

**Brigitte Hamann. *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship*.
Trans T. Thornton. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Pp.
viii, 482. Black and white illustrations, bibliography, index**

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dominating the city's notion of itself and its past and providing the basis for an extremely profitable tourist industry.

In the second section of the book, "Forms and Media", Borsay outlines characteristics of Bath's classical image and the means by which it was developed, maintained, and transmitted. He identifies two key constituents of Bath's Georgian image: biography (accounts of Bath's Georgian celebrities) and architecture (the classical buildings inherited from the eighteenth century).

The book becomes more interesting when Borsay turns to the uses the Georgian image has served, that is, to the commercial, social and political, and psychological contexts in which Bath's Georgian image operated. The image has been used to sell the city, especially to tourists, and as justification for intervening in and attempting to control the city's political processes—the twentieth-century conservation battles being a prime example here. Bath's image as a Georgian city has also been used to confer social status on middle-class aspirants, and psychologically

It provided an opportunity to escape from the pressures of the present, to establish a sense of continuity and therefore of personal and collective identity, and to celebrate several of the defining myths of western culture. (p. 348)

In his conclusion Borsay focuses on the wider significance of his study. He sees late twentieth-century Bath as an exemplar of a number of trends. Aside from meeting the needs just identified, it has also been part of a "heritage boom" (p. 369) and has provided ammunition in the debates surrounding the relationship of heritage with conservatism and class. Finally, Borsay says the study of Bath's image has implications for the understanding of history. It is a case study both for the complex and dynamic relationship between past and present and for the way in which meaning and identity are constructed not only through what is said but also through what is left unsaid.

In the last two sections of the book—on the uses of the Georgian image and in his conclusion—Borsay makes many thoughtful points and intriguing arguments that one wishes were more thoroughly discussed. For all his cavils against the orthodox historical pursuit of the objective and the real, the book is weighed down by the masses of empirical evidence Borsay feels compelled to supply throughout. Consigning some of the detailed accounts of the historiographical literature to footnotes, for instance, would have been a kindness to readers. It is a pity the editing could not have been tightened throughout to allow for a fuller exploration of the fascinating uses of Bath's image and its wider significance. It is ironic, surely, that a book firmly espousing a post-modernist stance with respect to reality should be criticised for evidential over-kill.

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The specialist receives another book about Adolf Hitler with suspicion that the human resources invested in it could have been better applied to a topic less exhaustively mined. Narrowing of the vital context to fin-de-siècle Vienna only partially allays suspicion: though no competition for the German dictator, pre-war Vienna has drawn considerable historical attention of its own. That this translation from the original German edition appeared after the first volume of the massive biography by Ian Kershaw, which draws from it, creates further scepticism. Against all these odds, however, Brigitte Hamann's book is a pleasant surprise. Whether viewed as a study of an important phase in Hitler's life or as an account of the political culture of the Habsburg capital, it is both engaging and insightful. It manages, crucially, while revisiting broadly familiar terrain, to establish wide-ranging, plausible links between the dreamy indolent who moved from Linz to Vienna in early 1908 and the rabble-rousing German politician of the 1920s and 1930s.

Since the sources for Hitler's early life remain scanty and often problematic, there are no great biographical revelations here. The only minimal addition comes from the author's contact with the daughter of Rudolf Häusler, a previously neglected roommate of Hitler's in Munich. Painstaking cross-checking of eyewitness accounts and the few official documents does allow Hamann to correct a number of errors in traditional accounts. However, her real achievement is to balance careful use of the traditional sources with statements gleaned from *Mein Kampf* and later speeches or conversations to show the formation of Hitler's mental world and political vision. While acknowledging that virtually everything Hitler later said was for political effect—above all, his so-called political testament, *Mein Kampf*—and that he stylized or deliberately obscured much of his pre-war biography, Hamann is still able to draw persuasive connections between the German public figure and the Austrian drifter and post-card painter. That these occasionally become speculative is no strike against her scholarship. For her achievement is to make sense of the impressionable, self-educated loner by immersing him, and the reader, in the socio-economic and ethnic struggles of pre-war Vienna.

Hamann manages to integrate Hitler's experience—concrete and imaginary—into this world without normalizing or making him a mere distillation of banalities. He emerges as no less idiosyncratic, no less an outsider and loser. Yet his very banality acquires substance through the world from which he drew prejudices, shreds of ideological comfort, and lessons in political gamesmanship. He remains a caricature, yet one identifiable and capable of being situated within the matrix of the fantastic ideologies, bitter nationality conflicts, and political peculiarities of pre-war Vienna. This matrix knew blacks and whites, not shades of gray, as Germans were pitted against Slavs in a struggle for ethnic survival and as democratic politics became characterized by demagoguery and violent confrontation. While Hamann does not prophesy doom for the Austro-Hungarian empire, one way to read this book is as an account of the circum-

stances under which that empire was set to implode. Indeed there are some noteworthy parallels between the disintegrative forces Hamann describes and those which later undermined the Weimar Republic, allowing Hitler to come to power.

While Hitler never studied formally or systematically, he was an avid observer and a veritable sponge for absorbing the cross currents of his time. In Hamann's portrait he appears an eager imbiber of the Pan-German and racist notions that gained remarkable circulation in the context of the nationality conflicts that rocked Austria-Hungary from the end of the nineteenth century. He also emerges as an avid political apprentice, gleaning especially from Karl Lueger, the people's tribune, essential lessons in demagoguery and self-representation. Furthermore, his passion for the arts—notably architecture and Wagnerian opera—while unschooled, gave him an eye for the possibilities of political theatre and *mis-en-scène*. Altogether, his stay in Vienna supplied the fundamentals of a worldview and a political praxis.

Even with the subsequent publication of Ian Kershaw's two-volume biography of Hitler, this study retains its fascination, for *Hitler's Vienna* boasts texture not achieved in Kershaw's early chapters. Moreover, it is highly readable, notwithstanding the oc-

casional infelicity in translation. (References to the "Double" rather than "Dual Alliance" of Austria and Germany, or to "alienation" to render fear of ethnic displacement, are initially confusing.) Urban politics are situated among the plethora of challenges faced by city planners and administrators. The poverty, loneliness, and lack of prospects among residents of the men's hostel, themselves not the lowest of the low in pre-war Vienna, receive graphic description. Likewise, the ferocity of the clash between Czechs and Germans, the latter fearful of a Slavic tide, and the growing estrangement between Germans and Jews acquire substance as aspects of everyday life. For anyone wanting to understand the peculiarities of central European politics in an age of ethnic assertiveness, and thus the vital context for both National Socialism—a movement with origins in pre-war Bohemia—and the shaping of its eventual leader, this book is indispensable.

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