brigitte Hamann definitely researched this book quite thoroughly, as you can see from her cited notes in the back of the book. What I liked about this book is that it dispelled a lot of rumors/myths about Hitler that have been circulating for years e.g. that he had Jewish ancestry, that he didn't get accepted to art school because of Jewish professors, and...more This was a good, informative book about Hitler's birth, up and until the time he left Vienna to go to Munich; so it covers from 1889- ~1914. Brigitte Hamann definitely researched this book quite thoroughly, as you can see from her cited notes in the back of the book. What I liked about this book is that it dispelled a lot of rumors/myths about Hitler that have been circulating for years e.g. that he had Jewish ancestry, that he didn't get accepted to art school because of Jewish professors, and that he was gay, among others. The book is quite detailed with little facts about what influenced Hitler's thinking, philosophy, and politics, as well as the people who influenced him. So if you have a serious interest in Hitler I would highly recommend this book as it is a very focused look into his early years etc; but if you only have a passing interest in him, then I think you can skip this one.(less)

1) The in-depth analysis of Vienna at the time of Hitler's arrival and stay from 1908 to 1913. He originally moved there in the hope to be accepted at the Academy of Fine Arts, but he was refused twice, mainly because he had dropped out of school at the age of 16 (he was lazy) and, therefore, had not passed the exams (rather like the SAT, I think) a standard r...more I saw on Amazon that the book also exists in English, "Hitler's Vienna, A Dictator's Apprenticeship".

This book has done so much for me. Wonderfully well-written, amazing research and does the best job at making the time period and Hitler's influences understandable. You see how so much of his ideology wasn't really his own, but just an heap of collected bits from here and there, which in turn makes him seem less like a monster from the get-go but more like a twisted and disoriented young man at the time. (And terribly afraid of any actual work.) I wish there was a follow-up about his years in M...more This book has done so much for me. Wonderfully well-written, amazing research and does the best job at making the time period and Hitler's influences understandable. You see how so much of his ideology wasn't really his own, but just an heap of collected bits from here and there, which in turn makes him seem less like a monster from the get-go but more like a twisted and disoriented young man at the time. (And terribly afraid of any actual work.) I wish there was a follow-up about his years in Munich!(less)

I read this book when I studied in Vienna in Fall 2001. It describes the art, political, and religious movements in Vienna before World War II. By learning about Vienna, one begins to learn more about the early years of an aspiring Adolf Hitler. The book succeeds in humanizing Hitler, putting him in a context that I knew too well (the streets and Opera Houses of Vienna), and drawing some basic conclusions. Excellent read.

AnÄ±l YaÄŸar I simply loved it. Not only because it dealt wih Hitler's youth, but with Vienna as it was at the turn of the century as well. I live in the district...more I simply loved it. Not only because it dealt wih Hitler's youth, but with Vienna as it was at the turn of the century as well. I live in the district Brigittenau, where Hitler spent three years, and walk past his old home every day. The strange feeling I've had before intensified after reading this well-researched book of Hamann, which gives an impression of the ordinary people living in the Habsburg monarchy - the people afraid of modernisation and the newly-arrived immigrants, the people struggling for survival under hardly-imaginable conditions. This was the real Vienna, not Klimt, Loos or Kokoschka. This was Hitler's Vienna.(less)

Hamann claims that the Hitler of Linz and pre-war Vienna was not yet an antisemite. She believes

that antisemitism became a central issue for him when he decided to become a politician and first began addressing audiences in Munich in 1919 in aggressively antisemitic terms. It was then that Hitler, the once weak eccentric who, in his own eyes at least, had become a somebody during the war...began reinventing himself.

A valuable social history of Vienna's netherworld and an attempt at explaining Hitler's anti-Semitism. Most biographies of Hitler will, of course, spend some time on his contested family history, often an expression of how deeply Freud has penetrated the craft of biography. Yet the time Hitler spent in Vienna as a down-and-out painter may have contributed more to his character than previously assumed. At least, this is the thesis that historian Hamann (*The Reluctant Empress: A Biography of Empress Elisabeth of Austria*, not reviewed) brings to life here. Hitler was 17 when he first arrived in the Austrian-Hungarian capital in 1906 with aspirations of becoming an artist. Hamann is sometimes overly detailed; for example, we are informed that in 1906 Vienna there were 176 arc lamps providing electrical light, 657,625 incandescent lamps, 354 automobile accidents, 997 hansom cabs drawn by two horses, 1,1754 one-horse carriages, and 1,101 cabs, which altogether caused 982 accidents. Hitler, though, is never overwhelmed in this profusion of detail; instead we get a meticulous portrait of everyday life in the artistically and philosophically modernist metropolis. That everyday life was not modernist at all, but materialistic, anti-Semitic, petit-bourgeois, and petty. As the most multinational of the European empires, Austria-Hungary was obsessed with concepts of "nation," "race," "degeneracy," and "Jewish modernism"; obsessions that soon became Hitler's own. Acknowledging the problem of sources, Hamann has hit upon a working-but not unproblematic-solution: liberally sprinkled through the text are italicized excerpts from Hitler's monologues, speeches and writings. Hitler revealed that "for me this was a time of the greatest spiritual upheaval I ever had to go through. I had ceased to be a weak-kneed cosmopolitan and became an anti-Semite," and more ominously, "the visual instruction of the Viennese streets had performed invaluable services."

One of the last photographs of Adolf Hitler depicts him shortly before his suicide as he sits in the bunker of his Chancellery. While the Red Army advanced into the ruins of Berlin outside, he pondered a pompous architectural model of the Upper Austrian provincial capital of Linz, the gigantic buildings illuminated by a sophisticated arrangement of spotlights: Linz in the morning sun, at midday, at sunset glow, and at night. "No matter at what time, whether during the day or at night, whenever he had the opportunity during those weeks, he was sitting in front of this model," the architect Hermann Giesler reported, saying that Hitler stared at it as if at "a promised land into which we would gain entrance."