

The Pre-1914 Origins of Hitler's Antisemitism Revisited¹

Thomas Weber

In 1994, Karl Höffkes, a collector of historic film footage and a chronicler of the darkest chapters of the twentieth century, sat down with a woman in her late 80s. The meticulously dressed woman with her large gold-rimmed glasses, curly, neatly styled gray hair, red lipstick and old-fashioned but elegant earrings had difficulty maintaining eye contact. She was clearly focusing on the world from 80 years earlier, which she was trying to bring back in front of her inner eyes. In the process, she shared her and her family's recollections about their life in Munich in the era of World War I. When Höffkes stopped filming his interview with Elisabeth Grünbauer, he had on his tape evidence of Hitler's first known antisemitic statement with any degree of credibility.²

Elisabeth Grünbauer was the daughter of the Popp, the family with whom Hitler lodged in Munich in the fifteen or sixteen months prior to his leaving of the city to fight in World War I. During that time, Hitler and the Popp—Elisabeth, her parents Anna and Joseph, and her brother Josef, Jr.—grew quite close, as evident in the surviving seven letters and postcards that Hitler sent to them from the front in late 1914 and early 1915.³

Born on 13 May 1905,⁴ Elisabeth Grünbauer was only eight by the time Hitler became her family's tenant. Her testimony should be read less as the personal recollections of a young girl, however, than as an account of the collective memories of her family about Hitler's time with them. In fact, her interview with Höffkes really has two parts: one focusing on things that her parents shared with her and another that recalls her own personal recollections—for instance, of how she and her friends had tried to play harmless tricks on Hitler.

As far as we can tell, Grünbauer lived a quiet life. Once she grew up, she married a Mr. Steindl and moved from Munich to Hamburg, where she lived between 1931 and 1935.⁵ During that time, her mother gave an interview to the author of the first major English-language biography of Hitler, *Germany's Hitler*, published in London in 1934. Her mother's interview was edited for the hagiographic book in such a way as to ensure that it fully aligned with the story Hitler had been trying to tell of himself. Furthermore, her mother's interview does not disclose anything of political significance. However, in its non-political observations, her mother's 1930s interview and her own 1990s interview align quite closely, thus supporting the idea that Grünbauer's interview should be treated as an account of the collective memories of her family, as shared with her.⁶

¹ I am grateful to Wieland Giebel, Andreas Heusler, Gerhard Hirschfeld, Karl Höffkes, Nicole Jordan, Kolja Kröger, Harold Marcuse, Gavriel Rosenfeld, Ulrich Schlie, and Dirk Walter for the feedback, help, and inspiration I received from them in the researching and writing of this article.

² The full interview will be published in Wieland Giebel, *Ich traf Hitler: Die Interviews von Karl Höffkes* (Berlin: Berlin Story Verlag, forthcoming).

³ Adolf Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen: 1905–1924*, edited by Eberhard Jäckel and Axel Kuhn (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980), documents no. 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 33, and 34.

⁴ Obituary of Elisabeth Grünbauer, *Münchner Merkur*, September 1999. I am grateful to Dirk Walter for locating and sharing this with me.

⁵ Spruchkammerakte, "Popp, Elisabeth," Staatsarchiv München, Spruchkammern, Karton 1340; Meldekarte for Ludwig Grünbauer, Stadtarchiv München, Meldeunterlagen, EWG 78.

⁶ Heinz A. Heinz, *Germany's Hitler* (London: Hurst & Blackett), pp. 49–53.

At some point during the Third Reich, Grünbauer and Steindl divorced, and she returned to Munich. She took a job as a clerk at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and moved back into her parents' apartment. In 1933, she joined the Nazi Party and in 1938 became a member of the German Labor Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront, or DAF). In 1969, she remarried and became the wife of Ludwig Grünbauer, who ran a taxi company. He predeceased her, dying in 1978, while she lived until 10 September 1999.⁷ She thus spoke to Karl Höffkes five years prior to her death, when the latter was collecting perpetrator and victim testimonies.

Even though Grünbauer's testimony matters most for shedding new light on the genesis of Hitler's antisemitism, Höffkes' conversation with her also turned up many other invaluable pieces of information about the future Nazi. It implicitly confirmed, for instance, that Hitler consistently lied—for reasons we still do not understand—about his move from Austria-Hungary to Germany. Hitler oddly claimed time and time again to have moved to Munich in 1912, when in reality he only moved to Germany the following year.⁸ The interview also reveals Grünbauer to still be under Hitler's spell, years after their interaction. Further it brings to the fore her very German love for neatness and order, as she describes how Hitler arrived from Vienna at her parent's apartment on Schleißheimer Straße in 1913 and rented together with his acquaintance Rudolf Häusler⁹ the room adjacent to their apartment next to the stairs:

When he arrived from Vienna, he had a suitcase with him and all of his clothing and everything else was arranged so orderly, as if his mother had packed [it] for him. Yes, everything was very, very clean and wonderful. ... He was extremely pleasant., a man of noble demeanor. ... I am almost tempted to say that he was obsessed with justice. ... He was very, very disciplined. I can only say the best about him on these matters.¹⁰

Grünbauer also shared with Karl Höffkes how Hitler had managed to serve in World War I in the Bavarian Army (and hence in the German armed forces), despite legally being a foreigner and a subject of the Habsburg emperor:

⁷ Spruchkammerakte, "Popp, Elisabeth"; Obituary of Elisabeth Grünbauer, *Münchner Merkur*; information provided by the municipal graveyard administration of the City of Munich on 25 November 2019.

⁸ Hitler made that claim, for instance, in an article for the *Völkischer Beobachter* of 12 April 1922, during his trial of early 1924, as well as in *Mein Kampf*; see, for example, Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf: Eine kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 1, ed. Christian Hartmann et al. (Munich: Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 2016), p. 373; Othmar Plöckinger, "Frühe biographische Texte zu Hitler: Zur Bewertung der autobiographischen Teile in 'Mein Kampf,'" *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, no. 1 (2010): pp. 96, 104. The claim was also repeatedly made by Nazi propaganda, see Philipp Bouhler, *Adolf Hitler: Das Werden einer Volksbewegung* (Lübeck: Verlag Charles Coleman, 1932), p. 9. See also Heinz, *Hitler*, p. 49.

⁹ Rudolf Häusler, 1893–1973, see Anton Joachimsthaler, *Hitlers Weg begann in München 1913–1923* (Munich: Herbig, 2000), p. 322f., note 9.

¹⁰ The German original of the interview reads: "Als er von Wien kam, ... hat [er] einen Koffer mitgebracht, da war alles wunderbar und seine Wäsche und alles, also dass man sagen muss, als wäre er gerade von der Mutter gekommen, die ihm den Koffer eingepackt hat. Ja, also sehr, sehr sauber. ... [Er war] äußerst angenehm. Ein so in seiner Gesinnung möchte ich sagen vornehmer Mensch. ... Er war ein, ich möchte beinahe sagen, ein Gerechtigkeitsfanatiker. ... [Er war] sehr, sehr diszipliniert. Also ich könnte da nur das beste sagen."

Hitler then sent a petition [*Immediatgesuch*] to the Bavarian king. Things took a very long time after that. ... He waited feverishly for a response; twice every day, he came by to my father's shop to inquire if still no letter had arrived for him. Yet eventually the response did arrive. ... Hitler almost jumped for joy at the news that he was allowed to serve in the German Army.¹¹

Grünbauer's statement is arguably the first plausible explanation as to how Hitler managed to serve as an Austrian in the German armed forces and hence to embark on a journey that would ultimately lead to his entering politics. On one level, her testimony simply confirms Hitler's own claims, as he himself, too, claimed in *Mein Kampf* to have turned directly to the king:

On August 3 I submitted a direct petition [*Immediatgesuch*] to His Majesty King Ludwig III with the request that I be permitted to serve in a Bavarian regiment. The cabinet office was certainly more than busy in those days; my joy was the greater when on the following day I received the reply to my request. My joy and my gratitude knew no end when I had opened the letter with trembling hands and read that my request had been granted and that I was summoned to report to a Bavarian regiment.¹²

Hitler's own claim has generally been dismissed as implausible, as it is unlikely that the king's office would have had nothing more urgent to do two days after the outbreak of war than to attend immediately to the request of a young Austrian volunteer. Furthermore, the War Ministry, rather than the king himself, was responsible for such requests.¹³ There is, however, a significant difference between Grünbauer's and Hitler's accounts of the affair. While Hitler claims to have received a response within a day, Grünbauer describes how he waited impatiently for a response to his request for special dispensation to serve in the Bavarian army and how it took a while before he received a response.

The time lag in the response to Hitler's request makes Grünbauer's claim both plausible and probable. Her statement would suggest that the request was not dealt with in an expedited fashion and that the king's office thus did not have to put to the side more pressing matters right after the outbreak of war. Furthermore, the fact that Hitler presented himself to the recruitment office of the 2nd Bavarian Infantry Regiment in order to volunteer only on 16 August now makes sense.¹⁴ It would mean that he only volunteered with the 2nd Infantry Regiment in mid-August for one simple reason: he had to wait to get a response to his request for special dispensation to serve in the German armed forces. This explanation seems more plausible than the previous

¹¹ The German original of the quote reads as follows: "Da hat er dieses Immediatgesuch gemacht, an den König, und das hat sehr lange gedauert. ... Fieberhaft hat er gewartet, also jeden Tag hat er zweimal im Laden nachgefragt, ob denn noch keine Post da ist. Und dann kam sie doch. ... Da hat er fast einen Luftsprung gemacht, dass er dann im deutschen Heer hat dienen können."

¹² Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Reynal and Hitchcock (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1941), p. 212; for the German original of the quote, see Hitler, *Mein Kampf: Eine kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 1, p. 459.

¹³ Thomas Weber, *Hitler's First War: Adolf Hitler, the Men of the List Regiment, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 15f; Hitler, *Mein Kampf: Eine kritische Ausgabe*, p. 458 note 41; Peter Longerich, *Hitler: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 34, 976 note 144.

¹⁴ For the date of his volunteering for the 2nd Infantry Regiment, see Joachimsthaler, *Weg*, p. 105.

speculation, which was that he only volunteered on 16 August with the 2nd Infantry, after having previously been turned down by other regiments.¹⁵

Furthermore, when the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior tasked the Bavarian War Archive with examining how Hitler had managed to be admitted into the Bavarian Army, the archive's report confirmed that the Bavarian king had issued a decree allowing the War Ministry to admit foreign volunteers. The report also detailed that the War Ministry did, in fact, admit a number of Austrians as volunteers at the beginning of the war. The War Archive, however, did not manage to find a paper trail relating specifically to Hitler amongst the files relating to foreign volunteers.¹⁶ This fact is far less significant, however, than the existence of policies that allowed for Hitler to be admitted into the Bavarian Army. After all, no paper trail relating to his admittance into the 2nd Infantry Regiment has survived either.

Moreover, it is untrue, as has been suggested elsewhere, that because Hitler was an Austrian subject to conscription, he would have had to be returned to Austria-Hungary.¹⁷ Due to the medical exemption he had received from the Habsburg authorities earlier in the year, he simply was no longer subject to conscription in Austria-Hungary.¹⁸ Nor is it of relevance that the War Ministry, rather than the king, was in charge of dealing with volunteers. Ignoring the issue that this was only a policy that evolved in the first few days and weeks of the war, the whole point of an "*Immediatgesuch*" is that petitioners forego normal administrative procedures and turn straight to the highest possible authority. Moreover, the lag in the response to Hitler's request leaves the possibility open that the War Ministry may have subsequently been involved as well.

In short, Elisabeth Grünbauer's interview gives, for the first time, the most plausible and probable explanation yet as to how Hitler managed to serve in the German armed forces and from there enter the world of politics. However, the real significance of Grünbauer's interview lies in her statements about Hitler's expressions of antisemitism. As she recalled in the interview:

And he always complained about what was going on in Austria; and, above all, he [said] that he did not want to serve in the military in Austria because Austria was too swamped with Jews [verjudet]. ... That was one of his recurring themes, that he said that Vienna and Austria were so "verjudet" that he had left the country and was unwilling to fight in the war for Austria. ... That repeatedly came up in conversation on his frequent visits to my father in his shop. ... Their discussions often lasted for hours, which was not always pleasant for my father, who of course had to work during the day. But other than that, the two of them got along well. ... [His anti-Semitism] was in no way conspicuous. It only appeared in conversation—for example, when he chatted with my father and asserted that "the Jews are exploiting the people." ... And the Stuffer Company on Lenbachplatz was Jewish too, and it paid him hardly anything for his paintings. ... Well, he also said that the Jews were exploiters, as they controlled Austria and the stock exchange. I was not personally present [to hear Hitler say this], but was told as much by my parents. ... He spoke simply of exploitation, that people were being exploited over there [in Austria], and that it was no different in Germany.

¹⁵ For that claim, see Longerich, *Hitler*, p. 976 note 144.

¹⁶ Joachimsthaler, *Weg*, pp. 103–105.

¹⁷ For the suggestion, see, *ibid.*, p. 103, ("Anmerkung des Verfassers").

¹⁸ Weber, *Hitler's First War*, p. 45.

What makes Grünbauer's statement significant is both the date of Hitler's antisemitic remarks and the arguments used to justify them.

Prior to the surfacing of Grünbauer's interview, no reliable document had ever come to light relating to Hitler's antisemitism prior to the summer of 1919. In other words, if Grünbauer's testimony is to be trusted, we now have evidence of antisemitic statements by Hitler that predate any other known reliable antisemitic expressions by him by about six years. Crucially, the antisemitic statements Höffkes recorded predate World War I and thus call into question the received wisdom of how Hitler turned into an antisemite. And they invite us to revisit the question as to what happened to Hitler in his final years in Vienna.

To be sure, Hitler himself claimed to have turned into a politically motivated antisemite while a young man in Vienna. However, ever since the late German-Austrian historian Brigitte Hamann released her seminal study *Hitlers Wien: Lehrjahre eines Diktators* (1998) chronicling his years in the Austrian capital between 1907 and 1913, Hitler's own contentions about the evolution of his antisemitism have been dismissed as politically clever fiction.¹⁹

Between the autumn of 1922, when Hitler first started talking publicly about his own life, and the writing of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler skillfully invented a politically useful past for himself.²⁰ As part of his story, he explained how his antisemitism did not originate in his family, insisting—with some plausibility—that his father had not been antisemitic.²¹ Indeed, his half-sister Angela ran the Jewish student canteen at Vienna University in the aftermath of World War I. This fact confirms that no path dependency existed from Hitler's childhood and family background to his later fervently antisemitic beliefs. The same is true of the initial refusal of both Angela and Hitler's sister, Paula, to visit him in prison following his failed putsch due to his antisemitism.²²

While Hitler was thus truthful—at least on this occasion—about the starting point of his political travails, he departed from the truth as soon as his story reached his teenage years, and claims about the emergence of his antisemitism formed the core of the story he was telling. In so doing, he followed the literary conventions of the German *Bildungsroman* and the contemporary fascination with “genius,” explaining how, as a boy without any pedigree coming out of nowhere, he experienced many episodes of hardship during his Vienna years. Those experiences supposedly provided him with profound revelations about the nature of life. This approach made it possible for Hitler to portray the episodes of hardship he had supposedly endured as allowing him to see the hidden architecture of the world. This, in turn, enabled him to come up with totally original solutions to the problems facing mankind. Thereby, he artfully and cleverly created a space in politics for himself in 1920s Germany. This was a time at which there normally would have been no opening in politics for a high school dropout from a modest background. He

¹⁹ Brigitte Hamann, *Hitlers Wien: Lehrjahre eines Diktators* (Munich: Piper, 1996); English-language edition: *Hitler's Vienna: A Dictator's Apprenticeship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁰ Thomas Weber, *Becoming Hitler: The Making of a Nazi* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), Part III; Thomas Weber, “Inleiding,” in Adolf Hitler, *Zijn Leven, Zijn Redevoeringen: Eerste Autobiografie uit 1923* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verbum, 2018), pp. 7–40.

²¹ Hitler, *Mein Kampf: Eine kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 1, p. 199.

²² Weber, *Becoming Hitler*, pp. 203, 315.

exploited the popular craving after World War I for the emergence of “geniuses” who would lead Germany out of misery. Geniuses were defined as men with a superior capacity for creativity and originality and who were able to break the mold of the past and come up with entirely new answers. Crucially, geniuses tend to come out of nowhere, with innate qualities that they develop as they grow up.²³

Hitler thus claimed, in the form of a quasi-*Bildungsroman*, that the challenges he overcame in Austria’s capital revealed to him the power of antisemitism in making sense of the world. He wanted readers to believe that his political antisemitism was fully developed by the time he left Vienna for Germany.²⁴ As he wrote in *Mein Kampf*, “The scales dropped from my eyes when I realized that the Jew is the leader of Social Democracy. This put an end to a long internal struggle. . . . This was the time in which the greatest change I was ever to experience took place in me. From a feeble cosmopolite I had turned into a fanatical antisemite.” Hitler concluded, “If, with the help of the Marxian creed, the Jew conquers the nations of this world, his crown will become the funeral wreath of humanity, and once again this planet, empty of mankind, will move through the ether as it did thousands of years ago.”²⁵

As early as the 1930s, Rudolf Hanisch, Hitler’s companion in Vienna from late 1909 to August 1910, tried to expose Hitler’s account of the emergence of his anti-Semitism in Austria’s capital as fictional. In April 1939, *The New Republic* posthumously published a three-part article by Hanisch, written almost certainly four years prior to his death in an Austrian prison in 1937. The article recalled the time during which he had been “Hitler’s buddy.” The American magazine detailed the many Jewish friends and business partners with whom Hitler had contact in Vienna. According to Hanisch, Hitler had also rejected equating Jewish capitalism with usury. He reportedly had praised the charitableness of Jews, dismissed the ritual murder charge against them as nonsense, advocated the erection of a monument in Germany to the German Jewish poet Heinrich Heine, and praised Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s famous play *Nathan the Wise*, whose Jewish protagonist celebrates mutual Jewish–Christian–Muslim toleration. Furthermore, Hanisch claimed that Hitler had tried to contradict antisemites in discussions at the men’s hostel at which they stayed, celebrated Moses and the Ten Commandments as the basis of all civilization, spoke in awe of the Rothschilds, and admired how the Jewish people’s resilience had enabled them to survive persecution throughout the ages.²⁶

²³ Ibid., Parts II and III, especially ch. 8; Weber, “Inleiding”; Wolfram Pyta, Wolfram, “Adolf Hitler’s (Self-)Fashioning as a Genius: The Visual Politics of National Socialism’s Cult of Genius,” in Udo Hebel and Christoph Wagner, (eds.), *Pictorial Cultures and Political Iconographies* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), pp. 163–175. For the popular craving for genius, see also Carolin Lange, *Genies im Reichstag: Führerbilder des republikanischen Bürgertums in der Weimarer Republik* (Hanover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2012).

²⁴ Hitler, *Mein Kampf: Eine kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 1, pp. 199–231.

²⁵ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Reynal and Hitchcock, pp. 78, 83, 84; Hitler, *Mein Kampf: Eine kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 1, pp. 219, 229, 231. The author of this article refined the translation of this quote.

²⁶ Reinhold Hanisch, “I Was Hitler’s Buddy,” *New Republic*, 5 April 1939, pp. 193–199; 12 April 1939, pp. 270–272; 19 April 1939, pp. 297–300, available online as part of Harold Marcuse’s “Hitler in History Project,” <http://marcuse.faculty.history.ucsb.edu/projects/hitler/sources/30s/394newrep/394NewRepHanis>

Until the publication of Brigitte Hamann's book, Hanisch's account was dismissed as written by someone who had an axe to grind with Hitler and who was both an antisemite and a convicted fraudster. Indeed, some of Hanisch's claims cannot possibly be true—for instance, the fact that he reported Hitler's responses to a film that was, in fact, only released in 1915.²⁷ However, in meticulously following up on Hanisch's claims, Hamann found ample evidence to corroborate his observations about Hitler's Jewish contacts and concluded that they were essentially true. The Hitler who emerges from the pages of Hamann's book is one who was almost obsessively anti-Catholic, but had no difficulties interacting with his Jewish friends and business partners and who admired many facets of Judaism.²⁸ Likewise, Hamann deconstructed the claim made by Hitler's erstwhile friend August Kubitzek that Hitler joined the Antisemitic League during his time in Vienna, pointing out that the league did not even exist in Austria until after World War I.²⁹

Following the publication of Hamann's book, the natural assumption in the late 1990s and early years of the new millennium was that Hitler's antisemitism must have evolved during the years of World War I. However, my own book on the subject, *Hitler's First War*, revealed that Hitler had relations with other Jews during the war that appeared to be free of tensions; it further argued that there was no credible evidence about wartime antisemitic statements on his part and that any claims to the contrary were part of Hitler's subsequent attempt to invent a politically useful alternative past for himself.³⁰

In recent years, therefore, attention has shifted toward locating the emergence of Hitler's antisemitism in the postwar period, in the Munich of 1919. Three different sets of explanations about the birth of Hitler's political antisemitism currently compete with each other. The first locates Hitler's rabid antisemitism in his experience of the chaotic six months of revolution in the city, particularly during the short-lived Munich Soviet Republic in April 1919. According to this reading, anti-Bolshevism lay at the heart of Hitler's antisemitic conversion. The claim is that Hitler shared the popular belief that the Jews were behind the revolution.³¹ The second and third explanations claim that Hitler's behavior during the revolution suggests something else: that, rather than having been an anti-revolutionary antisemite, Hitler had either sat politically on the fence during six months of revolution or had even been willing to support it.

Following the most influential current explanation, Hitler first embraced antisemitism during his time in the post-revolutionary army (Reichswehr) in Munich, where he trained to be a counter-revolutionary propagandist. Hitler, we are told, merely absorbed the antisemitism around him. His politicization occurred in a passive way without requiring any initiative of his own. Any antisemitic ideas expressed by Hitler in the weeks and months to come, it is pointed out, could also be found in pamphlets available to him. In all likelihood, the people with whom Hitler spent time during the summer of 1919 also discussed them. And just as in the case of other people on the Right, Hitler's new antisemitism was directed primarily at the Left and, to a lesser degree, at

chHitlersBuddy.htm. Marcuse's website also reports how Hanisch's account had been written. See also Joachimsthaler, *Weg*, p. 331.

²⁷ Hanisch, "Buddy," pp. 242, 300.

²⁸ Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, pp. 23, 164–168, 185, 191, 347–359. On Hitler's anti-Catholicism, see Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, pp. 164, 249f, 302; Hanisch, "Buddy," p. 271.

²⁹ Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, p. 56f; Longerich, *Hitler*, pp. 17, 22f.

³⁰ Weber, *Hitler's First War*.

³¹ Ralf Georg Reuth, *Hitlers Judenhass* (Munich: Piper, 2009).

capitalists as well. In short, his emerging antisemitism, we are told, was utterly unoriginal and was simply the antisemitism of the post-revolutionary army in Munich.³²

My own belief, as advanced in *Becoming Hitler*, is that the previous theory merely describes, and does not explain, Hitler's antisemitic transformation. The previous interpretation arguably does not explain why in the summer of 1919 Hitler was suddenly so interested in, and receptive to, sustained antisemitic indoctrination. By contrast, my own explanation stresses the impossibility of Hitler simply passively absorbing the ideas of the milieu of the post-revolutionary army. In fact, he was exposed to a rich buffet of right-wing ideas that sometimes complemented and sometimes contradicted each other.

Hitler's anti-revolutionary propaganda course of the German army was supposed to have been led by Fritz Gerlich, a Catholic conservative and fervent opponent of antisemitism who was later murdered by the Nazis in 1934. The lecturers who actually did end up teaching the course were remarkably diverse in the ideas they propagated. They exposed Hitler to an array of conservative and right-wing ideas. The real question, therefore, is not whether or not echoes of the ideas expressed in his propaganda course and of pamphlets available to him can be found in Hitler's emerging antisemitic statements, but rather why Hitler started to eat from the buffet of right-wing ideas available to him in the first place. It is also crucial to ask why he picked the dishes that he did and refused others that were available to him.³³

In answering the first part of the question, it is important to recall the delayed nature of Hitler's realization of Germany's wartime defeat. That realization only seems to have occurred after the ratification of the Versailles Treaty. At this point, Hitler now asked himself two questions: How was it possible that Germany had lost the war? And more importantly, how would Germany have to be recast so as never to face defeat again? In confronting these two questions, Hitler sincerely engaged with the world of ideas. He sought to find the most persuasive answers as to what constituted the primary reasons for Germany's domestic and external weakness, with the ultimately goal of thus identifying normative descriptions about how Germany could be saved. It was at this point that Hitler turned to political antisemitism. He identified the supposedly pernicious influence of Jewish ideas as the primary reason of Germany's domestic weakness, fragmentation, discord, and poverty.³⁴

All this said, we still do not fully understand why Hitler chose the explanations that he did over others during his moment of nascent politicization. Simply pointing to the popularity of

³² Longerich, *Hitler*, pp. 57–62; Volker Ullrich, *Adolf Hitler: Biographie*. vol. 1, *Die Jahre des Aufstiegs*, Kindle edition (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2013), ch. 4; Othmar Plöckinger, *Unter Soldaten und Agitatoren: Hitlers prägende Jahre im deutschen Militär 1918–1920* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2013). For a more moderate version of this set of explanations, see Hans-Ulrich Thamer, *Adolf Hitler: Biographie eines Diktators* (Munich: Beck, 2018), pp. 60–67.

³³ Weber, *Becoming Hitler*, ch. 4–7.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 5. Variants of this explanation can be found in Joachim Riecker's argument that the outcome of World War I politicized Hitler and ultimately led to the Holocaust and in Brendan Simms' argument that Hitler turned to antisemitism when in the aftermath of World War I he was trying to understand the geopolitical and strategic challenge posed by the Anglo-American world, see Joachim Riecker, *Hitlers 9. November: Wie der Erste Weltkrieg zum Holocaust führte* (Berlin: WJS, 2009); Brendan Simms, *Hitler: Only the World Was Enough* (London: Allen Lane, 2019). Hitler saw insufficient territory, manpower, and resources as the primary reasons for Germany's external weakness.

antisemitic ideas in the right-wing milieu of the army in which he was moving in post-revolutionary Munich is unpersuasive. In fact, Hitler initially did not opt for the most popular brand of antisemitism in the army at the time: anti-Bolshevik antisemitism. Likewise, whereas scores of right-wing agitators later accused the Left of having stabbed the German army in the back during the war, Hitler hardly ever used the term “stab in the back.” And, contrary to his claims in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler’s antisemitism was initially far more anti-capitalist (aimed at supposedly Jewish finance capitalism) than anti-Bolshevik in nature.³⁵

The question then becomes why Hitler was drawn to certain antisemitic answers, as opposed to both non-antisemitic answers and antisemitic answers of a different kind, while seeking to explain the reasons of Germany’s internal weakness. It is in this context that one may ask if it is really credible to argue that Hitler did not harbor antisemitic views prior to the summer of 1919. It is in this context that Elisabeth Grünbauer’s interview is potentially so important.

Of course, hardly anyone would consider it likely that Hitler categorically did not harbor any antisemitic sentiments before 1919. In a Europe and North America rife with antisemitic prejudice—even among people fighting for Jewish emancipation—it would be counterintuitive to suggest that Hitler was the odd man out and did not embrace any antisemitic stereotypes.

Moreover, there is consensus that in Vienna Hitler did study antisemitic as well as pro-Jewish literature at great length,³⁶ which indicates that at the very least antisemitic thought entered Hitler’s storage of ideas while living in Vienna. Irrespective of whether or not Hitler identified with these ideas during his years in Austria’s capital, he could turn back to them for inspiration once his antisemitic political conversion occurred.

Furthermore, it is likely that while in Vienna Hitler became an admirer of the city’s mayor Karl Lueger and of the Pan-German politicians Georg von Schönerer and Karl Hermann Wolf, all of whom were antisemites.³⁷ However, his support of the three men does not prove Hitler to be an antisemite during his Vienna years. Lueger was both antisemitic and, unlike Hitler, very pro-Catholic; Schönerer was both antisemitic and anti-Catholic, while Wolf campaigned for Jews who identified as Germans to be brought into the Pan-German fray.³⁸ In other words, the three politicians differed in their attitudes toward Catholics and Jews, and the least we can say is that Hitler’s anti-Catholicism does not appear to have stopped him from identifying with central features of their political ideas.

There is thus a high likelihood that Hitler admired the three politicians, not for their respective attitudes toward Catholicism and Judaism, but for their goal of wanting to bring together all Germans under one national roof; after all, that is the only political constant in Hitler’s life from his teenage years until the day he died. Nevertheless, the antisemitic aspects of Lueger’s and Schönerer’s ideologies, in particular, would have entered Hitler’s storage of ideas while in Vienna anyway, ready to be used in case he himself turned to political antisemitism.

³⁵ Weber, *Becoming Hitler*, ch. 5 and 8. It was under the influence of Hans Rosenberg and Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter in the early 1920s that his anti-Bolshevik antisemitism became ever more prominent.

³⁶ See, for example, Hamann, *Hitler’s Vienna*, passim.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

³⁸ For Wolf’s attitudes toward Jews, see, for example, Wolfgang Benz, *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Vol. 5: Organisationen, Institutionen, Bewegungen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

According to Hanisch, Hitler, despite his frequent and positive interactions with Jews and his pro-Jewish statements, nevertheless expressed ideas with clear antisemitic undertones. If we can believe Hanisch, Hitler described Jews as a “different race.” Further, he is said to have remarked that Jews had “a different smell” and that Jews “are very radical and have terroristic inclinations.”³⁹ However, it should be noted that the term *race* had a double meaning at the time, meaning either “ethnicity” or “race” in a modern sense, depending on its context.

If Elisabeth Grünbauer’s statements are to be believed, by the time Hitler was her family’s tenant, his attitudes toward Jews were already of a far more radical and political kind than those of a man believing that Jews were of a different ethnicity with distinctive characteristics. Crucially, her claim that Hitler had left the country of his birth and had been unwilling to serve in the Habsburg armed forces has clear political connotations and thus goes well beyond the casual antisemitism shared by most Europeans and Americans at the time.

While Grünbauer’s statement appears to challenge the reigning explanations about the emergence of Hitler’s antisemitism, it dovetails with recent discussions about the origins of Hitler’s politically motivated Jew-hatred that were started in the “Scholars Forum” on *Becoming Hitler* in the pages of this journal. They centered, in part, on the riddle, as Mark Roseman puts it in his piece for the forum, that “the emergence of the antisemitic Hitler comes so quickly.”⁴⁰

In his piece, Harold Marcuse concludes, “However, I do think there is a relevant piece missing that prevents us from reaching a fuller understanding of Hitler’s drive toward genocide: Hitler’s personal life. Most scholarly biographers focus on Hitler’s political and ideological development, dismissing his personal life as subsidiary or irrelevant. Weber, too, succumbs to the attraction of avoiding serious engagement, never going beyond the claim that Hitler’s ‘urge to escape loneliness’ drove his opportunism.” Marcuse adds, “As convincing as Weber’s meticulous and nuanced contextual reconstruction of Hitler’s antisemitism after it emerged full-blown in the summer of 1919 is, I think some earlier piece of the puzzle is missing. It may not explain how the Shoah came about, but it would shed light on how the so-called butterfly effect can end up spawning a hurricane of hatred.”⁴¹

I fully agree with Marcuse. In order to understand the full significance of Grünbauer’s interview in this context, it is worth reproducing my original response to his criticism. I pointed out that I had, in fact, tried to advance an argument in *Becoming Hitler* similar to Marcuse’s—that is, of the importance of looking for earlier pieces of the puzzle, “but for fear of advancing an unsubstantiated argument, I clearly [had been] too timid and understated in the manner in which I [had] raised the issue.” I added:

In fact, I was under the impression of having written a book that details Hitler’s personal life in the belief that we can only make sense of Hitler’s political development if we are taking his personal life seriously. I believe that there are good reasons to believe that in the year prior to Hitler’s arrival in Munich, something might have happened in his personal life that was deeply traumatic for him and that would have a butterfly effect.

³⁹ Hanisch, “Buddy.”

⁴⁰ Mark Roseman, “Late Obsessions,” *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2018): p. 142.

⁴¹ Harold Marcuse, “The Political without the Personal,” *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2018): p. 137.

As I do not have firm evidence as to what this traumatic [event] might have been, I only alluded to the fact that something very significant happened to Hitler in 1912 or 1913 in my discussion of his interaction with Helene Hanfstaengl. I was trying to reopen the idea that there really is a missing year in Hitler's life, challenging the attempt in most recent Hitler biographies to dismiss this. In doing so, I hoped that readers of my book with knowledge of previously unreported or underreported facts relating to Hitler's whereabouts in 1912 and 1913 might come forward. Clearly I did myself a disservice by not being more explicit about what I was trying to achieve.⁴²

The section from *Becoming Hitler* about Hitler's 1923 interactions with Helene Hanfstaengl—who, like Hitler, was an ethnic German born abroad who had made postwar Munich her home and to whom Hitler was quite possibly emotionally closer than anyone else at the time⁴³—reads as follows:

Unlike with people in the party, he did not become cross when she asked him about his past. However, even though he was happy to talk about his adolescence in Austria and about his life since moving to Munich, he did not really talk to her about his experiences in Vienna. The only reference to his time in the Austrian capital occurred in his frequent rants against the city's Jews. In 1971 she [Helene Hanfstaengl] observed, "He was really very cagy about saying what he really did [in Vienna]." Helene believed that something personal must have happened to Hitler in Vienna, for which he blamed the Jews, which he could not, or did not want to talk about: "He built it up—this hatred. I often heard him raving about Jews—absolutely personal, not just a political thing."

Helene Hanfstaengl may well have been right. It was not just that he did not want to talk to anyone about his Vienna years, but also he kept misdating his move to Munich. All evidence suggests that Hitler did not arrive in Munich before 1913. Yet in an article for the *Völkischer Beobachter* of April 12, 1922, he claimed to have moved from Vienna to Munich in 1912. He made the same claim during his trial following the failed coup of 1923.

Hitler did not simply make the same mistake twice, as, in a brief biographical sketch he had included in a letter he wrote to Emil Gansser, the party's chief fund-raiser abroad, in 1921, he made the identical claim. And he would do so again in 1925 to Austrian authorities when requesting to be released from Austrian citizenship. It has never conclusively been resolved why Hitler deliberately predated his arrival in Munich by a year.⁴⁴

Going back to Hitler's final year(s) in Vienna promises to help us understand not only Hitler's consistent and bizarre misdating of his arrival in Munich, but also, more importantly, it has the potential to resolve whether something happened in his life during that time that would have a butterfly effect, whether a broader and more gradual antisemitic transformation took place in his final year(s) in Vienna, or whether the orthodox view that Hitler is unlikely to have harbored any significant antisemitic views until after World War I stands.

⁴² Thomas Weber, "Response," *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2018): p. 150.

⁴³ See Weber, *Becoming Hitler*, ch. 11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

Hitler's unwillingness to respond to questions about his past in Vienna, his misdating of his move to Germany, and Helene Hanfstaengl's observations lend credence to the idea that, as Marcuse put it, "an earlier piece of the puzzle is missing" that may "shed light on how the so-called butterfly effect can end up spawning a hurricane of hatred."

What makes it so difficult to make sense of Hitler's final year(s) in Vienna is that so little reliable documentary evidence has survived from that time. As the historian Peter Longerich has put it, "Indeed, there is hardly any reliable information about Hitler's life for the period 1910 to 1913."⁴⁵ Most of the reliable evidence relating to Hitler's time in Vienna comes from his first few years in the city, including Hanisch's account of his attitudes toward Jews (even though Hamann proved that positive interactions with, and statements about Jews on Hitler's part continued well after Hanisch and Hitler had broken with each other). Nevertheless, for his final year in Vienna, the surviving documentary evidence is highly problematic: anonymous two-page recollections of one of Hitler's peers from the men's hostel in which Hitler stayed in Vienna, published in a Czech illustrated magazine in 1935; an account by another former peer of Hitler's from the same hostel, which the Nazi Party Archive asked him to compose; and the family recollections of the descendants of Rudolf Häusler, with whom Hitler had shared his room adjacent to the Popp's apartment until Häusler had no longer been able to cope with Hitler's company and moved out in February 1914.⁴⁶

The anonymous Czech article focuses on Hitler's impoverished attire, his copying of pictures of Vienna, and his love for the adventure writer Karl May, yet also stresses Hitler's anti-Catholicism. The account commissioned by the Nazi Party Archive sings Hitler's praises and emphasizes his anti-Catholicism and anti-socialism. Meanwhile, Häusler's daughter told Hamann about her father's interactions with Hitler, stressing how he had infused a love for Wagner's music in her father, but not focusing on politics or interactions with Jews.⁴⁷

It is very difficult to know which of these statements can be trusted. And even if they were to be trusted, they likely only cover part of Hitler's final time in Vienna. The writer of the account commissioned by the Nazi Party claims to have met Hitler in early 1913, whereas Häusler and Hitler seem to have met in February of that year. The anonymous writer of the Czech article recalls Hitler's desire to attend Karl May's speech in Vienna in March 1912, but beyond that it is difficult to know what period of time he claims to cover.

Strangely, in his article for *The New Republic*, Hanisch—who between 28 November 1912 and 29 March 1913⁴⁸ stayed again at the same men's hostel at which Hitler was registered when he left Vienna in May 1913—does not really describe interactions with, or observations about, Hitler from late 1912 and early 1913. He details at great length his interactions and falling out with Adolf Hitler from 1909 and 1910 and then goes straight on to say: "The last time I met Hitler was in August, 1913, on the Wiedner Hauptstrasse."⁴⁹ It is almost as if Hanisch had had no encounters with Hitler during his time back at the men's hostel.

⁴⁵ Longerich, *Hitler*, p. 27.

⁴⁶ Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, ch. 12. Rudolf Häusler moved out on 15 February 1914; see Joachimsthaler, *Weg*, p. 323 note 9.

⁴⁷ Anonymous, "Muj Přitel Hitler," *Moravsky ilustrovany zpravodaj*, vol. 40 (1935): pp. 10–11; Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, pp. 379–381, 395–402.

⁴⁸ See Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, p. 380.

⁴⁹ Hanisch, "Buddy," p. 300. It is most unlikely that Hanisch did meet Hitler in August 1913, as it seems unlikely that Hitler returned to Vienna at any time during the summer of 1913.

Speculation as to whether something fundamental had happened in Hitler's life prior to his arrival to Munich—something that he edited out of his life's story—abounded as soon as he appeared on the political landscape of Munich in the early 1920s. In 1921, opponents within the Nazi Party attempted to discredit him when he tried to become the party's leader. They did so by claiming, implausibly, that he was secretly a supporter of the Habsburgs.⁵⁰ In reality, there is no doubt that he was a fervent opponent of the dynasty.

Even before accusations of pro-Habsburg sympathies were voiced, claims surfaced in January 1921 that Hitler's involvement with Jews had not just been social and political, but also romantic. The *Münchener Post*, the Socialist newspaper with the longest track record in trying to expose Hitler as both a fraud and a dangerous demagogue, ran a story about the Nazi Party at the time. The article covered the trial of Hitler after he was taken to court for violently interrupting a meeting of a different political grouping. According to the story in the *Münchener Post*, Hitler had once been engaged to be married to the daughter of an Eastern-European Jewish migrant from Galicia.⁵¹

A book by the Hungarian–Jewish writer Paul Tabori (also known as Peter Stafford), whose father had been killed in Auschwitz, put forward claims in his introduction to the Eva Braun diaries forged by the alpinist and actor Luis Trenker, published in 1949, that are similar to the ones made in 1921:

Erna Hoffmann, the wife of Hitler's "court photographer," declared in an interview which she gave to a French reporter and which was later reproduced in a Swiss illustrated paper, that Eva Braun was by no means Hitler's most important lady-love—only "one of his twelve mistresses." Frau Hoffmann said that Hitler had deserted Eva "just as he deserted his first mistress, the Jewish girl Johanna Wachsmann, who in 1913 had left her rich parents in order to live with Hitler on the fifth floor of the Vienna inn, 'Zur Schwarzen Katze.'"... The "twelve mistresses" whom Erna Hoffmann enumerates cannot be taken very seriously. Many similar legends were created by Hitler's predilection for pretty, fair-haired girls.⁵²

I also should add that a few years ago I was asked to evaluate documents in private hands that were of a similar nature to the stories that emerged in 1921 and in 1949. Furthermore, in the 1970s, the divorced wife of Hitler's half-brother Alois, Irish-born Bridget Dowling, published her memoirs claiming that Hitler had visited Alois and her in Liverpool from November 1912 to April 1913.⁵³

None of these stories quite add up. Dowling's book is so full of tall stories as to render her an utterly untrustworthy source. Similarly, I advised the people sharing their documents with me a few years ago that even though it would be difficult to verify my verdict, I deem the claims made in the documents improbable. Furthermore, Erna Hoffmann tried to get an injunction in

⁵⁰ Ernst Deuerlein, (ed.), *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP in Augenzeugenberichten* (Düsseldorf: Karl Rauch Verlag, 1968), pp. 138–140.

⁵¹ Georg Franz-Willing, *Die Hitlerbewegung: Der Ursprung, 1919–1922* (Hamburg: R. v. Decker's Verlag G. Schenk, 1962), p. 121.

⁵² Paul Tabori, (ed.), *The Private Life of Adolf Hitler: The Intimate Notes and Diary of Eva Braun* (London: Ishi Press, 1949), p. 11.

⁵³ Bridget Hitler, *My Brother-in-Law Adolf* (London: Duckworth, 1979); Michael Unger, *The Hitlers of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Bluecoat, 2011), p. 29.

court against a different book that also quoted from the Swiss magazine used by Tabori, arguing that she had never spoken to the magazine.⁵⁴ And the story in *Münchener Post* was published at a time at which we know that many people in Munich were trying to damage Hitler.

None of this is to deny the possibility that something happened in Hitler's life in his final year(s) in Vienna that might have had a butterfly effect. If Hitler's antisemitism simply had gradually radicalized in his final years in Vienna, we would expect to find echoes of that antisemitism in the few sources that have survived. Similarly, there would have been no—or at least less—incentive for him to lie about his departure date from Vienna. And, in all likelihood, there would have been a greater willingness by Hitler to talk about his Vienna years. Most importantly, if his political antisemitism had already been fully developed, just not expressed publicly, Hitler's antisemitism in the second half of 1919 would have been similar in nature and quality to the political antisemitism most popular in prewar Vienna, which it was not (even though there were echoes of his claimed earlier references to the stock exchange being controlled by Jews in his emerging anti-capitalist antisemitism in 1919.)

We are really only left with two plausible options: Either something fundamental happened in Hitler's life in Vienna that changed his attitudes toward Jews and that would have a delayed, far-from-inevitable impact after World War I, or Hitler's views of Jews until 1919 genuinely were without prejudice. The suddenness and radical nature of Hitler's conversion to political antisemitism in 1919, the fact that Hitler did not want to talk at all about his experiences in Vienna and clearly lied about his final year in Munich, and Helene Hanfstaengl's and Elisabeth Grünbauer's testimonies seem to lend support to the first of the two options—namely that something in his past, which Hitler did not want to talk about, changed his attitudes toward Jews.

Both Hanfstaengl and Grünbauer concur on one central point: when Hitler talked about Vienna, he engaged in frequent rants about Jews, yet did not elaborate on the point. Hanfstaengl tells us that he repeatedly raged about the city's Jews, but beyond that would not talk about his time in Vienna. Grünbauer, meanwhile, told Höffkes that Hitler often stressed how “*verjudet*,” or swamped with Jews, Vienna was and that he wanted to get away from there, and yet he would not elaborate on his antisemitism. As Grünbauer recalled, beyond his rants about wanting to leave a city city that was “*verjudet*,” he did not say anything antisemitic. One should also add that for the rest of his life, Hitler rarely returned to Vienna and was full of disdain for the city.

All this would suggest that there is a high likelihood that Helene Hanfstaengl was right when she suggested that something must have happened in Vienna that changed Hitler's attitudes to Jews that was “not just a political thing,” but something that Hitler perceived as “absolutely personal.” His behavior suggests the existence of some kind of deep-seated, repressed antisemitism rooted in his time in Vienna.

This is not say that something must have occurred to him that was major in an objective sense—rather, that it was merely something that Hitler perceived to be so. Nor is it to say that there is a direct line from Hitler's Vienna years to the emergence of his postwar political antisemitism. To stick with Marcuse's image, the flapping of the wings of butterflies rarely triggers hurricanes. Had it not been for the political conditions of Munich in 1919, whatever might have happened in Hitler's life in final year(s) in Vienna would not have culminated in the emergence of a hurricane of hatred. In other words, the impact of his changing attitudes toward Jews prior to the war may have been as simple as making him more receptive to antisemitic

⁵⁴ “Hitler und die Frauen,” *Der Spiegel*, no. 45, 5 November 1952, p. 32.

explanations at a time, in 1919, when he had to choose between competing accounts about the primary reasons of Germany's domestic weakness. And the release of repressed, deep-seated antisemitism in 1919 would go a long way in explaining the surprising ferocity with which his political antisemitism emerged in 1919.

The explanation offered here does not simply stand or fall with Grünbauer's testimony. However, her interview is the clearest piece of evidence in support of the idea that Hitler's political antisemitism of 1919 did not emerge out of nowhere, but was a mutation of an earlier form of political antisemitism on his part. Without that earlier antisemitism, Hitler would have been less receptive to antisemitism to 1919 and would have been, in all likelihood, less ferocious in following through with it.

This raises the question of how reliable we can regard Grünbauer's recollections, given that they came from an elderly woman remembering events that occurred 80 years earlier. Of course, her interview is far from an ideal source. However, in the context of Hitler's radicalization, it is as good a source as any, as prior to World War I Hitler was an insignificant person with a thin documentary record. More importantly, he subsequently diligently destroyed any surviving evidence when he invented a political useful past for himself. If we want to understand what Hitler did not want us to see and how he cleverly created a space in politics for himself—in short, if we want to understand how in moments of crisis people like Hitler can emerge—we have no choice but to use to the best of our abilities imperfect recollections from after the event. In fact, most of the sources that historians have used for decades in their attempt to unmask Hitler are far more problematic in nature than Grünbauer's recollections.

All Hitler biographies are based in their coverage of the time between Hitler's birth and the outbreak of World War I on a very small number of highly problematic and flawed accounts: the testimony of his friend August Kubitzek, Hanisch's article, the three accounts relating to his final year in Munich, the 1930s interview of Elisabeth Grünbauer's mother, and a handful of other accounts. In other words, they are based, in the case of Kubitzek, on somebody who produced one pro-Nazi account during the years of the Third Reich and another one after the war aimed at proving that he had not, in fact, been involved politically with Hitler. In other cases, we are dealing with anonymous 1930s sources, accounts recorded by Nazi authorities, an interview that was edited to bring it in line with the story Hitler had tried to tell, the recollections of a daughter of a peer of Hitler's who had not even been alive at the time, and other testimony either meant to please Hitler while he was in power or to invent distance from Hitler after the event, thus aimed at saving the tellers' own skins in the late 1940s and 1950s. In short, what we know, or what we think we know, about the political and personal development of Hitler from the time of his birth to the time of World War I is based on testimony that is often even more problematic than that of Grünbauer.

As we have seen, Grünbauer's interview is not simply based on the recollections of a young girl 80 years after the event. Rather it should be treated as collective family recollections. Additionally, her interview is also credible for the way it aligns with other sources, such as Helene Hanfstaengl's account. Furthermore, Grünbauer is aware of her own limitations. She neither tells overly detailed stories, nor does she provide verbatim quotes, both of which would render her testimony less reliable. She is also explicit in acknowledging that some of her testimony is based on what her parents had told her. Likewise, she does not shy away from telling Höffkes that in certain instances she is unsure about her answers, adding that she wished that her brother had still been around, as, according to her, he would have remembered more than she did. Maybe most importantly, Grünbauer is not trying to provide an account that would

sanitize her and her family. Ever since 1945, there has been a tendency for people who knew Hitler to claim that they had only known him socially and had never been present in discussions about politics. However, in the case of Grünbauer, we have none of that. She readily volunteers information about Hitler that most people would have omitted or downplayed. For all these reasons, Elisabeth Grünbauer's testimony about the origins of Hitler's antisemitism is thus both plausible and probable.

Just as in the case of all other surviving pieces of evidence relating to Hitler's life prior to World War I, doubts remain about some of Grünbauer's statements, but they should not lead us to dismiss her interview. Instead, they should inspire us to look further.

In her beautifully written book, *Paper Love: Searching for the Girl My Grandfather Left Behind*, the American–Jewish writer and critic Sarah Wildman embarks on a journey aimed at uncovering the hidden story of the Jewish girl her grandfather had loved, but had to leave behind when he emigrated in the late 1930s from Vienna to America. Hitler's past in Vienna and that of Wildman's grandfather in Austria's capital city could not be more different. Yet both their pasts are cloaked in secrecy. Both their pasts intersected with or were part of Jewish life in Vienna. And in both their cases, making sense of their hidden pasts promises to provide the key to understanding their subsequent lives and their diverging attitudes toward Vienna. While Hitler would rage about the city's Jews and hate Vienna for the rest of his life, Wildman's grandfather would return to the city whenever he could. Despite the trauma he experienced in Austria and all the family and friends he lost in the Shoah, the Vienna of his youth was always “the wonderful city” for him. As Sarah Wildman writes, “*It doesn't get any better than this*, [my grandfather] would recall thinking, in his rosy recounting of life in Vienna.”⁵⁵

If we want to unlock the missing link between Hitler's Vienna years and his subsequent life—if we want to know if Grünbauer's recollections really point us into the right direction—we need someone to research and write about Hitler's hidden last three years in Vienna as imaginatively as Wildman wrote about her grandfather. Why was Vienna not a “wonderful city” for Hitler? Why did he hate it so much? Why did he want to move away, repeatedly misdating his departure from the city? Why did he almost always refuse to talk about his time there? Why did he hardly ever return? What caused his antisemitism to mutate over time? Finally, we need to revisit not only the pre-1914 origins of Hitler's antisemitism, but also the ferocity with which it broke through in 1919. We need to examine the question of whether Hitler already had developed a preferred “final solution” by the early 1920s that was genocidal in character.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Sarah Wildman, *Paper Love: Searching for the Girl My Grandfather Left Behind* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2014), pp. 45, 49.

⁵⁶ See my unpublished paper from the 2018 annual conference of the German Studies Association: “Hitler's Preferred ‘Final Solution’ of the Early 1920s and the Evolution of the Holocaust: A Neo-Intentionalist Interpretation,” which maps out antisemitic statements by Hitler made in private and semi-private settings.