

CASE STUDY – PHOTOGRAPHY AS POLITICAL PERSUASION: HOW HEINRICH HOFFMANN SOLD ADOLF HITLER



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Abstract

The twentieth century saw the rise and fall of Europe's most notoriously identifiable demagogue, Adolf Hitler. This case study analyses how Hitler's only official photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, marketed the countenance of Hitler to the German people through the Party's photographic propaganda. Ultimately, to identify the techniques used to construct a photographic image designed to influence public perception and sell both Hitler and, by connection, the Nazi Party. Through study of Hoffmann's photographic depictions analysed in context of the social and political environments they were created for; this essay aims to use testimonies namely of historians and Hoffmann himself to understand if and how propaganda was altered to capitalise on the needs of German society.

The findings reveal Hoffmann to have been an invaluable communicator in the creation of a fictitious Hitler image, one that was made ubiquitous through its mass merchandising and dissemination. Such visual persona would come to adapt to the needs of German society and exploit their insecurities in the aftermath of the First World War. The methods of political persuasion analysed within this case study may provide valuable retrospective on contemporary political culture. Although the methods and regulations may have been refined and rendered more inconspicuous, political persuasion through photographic imagery is still a modern political technique.

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Introduction

Seldom are there individuals more identifiable than Adolf Hitler. The events put in motion by the Nazi Party created a world-wide conflict that dominated an era of humankind, impacting through to the modern day. The only official photographer of Adolf Hitler has largely been ignored by history and remained foreshadowed by Hitler himself, however Heinrich Hoffmann is a man responsible for the majority of the imagery remaining of Hitler. He shared a uniquely close and private relationship, often being present for the key events in the Nazi timeline. His work with the party was one of both a documentarian and propagandist, developing an identity of Hitler that would adapt depending upon the circumstances of Germany and which persona was deemed necessary. The study of how Heinrich Hoffmann sold Adolf Hitler will follow a chronological system from the early photo sessions of the 1920s to the acquisition of power in the early 1930s, explaining social and political events where necessary to provide the actions of Hoffmann with apt context.

Chapter 1 – The Visual Mystery of Adolf Hitler

Born 1885, Heinrich Hoffmann was the son and nephew of two established photographers both with a repertoire of noble subjects, including multiple royal families. Apprenticing in the family photographic studio in 1897, Hoffmann too continued to photograph subjects of high social standing following on from his previous positions as a press photographer in 1909. He founded the *Photobericht Hoffmann* image agency in 1913, later becoming a conscripted photo correspondent in 1917 during the First World War. It was during this period, in 1914, that he supposedly first photographed a young Adolf Hitler celebrating the outbreak of World War 1 seen in Figure 1 (Hoffmann, 1914), though this authenticity of this image has never

been certified. The presence of Hitler within the image was only later discovered in 1929 as it found use as Nazi propaganda representing the longevity of Hitler's commitment to Germany.



Figure 1. *Adolf Hitler attends a rally in the Munich Odeonsplatz to celebrate the declaration of war in 1914, Henrich Hoffmann, 1914*

Post 1918, following the subsequent defeat of Germany during the conflict of World War 1, the political, economic and moral status of the country itself was largely diminished. The signing of the Treaty of Versailles, by German representatives Hermann Müller and Colonial Minister Johannes Bell, on June 28th 1919, consequently acknowledged Germany as the proprietary aggressor of the conflict through Article 231. More commonly known as the War Guilt Clause, this served as a legal basis in which to compel the payment of 132 billion Gold marks (\$393.6 billion as of 2005) in reparations on behalf of the country; something only

officially repaid in October of 2010, which illustrates the levity of the financial debt. It was this action which put in motion a nationwide consensus of betrayal and humiliation amongst the people, a social environment which made the agenda of more radical, non-centrist parties more appealing as unrest with the current government grew.

It was following the conclusion of the initial world war, that in 1919 Hitler emerged, speaking publicly after joining the Deutsch Arbeiter-Partei (DAP) – ‘German Workers Party’ - in the year of its formation. The initial reputation of Hitler was garnered through his skilled oratory prowess and there was a purposeful omission of his countenance during the rise of the party; ‘Keen to raise funds for his party, Hitler was severely rationing his own image to that end; creating a mystique around himself and using his bodyguards to prevent unauthorized photographers from taking his picture’ (Moorhouse, 2018, pp.20-22).

On the other hand, there are contrary explanations for Hitler’s lack of public image. Members of the party considered it a personal idiosyncrasy while the press at the time reviewed this as ‘propagandistic legerdemain’ (Schmoulders, 2000, p.43), a more evidentiary explanation being as such; Hitler was wanted by warrant in Prussia and some northern German states during the period of the party’s banning in 1923. This explanation is flawed however in its lack of justification for the years prior to this banning, mainly the years 1919-1923 in which such photographic prohibition was in effect, this would give greater credence to the former explanation by Moorhouse with a profit and mystique-based rationale.

The vacuum of his non-existent public image along with personal curiosity drew Hoffmann to first attempt photographing Hitler in 1922; motivated by the large financial offering of an unspecified American agency, the attempt was thwarted by Hitler’s guards and the

photographic plate exposed, as many were during the prohibition of his image. Hoffmann himself joined the Nazi party in 1920 during the year of its formation, although his involvement in the politics are obscure and later self-admittedly revealed as being apolitical; 'It was my continued lack of interest in politics, in power or in position, my persistent refusal to accept any office under the Party and my sincere insistence on the purely professional aspect' (Hoffmann, 1955, p.70).

Within this period, the DAP had been renamed to the National Socialist German Workers Party, otherwise known as the Nazi Party. By 1923, Hitler became the leader of a party with newly formed, unsuccessful image in part due to the lack of consistency. A party with clear political aims as set forth in the Twenty-Five Theses; the pursuit of nationalism and social Darwinism. With the steady improvements in Germany, both economic and political, the waning faith in political centrism which had once given credence to the political right was now in recession. The radical right-wing approach of Hitler lost attraction, the need of the German people to find new political leadership was slowly being replaced by a restoration of faith in the current leadership. Both Hitler and the Nazi party were making minor political progress at this time but remained largely a Munich phenomenon contained within Bavaria. However, the lack of his pictorial profile was beginning to peak interest in the press. The May 1923 issue of *Simplicissimus*, a satirical Munich based weekly publication, published a series of caricatures based on testimonials posing the question: 'Wie Sieht Hitler Aus?'- What Does Hitler Look Like? seen in figure 2 (Simplicissimus 1923). Despite the satirical nature of the presentations, this is an evidentiary indicator of a local interest forming around the, as of then, hidden Hitler.

Wie sieht Hitler aus?

(26. 10. 1923)

Adolf Hitler läßt sich nie abbilden. Bei meinem Aufenthalt in Berlin wurde ich mit Fragen über sein Aussehen befürrt.



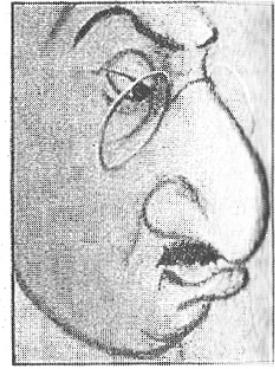
„Ist es wahr, daß er in der Öffentlichkeit nur mit einer schwarzen Gesichtsmaske erscheint?“



„Das Charakteristische seines Gesichts sind doch wohl die faszinierenden Augen?“



„Oder ist der Mund die Hauptsache?“



„Oder die Nase?“



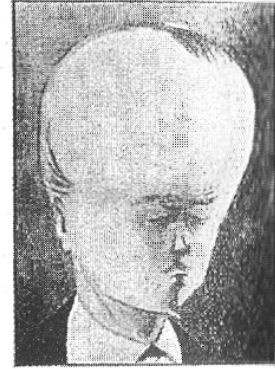
„Trägt er vielleicht einen wallenden Bart wie Wotan oder wie Rabindranath Tagore?“



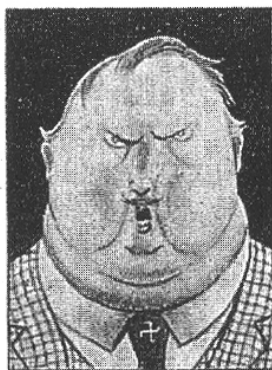
„Er hört die leisesten Äußerungen der Volkstimme; sind nicht seine Ohren besonders entwickelt?“



„Beträt etwa die untere Gesichtshälfte seine fabelhafte Energie?“



„Oder finden die ungeheuren geistigen Fähigkeiten ihren Ausdruck in fast hypertrophischen Schädelformen?“



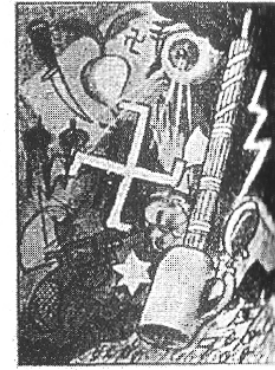
„Ist er fett?“



„Ist er mager?“



„Ist er schön?“



Die Fragen mußten unbeantwortet bleiben. Hitler ist überhaupt kein Individuum. Er ist ein Zustand. Nur der Futurist kann ihn bildlich darstellen.

Figure 2. May 1923 issue of *Simplicissimus*, 'What does Hitler look like?'

There was a key psychological discourse present during the second half of the 20th century, one which had a great influence upon how depiction of the face would have been received. Physiognomic discourse, although falling in and out of public consciousness since its inception in ancient Greece, found a resurgence during the first half of the 20th century under the name of morphopsychology developed by French psychiatrist Louis Corman, coinciding with the duration of Hitler's propaganda production. Physiognomy refers to the idea that everything about one's character and personality can be accurately inferred from the outward physical appearance. This manner of interpreting the face, ultimately alters the way in which portraiture was interpreted by the public in the early twentieth century, comparative to the second half of the century in which physiognomy had then been discredited as scientific racism. Historically, during the political campaigns of the Nazi Party, this was still in practice as a 'scientific' method to validate racial categories on the basis of inferior and superior countenance profiles. During the later periods of racial cleansing and sterilisation, individuals suspected of belonging to lower racial categories would be 'evaluated' through procedures of facial measurements to determine the necessity of sterilisation. High ranking Nazi SS officers, in keeping with this racial profile, would also have to date their pure Aryan ancestry back to at least 1750.

The previous published caricatural images provide some introduction into practical physiognomic thinking at the time, the face was not simply an unconditional physical feature, instead it was an objective, biological token of bloodline. Countenance was more than image alone, this was a passport of identification. With *Simplicissimus* being a centrist publication, these negative portrayals were not physical insults, but media commentary on the character of Hitler himself. C. Schoulders (2000, p.90) best describes how this became an issue for the party;

The race thinking at the time – physiognomy – made Hitler’s physiognomy a problem. Because of academic racial discourse, is obsessively searched for the features of the ruling class, the face of the century, the German countenance, the presentation of the no so Aryan Hitler became a problem for propaganda.

For the man who was to be principally charged with turning the image of Hitler into photographic film, this became a considerable issue. What is commonly misunderstood about the Nazi Aryan agenda however, is that the stereotype of blonde, blue-eyed features was a misinterpretation commonly held by those outside of the scope of the party’s influence. Nazi racial typologies were in fact wide and malleable, broad enough as to include even Nordic and Mediterranean types amongst others as set out by Hans F.K. Günther in *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes* (1922), a writing which greatly influenced the Nazi racial policy. In this case, Hitler himself could be considered within the scope of Aryan but for those who understood the Aryan profile through the misconceived definition, it became a common complaint. Therefore, Hoffmann’s portrayals of Hitler were construed differently, once again depending on knowledge of the Nazi Party itself. Those misinformed were given a paradoxical image of a man who vocalised a superior race of which he could claim no inclusion to, while others were delivered imagery of an individual advocating his own racial superiority. It is due to these factors, it must be maintained that the interpretations of Hoffmann’s photographic portraits today, are incomparable to the interpretations of such imagery at the time of production.

Chapter 2 – The Hitler Image

Hoffmann was an astute business man, later evidenced by his profiteering from the war and this is no-more evident than in the events of the first formal meeting between Hoffmann and Hitler. Hermann Esser, a member of Hitler's elite was due to wed, Hoffmann offering to host the wedding breakfast in which Hitler was later announced to attend. On this occasion, Hoffmann, recognised from his failed attempt in 1929, persuaded Hitler as to his photographic prowess and acclaim securing what was soon to become his most lucrative personal and professional relationship. 'When I shall permit myself to be photographed I cannot say; but this much I can promise, Herr Hoffmann – when I do so, you will be allowed to take the first photos' (Hoffmann, 1955, p.48). Ultimately, Hoffman was not the first, with photo anonymity being broken by Georg Pahl in 1923 despite the efforts of Hitler and his entourage to prevent such an incident. Pahl's first attempt failed after Hitler had persuaded him to destroy the negative. The second attempt, however, was successful, as seen here in Figure 3 (Georg Pahl, 1923). This event subsequently persuaded Hitler to give Hoffmann permission to proceed with a studio portrait session in early September of the same year, in what can be argued as a pre-emptive effort to negate the forthcoming impact of the unsolicited images finding its way into publication, by countering it with an officialised portrayal of Hitler's image.



Figure 3. Among Julius Streicher's private files at his estate near Nuremberg was this photo of him with Adolf Hitler in 1923 at a Nuremberg Nazi Rally, Georg Pahl, 1923.

Hitler was not to remain invisible anymore and the Nazi Party had initiated their candidacy to become the face of Germany, one in which they had metaphorically lost during the war, with Hoffmann as its photographic creator. Hoffmann and the party's strategy in promotion of the first photographs was to advertise within the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the press paper of the party, in 1923. Alas, 'The image cult was kicked off' (Schmoulders, 2000, p.86), Hitler's personal political experiences of anti-Semitic politicians Karl Lueger and Georg Ritter von Schönerer during his years as a struggling artist in 1907 to 1913 provided sources of inspiration for the later propagandistic techniques of the Nazi party, including; political indoctrination and mobilisation. Indoctrination in the form of the impassioned speeches to a susceptible audience cultivated by political unrest, and mobilisation which became realised

though Hoffmann's photographic work in reproducing the image of Hitler as a tangible product capable of distribution in various forms, such as the postcards and stamps (seen later in figure 10).

The reaction to the initial Hoffmann sessions, here in figure 4 (Heinrich Hoffmann circa 1920-1924), was primarily one of ridicule. The leftist press including the centrist *Simplicissimus* publication sought to ridicule Hitler through mockery of his appearance, most notably the moustache which became a point of contention within the party itself;

[H]is adviser Putzi Hanfstaengl questioned whether the moustache was such a good idea, as it seemed such a PR own goal, but Hitler was adamant and said in effect that "one day, you'll all be wearing one". Again, his instincts seem to have been right.

(Moorhouse, 2018)



Figure 4. Portrait from the first Hoffmann sessions, Heinrich Hoffmann, circa 1920 - 1924

Hoffmann's pictorial representation and promotion of Hitler had now officially entered the territory of Nazi propaganda but not yet with deceptive or misleading intentions, Hoffmann's 'promotion' of Hitler nonetheless had now been initiated. It must be taken into consideration that these images were not received by the German people without bias, although the face of Hitler was preserved in anonymity, he still had a public profile; which constituted majorly of his oratory prowess and the notoriety of the party's nationalist and anti-Semitic agenda. Thus, Hoffmann's portraiture was not viewed with complete impartiality.

It was after the initial photoshoots circa 1920 – 1924 that Hoffmann first began commercialising portrayals of Hitler; this began in the form of press images, postcards and

posters. It was this form of merchandising which formed the most effective strategy to sell Hitler, there now existed tangible 'promotional material' to exhibit the political figurehead of the Nazi party. He was no longer exclusively an image of description, Hoffman had begun to brand the Nazi party with a single face. The formal portrait was a mechanism to build and solidify pictorial representation.

Germany at this time was still yet to recapture its former economic status, it was now on the verge of national bankruptcy, millions had lost life savings and poverty was a wide spread phenomenon. The country had defaulted on the war reparations agreed upon in the Treaty of Versailles, their requests for postponements were denied by the French and the German people sided with their own government, the culmination of such being the French occupation of the Ruhr to ensure payment. Civil unrest once again began to rise leading to political demagogues on both the extreme right and left attempting to capitalise on the crisis with their radical political agendas. One such group being the Nazi Party, now consisting of approximately 55,000 followers and developing in momentum. In the words of Hoffmann (1955, p.51); 'the movement began to be taken seriously – and to be feared'.

Intending to overthrow the current government in a Russian style takeover, Hitler planned to force them into accepting him at gunpoint. The attempt was one of failure culminating in the death of party members and the imprisonment of Hitler. Hoffmann was not present during the attempt, finding attendance only during its conclusion;

[B]ut all that I was in time to see with my own eyes was the removal of sawdust, drenched with the blood of the fourteen victims, from the gutters of the street. I had

missed the chance of taking an historic photograph, for which later Hitler would have been particularly grateful (ibid, p.57).

Hitler had been sentenced to five years in prison, claiming sole responsibility during the trial which came to inspire the title of ‘*Führer*’, or leader. The notoriety of the event, alongside Hitler’s treatment of the trial as a way to spread the party’s agenda to the press, vastly improved the sales of Hoffmann’s imagery. The imprisonment was exploited as an opportunity to play to the press; expressing distain for the government for permitting such treatment of Germany and appealing to the people affected by the economic state of affairs. The trial instigated the Nazi Party in to a household name.

Due to his position as the only authorised photographer, his imagery accounted for the primary, if not sole, visual representation of Hitler at this time. During the reduced nine months in prison, Hitler undertook a major revision of his strategy to gain power.

[T]he year 1942 can be seen as the time when, like a phoenix arising from the ashes, Hitler could begin his emergence from the ruins of the broken and fragmented völkisch movement to become eventually the absolute leader with total mastery over a reformed, organisationally far stronger, and internally more cohesive Nazi Party. (I. Kershaw, 2010, p.15)

The pursuit of political power was now a will of legal means, superseding one of force or revolution and one in which the use of Hoffmann was indispensable. Hitler began considering the development of Nazi propaganda as a primary means of advancing the party; ‘He preposterously considered the movements of history, the rise and decline of nations,

classes, or parties largely as the consequence of differing propagandistic abilities' (Fest, 2013, P.72). It was known that during the period of imprisonment that writing had commenced for *Mein Kampf* and the public waited in anticipation for its release.

Hoffmann had not ceased in propaganda creation during this period, he smuggled a 'Stirnschen', or hidden camera, into the prison to photograph Hitler and some of the fellow members arrested for the coup. Figure 5 (Heinrich Hoffmann, 1924) provides evidentiary support that Hoffmann persisted in his commitment to his role, transgressing prison law of no photography to ensure effective documentation of Hitler that could be used to benefit propaganda. In the event that image production had ceased, this would have been detrimental to the party's capitalisation on the momentum of the coup. This event had sparked a nationwide revival of interest through the press. It was the photography of Hoffman that had been supplying this interest in Hitler with visual documentation style content, as opposed to verbal and written testimonies alone.



Figure 5. *Hitler, Hess, and Fellow Prisoners*. Heinrich Hoffmann, 1924

Hoffmann was in attendance for the release of Hitler, keen to capture the event for prosperity and the world's press. An attempt to capture Hitler leaving the prison was prohibited by the fortress authorities with Hoffmann concluding; 'it seems essential that a photograph to mark the occasion should be taken in Landsberg itself' (Hoffmann, 1955, p.61). This claim gives credence to the notion of Hoffmann being an advocate for authenticity within the Party's imagery, however, it could be understood that this desired authenticity was driven instead by an inclination to preserve one's artistic integrity, that such deception upon reveal could come to harm his professional reputation. As of this point he had remained uninvolved in the politics of the party, considering himself strictly a press photographer. Alas, figure 6 (Heinrich Hoffmann 1924) was taken a short drive away at the 'old city gates.' The photographs were immediately sent to the press on the day of capture with the caption 'Adolf Hitler leaves Landsberg Fortress', something which the press ignored in favour of more emotive soundbites such as 'The first step to freedom' and 'Thoughtfully, Hitler stands in front of his prison – what will he do now'. During the rise of the party, before they had attained political control of Germany and the press, there was an unpredictability to the propaganda within the press itself. Press outlets were not yet under the suppression of the party and so were free to interpret events. The authenticity of this image was never questioned and was indeed taken on face value. This does however, illustrate the awareness of Hoffmann to the political relevance of the imagery in creation, but more importantly that he along with Hitler, were actively willing to deceive and disregard legitimacy in favour of influential imagery.



Figure 6. *The Socialist National Party of Adolf Hitler picked up by car in the Landsberg Fortress. Hitler the liberation of Landsberg.* Heinrich Hoffmann, 1924.

The squat posture of Hitler, with a hand on the vehicle and a minor lean towards the vehicle insinuates an element of candidness, as though a man with eminent purpose has little time to pose for a photograph. It is arguably an apt decision to perpetuate this significant part of Hitler's image, as the man with complete dedication to the task of 'saving' Germany. The reality of the situation however was that Hitler had remarked something to the effect of 'Get a move on, Hoffmann, or we'll have a crowd collecting; and anyway, it's bloody cold' (ibid, p.61). Pre-1932, Hitler was portrayed as an 'other-worldly' (R. Moorhouse, 2018, p.20) figure, a man obsessed with the political movements of Germany, austere in his pursuits and detached from the trivial concerns of public profile or image. However, it can be argued by the events behind the scenes of figure 6 and also the countless private sessions with Hoffmann to refine an image, that Hitler was in fact an image obsessive who cared a great deal about what would now be considered as public relations, but at a time in which very few

politicians cared little for it. Upon seeing a photograph of Benito Mussolini in bathing trunks, Hoffmann recalls Hitler as remarking ‘A really great statesman wouldn’t do it.’ (Hoffmann, 1955, p.197). Even images depicting Hitler in glasses such as that seen in figure 7 (Heinrich Hoffmann, 1939) were prohibited from release as spectacles were deemed a physical weakness, something not befitting of a leader.



Figure 7. *Adolf Hitler wearing spectacles in a censored photograph taken by Heinrich Hoffmann. The photograph was censored personally by Hitler - no photograph in spectacles was to be published.* Heinrich Hoffmann, 1939.

The ‘political sell’ had been engaged through a crafted photographic image, one that could be manipulated to reassure that there was power to the movement, a newsletter per-se of the party’s momentum.

Following the release from prison, and in the lead up to the publication of *Mein Kampf*, there was an issue of how Hitler was to be presented on the cover. With the known consequence being that such an image would serve as the chief pictorial emblem for the writings one experienced upon every read, psychologically linking with the book's manifesto. Was this image to be similar to the photographic depictions of Germany's first chancellor Otto von Bismarck, or that of a spiritual and inspired thinker? Hoffmann and Hitler decided upon the latter. Despite the crafted image of the party, it was hampered by Hitler's speaking ban between 1925 – 1927, the improvements in economic and political stabilisation diminished the main enticement of the party which was governmental distrust. In 1928, the Nazi party polled only 2.6% and as explained by R. Moorhouse (2018, p.21) 'Hitler was scarcely getting his message across. His party was flirting with insignificance'. Although Hoffmann had been successful with his consistent imaging of Hitler, this was still only an image and the party found difficulty in providing ample substance to prop up this perception.

The period of the 1920s can be seen as the era in which Hoffmann worked to hone the image of Hitler; 'I always had to photograph him in private in his new garments; only if he were completely satisfied with the resultant photograph would he then take them into public use' (H. Hoffmann, 1955, p.197). Hitler feared the thought of appearing ridiculous and these sessions gave Hitler a chance to see how he was seen from a public perspective. Attire aside, gesture control and application were also evaluated through this process. Hitler going as far as to involve a self-styled mystic named Eric Jan Hanussen to coach him in his expansive gesture control to emphasise his political speeches. Most were considered too superfluous, such as that depicted in Figure 8 (Heinrich Hoffmann, 1925). The benefits of these rehearsals were not limited to his public speeches alone. Body language is a means of non-verbal communication and Hitler's increased awareness of his gesture control would inherently

influence the manner in which he posed himself for a photograph. It is because of these sessions that Hoffmann was not only the man selling Hitler, but one that aided Hitler in selling himself.



Figure 8. *Hitler rehearsing his public speech in front of the mirror.* Heinrich Hoffmann, 1925

Chapter 3 – Adaptation During The Great Depression

The Great Depression of 1929 further regressed Germany's economics, WW1 had left Germany with an insufficiency for self-dependence and middle-class Germany came to blame this on events outside of Germany. Banks failed, savings vanished, mass unemployment (doubling to more than 3 million by 1930, doubling again by 1932) and poverty prevailed. Once again, the radical views of Adolf Hitler on society and economy promising

an exit from the current situation found ready ears in the people, now willing to listen to anyone. Party numbers found exponential growth in the following years and the promoted propaganda became more effective with willing recipients.



Figure 9. One of the most reproduced images of Adolf Hitler in his brown shirt attire. Heinrich Hoffman, circa 1928-1929.

Throughout the second half of the 1920s Hoffmann had been working towards a consistent image of Hitler, one of the most notoriously widespread and regularly published sessions with Hitler was shot by Hoffmann circa 1928-29; Figure 9. The attire consisting of a brown shirt with shoulder strap and the iron cross first class became emblematic of the party, an

image depiction now more commonly referred to as the ‘brown shirt’ period – a symbolic uniform of the party - which signalled the transformative stage, in which Hoffmann began to recast Hitler into that of a national comrade. Until this point Hitler had been portrayed as both an angry orator and a soldier, something which was befitting of the small group status, but incompatible with the party’s sudden growth in membership. Hence why the propaganda now began to present Hitler as a leadership figure.

The portrait is an appeal to connection with Hitler, being shot at eye level with the subject in gaze with the viewer. The focus on the eyes is not coincidental, but an artistic decision on the part of Hoffmann evidenced by the retouching applied to intensify the eyes, which were one of the most remarked features of Hitler from those who recall witnessing him in the flesh. His secretary recalled his habit of maintaining uncomfortably lengthily eye contact, whilst members of the public often mesmerise the colour of his eyes. In the black and white photographic image, colour was compensated by a focus on tone and contrast. Although, it could be concluded that recollections of such sightings after the major events of Nazi regime could be subject to Change Bias; exaggerating past experiences due to events of the present.

George Orwell wrote of Hitler in these sessions;

‘It is a pathetic dog-like face, the face of a man suffering under intolerable wrongs. In a rather more manly way it reproduces the expression of innumerable pictures of Christ crucified, and there is little doubt that is how Hitler sees Himself’ (Orwell, 1940, p.13).

Indeed, political religiosity and ceremonialist analogies are not ill-considered. Five elements constituted the ‘religion’ of Nazism; the bible: *Mein Kampf*, the martyrs: those killed in the Beer Hall Putsch, the relics: a swastika soaked in the blood of the Putsch deceased, the icons: depiction of Hitler including those of Hoffmann, and the messiah: Hitler himself at the centre. The external public persona advertised a distinctive individuality from his counterparts, his so-called mission and devotion to Germany was designated almost messianic importance for the country. ‘He was not a politician; he was a messiah’ (Moorhouse, 2018 p.21). Hoffmann’s production of ‘icons’ as aptly illustrated by the postcard in Figure 10 (Heinrich Hoffmann, 1933), in their vast formats of materials capable of dissemination simulated an experience of proximity. That is to say, the ubiquity of his image closed the distance between Hitler and the public.



Figure 10. *"The Liberator of Germany" (the man who freed Germany), photographs his home on his Berghof, Obersalzberg.* Heinrich Hoffmann, 1933.

The purpose of Hoffmann was to transmit the auditory experience of Hitler's speeches at close quarters into a tight knit visual audience without losing the qualities of the former. Before the visual representation, Hitler had been primarily using oration to spread his message and this remained at the core, but range was a limitation which visual material could compensate for.

Take for example Figure 11 (Heinrich Hoffmann, 1925), Hoffmann's image of Hitler speaking at Circus Krone around 1925 shortly after the initial portrait sessions. The decision not to highlight Hitler, but to instead focus upon a scene of symbolism is indicative to the intuition of Hoffmann. The image is an affirmation to the understanding Hoffmann had of the photographic sell, communicating an idea using visual signifiers; in this case by using the amassed crowd facing an elevated subject to push the idea of them standing before an object of great significance, appealing to the human sense of curiosity and wonder as to what this significant object worth such attention was. His work does not provide an impartial, objective view of Hitler, but rather imagery suffuse with symbolism from his artistic choices and the various emblems of the party. It worked to play on the mysticism of Hitler by utilising the results of his prowess, he had chosen to photograph Hitler without actually photographing the man himself.



Figure 11. *Hitler Spricht!* Hitler speaking to a Nazi rally, in München Circus Krone. Heinrich Hoffmann, 1925

During the increasing traction of the Party, manufacturers had begun exploiting Nazi slogans, emblems and insignia on common objects. The party being viewed as kitsch was a fear of Hitler, writing in *Mein Kampf*; ‘All advertising, whether in the field of business or politics, achieves success through the continuity and sustained uniformity of its application’. They sought to defend their identity by passing the ‘Law for the Protection of National Symbols’ in 1918, preventing any unauthorised use of party symbols by manufacturers such as, for example, the ladies hand fan emblazoned with the swastika. With the many motifs, the party sought to manage brand consistency and recognition through exclusivity. While the presentation of Hitler would be altered dependent upon the needs of the situation, the constant of Hoffmann ingrained uniform traits within the photographic propaganda. All official images were shot by Hoffmann, thus his approach to crafting a portrait in

composition, angle, proximity would have a semblance of homogeneity; as though a standardised photographic approach would better showcase the changing Hitler.

The formal portrait was an integral element of the Nazis in building the image of Hitler, it was this tokenisation of his countenance that provided an ornamental product to adorn public places and residences, also something which would find a fitting position within innumerable press publications. It embedded the Nazi image with an element of historic significance, as though every appearance was in representation of a hyper-historicised time that the Germans were living in.

Chapter 4 – A Symbol of Nazism

Hitler's image as an otherworldly figure shifted following the suicide of his niece, Angela Raubal in 1931. A person with whom Hitler had a close familial relationship, even living with him for a period of time and often in attendance for political and cultural affairs. The press was filled with speculation that the relationship had been that of an incestuous affair, an idea propagated mostly by the political opposition with the intent to smear. The traction the Nazi party had gained from the great depression was at risk of being maligned by the rumour, they had been forced into damage-limitation in a public relations conflict. 'The oddball, other-worldly messiah-figure had now, overnight, become something of an electoral liability, so Hitler would be recast as a chaste, cultured aesthete; more statesman than prophet' (Moorhouse, 2018, p.21). Hoffmann was at the head of this change, releasing a photographic volume entitled "*Hitler, wie ihn keiner kennt*", The Hitler Nobody Knows, in the following six months, a collection of images exhibiting Hitler in domesticated situations mostly at his residence or with his dog Figure 12 (Heinrich Hoffmann, 1936). This was the first time

something akin to a personal life had been used in the propaganda, this is not to say that such images are authentic, but rather a close mimicry of privacy. This was just as much of a fabrication as all the depictions previously. What had been omitted before it in the messianic image, i.e. a private life, had now become an asset to sell Hitler as a somewhat ordinary citizen. The display of informal body language within a scene of domestication was yet another promotional tool, but the intentions here were contrary to those of the formal portraiture. Hoffmann was selling Hitler to the converted and the unconverted alike, in an attempt to present the image of Hitler being an ‘ordinary’ man in some respects. Ultimately, to limit the damage of the Raubal controversy. This was ultimately a successful aversion as he would be appointed Chancellor only a year later.



Figure 12. *Adolf Hitler posing with Alsatian.* Heinrich Hoffmann, 1936.

By the early 1930s, the Nazi party were running a well-financed American style political election campaign that began to equate Hitler as the embodiment of both Germany and National Socialism. The finance being in part due to the wealth of commercialised images of Hitler sold via photobooks: such as that seen in Figure 13 (Heinrich Hoffmann, 1940), postcards and press images.



Figure 13. *Grossdeutschland im weltgeschehen* – ‘Greater Germany in World Affairs’. Heinrich Hoffmann, 1940.

All were shot by Hoffmann, but it was both he and Hitler who would gain royalties from the images, something which over the duration of the Nazi party made them both millionaires. But there remained an element of separation from the party; what was being sold was Hitler

the man and the negative impacts of life resulting from the regime were seen as the work of subordinate Nazi officials within the party. Germans who had succumb to the persuasive presentation of Hitler felt as though he could do no wrong. Despite Hoffmann's reconstruction of his image into that of a humanised statesman in Germany, the political religiosity persisted in the follower's perception of Hitler. Numerous images of Hitler speaking at rallies filled the press during the campaign for chancellorship, the main propagandist piece and the one most reminiscent of an American style campaign being a 1932 election poster of Hoffmann's photography, seen here; Figure 14 (Heinrich Hoffmann, 1932) and also seen in context in Figure 16 (photographer unknown, 1932). This photograph was one originally shot in 1927 but found its re-contextualised inspiration from an Ernst Benckard photographic collection of death masks entitled *Das Ewige Antlitz*, 'The Eternal Face' Figure 15 (1926). During the era of physiognomy importance, this collection was regarded as 'one of the most impressive studies on the topic' and 'the first serious art-historical investigation by a specialist'. The masks were presented as a white face against a black backdrop in what was essentially a search for the German countenance. All are shot at eye level providing a neutral objectification of the image yet shot close up, with theatrical top down lighting and features treated with artistic familiarity as though one was looking upon a collective document of the German face. Hoffmann's disembodied depiction of Hitler too features many similarities in its artistic structure, it utilises a stylistic approach proven effective by Benckard's collection. In perhaps one of the most neutral portrayals of Hitler, the countenance exhibited here is treated with symbolism on par to that of the swastika or any other emblematic Nazi token for that matter. This is the pinnacle piece in which Hoffmann had succeeded to transmute Hitler the man, into Hitler the paramount symbol of Nazism.



Figure 14. *Adolf Hitler Election Poster*. Heinrich Hoffmann, 1932

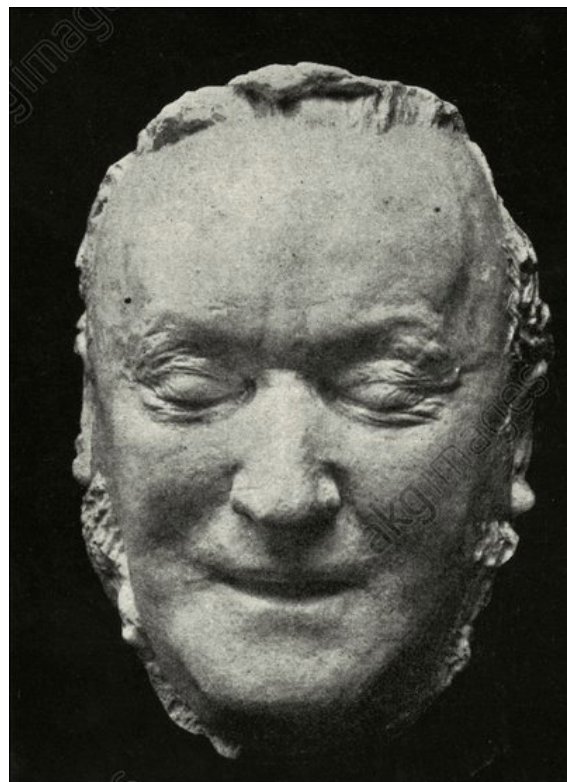


Figure 15. *Death mask of Richard Wagner*. Ernst Benkard, 1926.



Figure 16. *Hitler's paramilitary "Brownshirts" sit down with a farmer and his wife and try to persuade them to vote Nazi.* Photographer unknown, 1932.

The appointment of chancellor in 1933 gave a whole new level of credibility to both Hitler and the Party. The propaganda had been built upon the idea of a small man accomplishing great things; a soldier rising the ranks through the party to become the chancellor of Germany and ultimately its avenger. This simple soldier image is something that Hoffmann was able to keep an essence of, even as Hitler became more prominent. It was accomplished in part by persistent reference to the soldier rhetoric in both image and text; the brown shirt attire of the late 20s, to Hitler amongst soldiers embedded a sense of identifiability. After all, the accomplishments of Hitler were those of an average soldier with no political education, giving the German people a sense of proximity to power. Hitler too was once an 'average' man and so too are the public.

The previously discussed consistency granted by Hoffmann's place as the single official photographer came to a pictorial head in Figure 17, a 1936 special issue of the *Illustrierte Beobachter*. A photographic montage of Hitler from 1916 to 1936 formatted as 16 *en face*, tightly cropped headshots with all except the 1916 image, being the work of Hoffmann. His photobooks depicting Hitler as a private man or man of the people were not as successful as those depicting him as a commander and military man, the sales figures became feedback for the party in determining which persona held more persuasive impact. It was as though the *Illustrierte Beobachter* was finally answering the question posed by the May 1923 issue of *Simplicissimus*; 'What Does Hitler Look Like?', seen earlier in figure 2. Moreover, this is a conclusory gallery that illustrates the breadth of Hoffmann's involvement with Hitler, constructing his photographic image from a party leader to the Führer of Germany.



Figure 32. Hitler's favorite legend was that of the rapid rise of the simple soldier to chancellorship and to the status of the German avenger. The *Illustrierte Beobachter* wanted to illustrate this career facially (and face-to-face) in 1936 on the occasion of the remilitarization of the Rhineland. With the repetitious close-ups commented on rabidly in the accompanying text, the montage of course withheld the fact that the road to rulership tends to distance the ruler—a fact represented by Leni Riefenstahl in her films.

Figure 17. *Ein Antlitz-vom Kampf geformt* (A visage shaped by the fight). *Illustrierte Beobachter*, 1936.

It could be argued that Hoffmann had created what was the second body of the king, a theory characterised by Ernst Kantorowicz in *The King's Two Bodies* (1957). Firstly, there is the mortal man who is a physical being and secondly, there is the immortal political power that acts upon a nation. Propaganda by definition is bias and misleading, untruthful to the reality of the Hitler. The propaganda had manufactured a fictitious clone, malleable to the requirements of German social environment, becoming a political power in itself. It is because of this that it constitutes the second body. The German people were led to believe they knew Hitler through a convincingly deceptive campaign of curated photographic imagery selling 'candidness' and 'truth'. The real Adolf Hitler, however, remained undisclosed.

Conclusion

It is imperative to consider the zeitgeist and historical context in which the memoirs of Hoffmann were both written and published, one in which a now 70-year-old Hoffmann had experienced the collapse of the Third Reich, the death of Hitler, four-year imprisonment and wealth confiscation of all but 3,000 marks (£1,366 equivalent) due to a conviction of war profiteering, all of which had occurred within a decade of publication. It could be argued that the aforementioned personal historical recollection was a conclusory essay, in which Hoffmann sought to diminish his responsibility during the Nazi regime in the interest of a more lenient judgement in the annals of history. This is the key limitation of this research; a primary account is highly susceptible to subjectivity and many objective stances are written by contemporary authors who were born after such events relying now on testimonies of others.

The success of Hoffmann's persuasion and propagation of the Hitler image rested upon three main factors; ubiquity, malleability and photographic consistency. Image was a tool utilised to shape the way the party would be perceived by the public. The game Hoffmann and Hitler were playing was that of political chess, their image would periodically shift depending upon the circumstances of the times which allowed them to constantly strive for favour with the German people; in the times of Germany's post war distress they would perceive Hitler as a prophet-like 'commander,' and during their stability they would perceive him as a statesman. Hitler was very much at the centre of this propaganda, an obscure figure with no public image was marketed by Hoffmann as the face of Nazism and ultimately, the face of Germany.

Alas, there was little in the way of authenticity in the public image of Hitler; there existed a mortal man and then there existed the personification of Nazism, a production of Hoffmann. This production allowed Hitler to escape the judgement for the realities of life under the Party, this was simply not compatible with the persona of the Hitler the German people were being sold through propaganda. Hoffmann was not simply a documentary photography depicting the life of a man, but rather an artist whose efforts are more aptly described as those of an advertiser. Hoffmann and Hitler shared a uniquely close personal relationship, one which history has largely neglected. The study of political parties utilising propagandist photography is not limited to the Nazi party alone and such investigations could be conducted on the modern political landscape. Modern regulations would undoubtedly alter the way in which propaganda is legally allowed to operate, creating an opportunity for contrast and comparison.

LIST OF IMAGES

Figure 1.

Hoffmann, H. (1914) *Adolf Hitler attends a rally in the Munich Odeonsplatz to celebrate the declaration of war in 1914.* United States Holocaust Memorial Museum [online]. [Accessed 1 Sep 2018] Available at: <<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1037320>>

Figure 2.

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Figure 3.

Pahl, G. (1923) *Among Julius Streicher's private files at his estate near Nueremberg was this photo of him with Adolf Hitler in 1923 at a Nuremberg Nazi Rally.* Getty images [online]. [Accessed 15 September 2018] Available at: <<https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/among-julius-streichers-private-files-at-his-estate-near-news-photo/515547286>>

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Figure 5.

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Figure 8.

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Figure 9.

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Figure 10.

Hoffmann, H. (1933) *"The Liberator of Germany" (the man who freed Germany), photographs his home on his Berghof, Obersalzberg*. Alamy [online]. [Accessed November 7 2018]. Available at: <https://www.alamy.de/stockfoto-adolf-hitler-1889-1945-der-befreier-deutschlands-der-mann-der-deutschland-frei-gemacht-fotografiert-auf-seinem-berghof-obersalzberg-nach-hause-datum-1933-105322354.html>

Figure 11.

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Figure 12.

Hoffmann, H. (1932) *Adolf Hitler posing with Alsatian*. V&A Collections [online]. [Accessed 10 November 2018].

Figure 13.

Hoffmann, H. (1940) *Grossdeutschland im weltgeschehen*. Berlin: Publisher Kasper & Co. (Personal photograph, taken at The Imperial War Museum Photo Archive)

Figure 14.

Hoffmann, H. (1932) *Adolf Hitler Election Poster*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum [online]. [Accessed 10 September 2018]. Available at: <https://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-kits/traveling-exhibitions/state-of-deception/hitler-election-poster-1932>

Figure 15.

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Figure 16.

Photographer Unknown (1932) *Hitler's paramilitary "Brownshirts" sit down with a farmer and his wife and try to persuade them to vote Nazi*. AllThatsInteresting [online]. [Accessed 8 November 2018]. Available at: <https://allthatsinteresting.com/hitler-election#5>

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APPENDIX

Appendix A.

Primary Research 1:

Viewing all original Heinrich Hoffmann material contained within the Imperial War Museum photo archive in London, including photographs, postcards, stamps distributed during the Nazi era and 1st edition original photobooks;

Grossdeutschland Im Weltgeschehen: Tagesbildberichte (Greater Germany in World Affairs: Daily Picture Reports) 1931/1940/1941/1942. (No photography allowed of the material)

Appendix B.

Primary Research 2:

Visiting the Imperial War Museum World War 1 & 2 permanent exhibitions including second world war Nazi propaganda featuring the photography of Heinrich Hoffmann.

Appendix C.

Primary Research 3:

Email correspondence with British historian and author R.Moorhouse, specialist in modern German history, particularly on Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich.

Connor Gordon email to Roger Moorhouse - November 5th 2018:

Hello Mr. Moorhouse

Thanks for the timely reply.

One of the key moral points I've been toiling over is whether Hoffmann truly believed he was an apolitical photojournalist. With such a wealth amassed from his work during the Nazi regime, surely it would be undeniable even to Hoffman that this constituted war profiteering. Again, with the depictions of Hitler being such an integral part of the Hitler 'cult', it seems as though his claim to innocence must have clearly been disingenuous. What's your opinion on this, is there any reason to believe Hoffmann doubted the moral side of depicting Hitler?

*I find it interesting and also somewhat ironic that Hitler was an advocate for the supremacy of the Aryan race, yet he lacked some of the characteristics himself; hair colour being a prime example. Having read Claudia Schmölders' *Hitler's Face: The Biography of An Image*, physiognomic discourse seemed to be a key method of interpreting faces at the time.*

How do you think Hoffmann actively tailored his depictions of Hitler to better conform to a Nordic facial profile?

In his autobiography, Hoffmann states; 'My friendship with Hitler was a purely professional relationship, and so, I was determined, it should remain', it seems as though that as time passed and their relationship matured, Hoffmann became a mouthpiece, almost a 'rationale' in a way. His private relationship allowed him to present opinion, something which I think would have been a rare thing only a few people were capable of doing (please do correct me if I am mistaken in thinking so). I have argued in my dissertation that as a photographer, opinion was something of an inherent necessity considering Hitler did not have the photographic knowledge of that Hoffmann possessed. I have yet to find writings that gives a deep insight into the actual session of photographing Hitler, so how much of an involvement do you think Hitler had in the photographic process? Could it be said that Hoffmann was not leading these sessions, but rather Hitler himself?

Finally, as the first images from the Hoffmann sessions made their way into the public sphere and the question of 'what does Hitler look like?' became answered. How were these received? Did they find immediate success or was the public taken by surprise from the reveal of the face behind the voice?

*I'm interested to hear your opinions because I think this will make an interesting insight into the Hoffmann - Hitler dynamic.
I have a session booked in at the Imperial War Museum in two weeks to see some of these works in person.*

Kind Regards.

Roger Moorhouse email to Connor Gordon, November 6th 2018:

Dear Connor (if I may)

Interesting stuff this.

On the issue of "morality". An important contextual point here is that the Nazis and especially the SS developed what they considered to be an alternative morality, in which duty to the race and the nation was considered paramount, even if it meant engaging in what might hitherto have been considered criminal or amoral activity. So when we talk about morality in the conventional sense, we should remember that we might be talking about something that Nazi true believers had already jettisoned and no longer felt bound by. That said, I don't believe that Hoffmann falls into that category. He seems, from everything that I have read about him, to have been rather uninterested in the ideological/political aspects of Nazism. He was a relatively simple man (though a brilliant photographer), who seems to have been more interested in where his next bottle of red wine was coming from than the minutiae of Nazi politics. That doesn't make him apolitical, of course. He had a close personal relationship with Hitler. He collaborated, actively created the Hitler myth and Hitler's image, and made a huge amount of money doing so. So, no, I don't think he doubted the "morality" of what he was doing – I doubt he even gave it a thought. But then, like millions of other Germans, he wouldn't necessarily have seen anything amoral or immoral in what Hitler was doing. You have to be wary of judging the past by the standards of the present. They lived in a

totalitarian state; complete control of information, highly effective propaganda – consequently they didn't tend to ask themselves “are we the bad guys?”

Regarding the Aryan aspect – yes, it is a common complaint, that so few of the Nazi paladins actually looked Aryan (with the possible exception of Reinhard Heydrich). The Poles even joked about it, parodying the Hitler quote about “tough as Krupp Steel...” by saying “As tall as Hitler, as slim as Goring, and as athletic as Goebbels”. In fact, the Nazi racial typologies were broad enough to include someone like Hitler without a problem. Though the stereotype we have is of blonde, blue-eyed Aryans, it was much broader than that – indeed was almost infinitely malleable – including dark “Dinaric” and Mediterranean types and others. Look at the typology given by Nazi race theorist Hans Gunther on this. So, there would have been no need for Hoffmann to tailor his depictions in the racial way that you describe – though, of course, he did massage and manage Hitler's image in other ways...

Regarding the relationship - You are right to conclude that Hoffmann was closer to Hitler than most other members of the entourage, and – that he had a private relationship with him that many others didn't. Part of that is in the fact that he was relatively “unpolitical” as a photographer, (and art expert), so he didn't arouse Hitler's political jealousies in the same way as others maybe did. By extension, regarding any influence that Hoffmann might have had... Yes, certainly in the creation and management of Hitler's image (though, like you, I have not seen an account to directly confirm it) – you might want to read the attached article I wrote recently on this. At the same time, however, we should not assume that Hitler was a total ingénué in such matters – after all the story of how Hoffmann came to photograph him the first time (see the article) demonstrates that he had a good understanding of such matters. So I'd say that, in this respect, it was rather a symbiotic relationship.

On the first images – I seem to recall that the primary reaction was one of ridicule. The left-wing Munich press obviously went for Hitler, and his adviser Putzi Hanfstaengl questioned whether the moustache was such a good idea, as it seemed such a PR own goal, but Hitler was adamant and said in effect that “one day, you'll all be wearing one”. Again, his instincts seem to have been right. I wrote something about Hitler's image, and his moustache, in my book “The Third Reich in 100 Objects”.

I hope that helps, do let me know if you have any follow-up questions.

best wishes

Roger

Connor Gordon email to Roger Moorhouse, November 7th 2018:

Dear Roger.

I appreciate the detailed reply.

Your words have been a tremendous help in gaining a better understanding of how his image was received.

I find it quite interesting to consider the public image of Hitler as that of 'the' messiah of Germany. Dare I say, a good argument could be made especially considering the ritualistic attitudes taken towards him. The impact of Raubal's death on Hitler's image and the ultimate reshaping of his image to that of a 'statesman', needs far more recognition in my writings. Clearly in the context of propaganda, this is truly an event worth discussion.

Was the article you attached published elsewhere? I would love to reference some of this material in my dissertation and it would be preferential to do so from the published source.

Kind Regards.

Roger Moorhouse email to Connor Gordon, November 7th 2018:

Dear Connor,

Yes, the “political religion” aspect of Nazism – with its messiah, its Holy Book (Mein Kampf), its martyrs (1923 dead) and its holy relics (Blood Flag) is very convincing in my opinion.

Also, that shift after Raubal’s death is instructive in that it shows us how artificial Hitler’s public image was – that it could be changed almost overnight when political expediency dictated.

As I say, interesting stuff. You might want to check out “Hitler at Home” by Despina Stratigakos – very good on this.

Yes, the article was published, as “Hitler: Rise of a Dictator” in ‘History Revealed’, June 2018.

Good luck with it.

all best

Roger

Appendix D.

Primary Research 4:

Phone Correspondence (30 minutes and 30 seconds) on November 8th 2018 with Nicholas O’Shaughnessy, author of *Marketing the Third Reich (2018)* and *Selling Hitler: Propaganda and the Nazi Brand (2016)*.

Excerpts from the conversation:

01:19 - 01:58:

N.O'Shaughnessy: *That's how they did it you see they standardised the imagery through Hoffmann*

C.Gordon: *I think in one of your books you mentioned that it was for brand consistency that they used Hoffmann's imagery for the majority of the time.*

N.O'Shaughnessy: *Exactly, and what Hoffmann used to do is publish these photobooks which had no text, they were simply page after page. I've got one of the actually, of Hitler doing various things, like Hitler in his homeland and when his visits Vienna and so forth. It's, it's, it's just very modern because there's no verbalisation at all, it's just pure imagery.*

22:07 – 23:17:

C.Gordon: *How were the very first images that Hoffmann took of Hitler, how were they perceived by Germany?*

N.O'Shaughnessy: *Well, um. Hitler was, you see, in 1928 only got about two and a half percent of the vote, so they were just a very outside party with this weirdly charismatic leader who was saying some resonant things, but who frightened them. Um, and who had of course been involved in an attempt to overthrow the state by a military or populist coup d'état in 1923, so they would obviously be middle class and so forth, especially the upper middle class who had great reservations. There were even advise in Nazi circles not to show the swastika very much in middle class areas. Um, this was before the seizure of power, people would object to it.*