



VINTAGE

HITLER'S PRIVATE LIBRARY

TIMOTHY W. RYBACK

CONTENTS

Cover

About the Book

About the Author

Illustrations Credits

Dedication

Title Page

Epigraph

Preface: The Man Who Burned Books

ONE: Frontline Reading, 1915

TWO: The Mentor's Trade

THREE: The Hitler Trilogy

FOUR: An American Bible

FIVE: The Lost Philosopher

SIX: Book Wars

SEVEN: Divine Inspiration

EIGHT: Frontline Reading, 1940

NINE: Hitler's History of the Second World War

TEN: A Miracle Deferred

Afterword: The Fates of Books

Notes

Acknowledgments

Index

Appendixes

*Appendix A: Description of Hitler's library from *This Is the Enemy*, by Frederick Oechsner, 1942*

Appendix B: Description of the Berghof book collection from a classified report by the U.S. Army Twenty-first Counterintelligence Corps, May 1945

Appendix C: "The Library of a Dilettante: A Glimpse into the Private Library of Herr Hitler," by Hans Beilhack, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 9, 1946

Appendix D: "Report on the Adolph [*sic*] Hitler Collection and Recommendations Regarding Its Arrangement," by Arnold J. Jacobius, Intern, Rare Books Division, Library of Congress, January 9, 1952

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About the Book

He was, of course, a man better known for burning books than for collecting them and yet by the time he died, aged 56, Adolf Hitler owned an estimated 16,000 volumes - the works of historians, philosophers, poets, playwrights and novelists. A passionate reader, his world-view was largely formed by the books he read.

About the Author

Timothy W. Ryback is the author of *The Last Survivor: Legacies of Dachau*, a *New York Times* Notable Book for 1999, and he has written for *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*. He is the co-director of the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation. He currently lives in Paris.

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*To my mother,
who taught me the love of books,
and in memory of my father.*

Hitler's Private Library

The Books that Shaped his Life

Timothy W. Ryback

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

*A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.*

ALEXANDER POPE, "A Little Learning"

I know people who "read" enormously, book for book, letter for letter, yet whom I would not describe as "well-read." True, they possess a mass of "knowledge," but their brain is unable to organize and register the material they have taken in. They lack the art of sifting what is valuable for them in a book from that which is without value, of retaining the one forever, and, if possible, not even seeing the rest.

ADOLF HITLER, *Mein Kampf*

PREFACE

The Man Who Burned Books

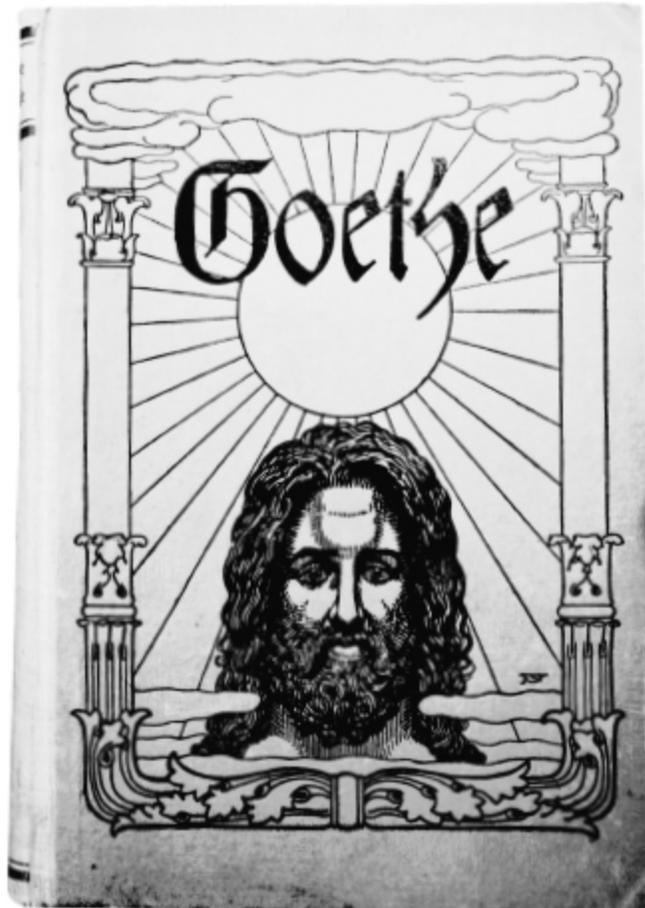
He was, of course, a man better known for burning books than collecting them and yet by the time he died at age fifty-six he owned an estimated sixteen thousand volumes. It was by any measure an impressive collection: first editions of works by philosophers, historians, poets, playwrights and novelists. For him the library represented a Pierian spring, that metaphorical source of knowledge and inspiration. He drew deeply there, quelling his intellectual insecurities and nourishing his fanatic ambitions. He read voraciously, at least one book per night, sometimes more, so he claimed. "When one gives one also has to take," he once said, "and I take what I need from books."

He ranked *Don Quixote*, along with *Robinson Crusoe*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and *Gulliver's Travels*, among the great works of world literature. "Each of them is a grandiose idea unto itself," he said. In *Robinson Crusoe* he perceived "the development of the entire history of mankind." *Don Quixote* captured "ingeniously" the end of an era. He owned illustrated editions of both books and was especially impressed by Gustave Doré's romantic depictions of Cervantes's delusion-plagued hero.

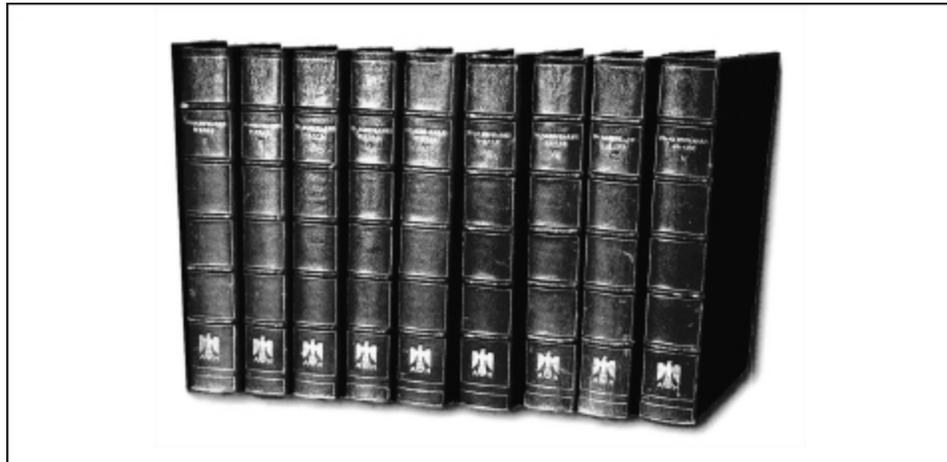
He also owned the collected works of William Shakespeare, published in German translation in 1925 by Georg Müller as part of a series intended to make great literature available to the general public. Volume six

includes *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. The entire set is bound in hand-tooled Moroccan leather with a gold-embossed eagle flanked by his initials on the spine.

He considered Shakespeare superior to Goethe and Schiller in every respect. While Shakespeare had fueled his imagination on the protean forces of the emerging British empire, these two Teutonic playwright-poets squandered their talent on stories of midlife crises and sibling rivalries. Why was it, he once wondered, that the German Enlightenment produced *Nathan the Wise*, the story of the rabbi who reconciles Christians, Muslims, and Jews, while it had been left to Shakespeare to give the world *The Merchant of Venice* and Shylock?



Hitler was given this anthology of Goethe's poetry shortly after his release from prison in December 1924, for his "serious and lonely hours."



Hitler kept this hand-tooled leather edition of Shakespeare's collected works at his alpine retreat near Berchtesgaden. His initials are at the base of the spine.

He appears to have imbibed his *Hamlet*. "To be or not to be" was a favorite phrase, as was "It is Hecuba to me." He was especially fond of *Julius Caesar*. In a 1926 sketchbook he drew a detailed stage set for the first act of the Shakespeare tragedy with sinister façades enclosing the forum where Caesar is cut down. "We will meet again at Philippi," he threatened an opponent on more than one occasion, plagiarizing the spectral warning to Brutus after Caesar's murder. He was said to have reserved the Ides of March for momentous decisions.

He kept his Shakespeare volumes in the second-floor study of his alpine retreat in southern Germany, along with a leather edition of another favorite author, the adventure novelist Karl May. "The first Karl May that I read was *The Ride Across the Desert*," he once recalled. "I was overwhelmed! I threw myself into him immediately which resulted in a noticeable decline in my grades." Later in life, he was said to have sought solace in Karl May the way others did in the Bible.

He was versed in the Holy Scriptures, and owned a particularly handsome tome with *Worte Christi*, or *Words of Christ*, embossed in gold on a cream-colored calfskin cover

that even today remains as smooth as silk. He also owned a German translation of Henry Ford's anti-Semitic tract, *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*, and a 1931 handbook on poison gas with a chapter detailing the qualities and effects of prussic acid, the homicidal asphyxiant marketed commercially as Zyklon B. On his bedstand, he kept a well-thumbed copy of Wilhelm Busch's mischievous cartoon duo Max and Moritz.

Walter Benjamin once said that you could tell a lot about a man by the books he keeps—his tastes, his interests, his habits. The books we retain and those we discard, those we read as well as those we decide not to, all say something about who we are. As a German-Jewish culture critic born of an era when it was possible to be “German” and “Jewish,” Benjamin believed in the transcendent power of *Kultur*. He believed that creative expression not only enriches and illuminates the world we inhabit, but also provides the cultural adhesive that binds one generation to the next, a Judeo-Germanic rendering of the ancient wisdom *ars longa, vita brevis*.

Benjamin held the written word—printed and bound—in especially high regard. He loved books. He was fascinated by their physicality, by their durability, by their provenance. An astute collector, he argued, could “read” a book the way a physiognomist deciphered the essence of a person's character through his physical features. “Dates, place names, formats, previous owners, bindings, and all the like,” Benjamin observed, “all these details must tell him something—not as dry isolated facts, but as a harmonious whole.” In short, you *could* judge a book by its cover, and in turn the collector by his collection. Quoting Hegel, Benjamin noted, “Only when it is dark does the owl of Minerva begin its flight,” and concluded, “Only in extinction is the collector comprehended.”

When Benjamin invoked a nineteenth-century German philosopher, a Roman goddess, and an owl, he was of course alluding to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's famous maxim: "The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk," by which Hegel meant that philosophizing can begin only after events have run their course.

Benjamin felt the same was true about private libraries. Only after the collector had shelved his last book and died, when his library was allowed to speak for itself, without the proprietor to distract or obfuscate, could the individual volumes reveal the "preserved" knowledge of their owner: how he asserted his claim over them, with a name scribbled on the inside cover or an ex libris bookplate pasted across an entire page; whether he left them dog-eared and stained, or the pages uncut and unread.

Benjamin proposed that a private library serves as a permanent and credible witness to the character of its collector, leading him to the following philosophic conceit: we collect books in the belief that we are preserving them when in fact it is the books that preserve their collector. "Not that they come alive in him," Benjamin posited. "It is he who lives in them."

For the last half century the remnants of Adolf Hitler's library have occupied shelf space in climatized obscurity in the Rare Book Division of the Library of Congress. The twelve hundred surviving volumes that once graced Hitler's bookcases in his three elegantly appointed libraries—wood paneling, thick carpets, brass lamps, overstuffed armchairs—at private residences in Munich, Berlin, and the Obersalzberg near Berchtesgaden, now stand in densely packed rows on steel shelves in an unadorned, dimly lit storage area of the Thomas Jefferson Building in downtown Washington, a stone's throw from the Washington Mall and just across the street from the United States Supreme Court.

The sinews of emotional logic that once ran through this collection—Hitler shuffled his books ceaselessly and insisted on reshelving them himself—have been severed. Hitler's personal copy of his family genealogy is sandwiched between a bound collection of newspaper articles titled *Sunday Meditations* and a folio of political cartoons from the 1920s. A handsomely bound facsimile edition of letters by Frederick the Great, specially designed for Hitler's fiftieth birthday, lies on a shelf for oversized books beneath a similarly massive presentation volume on the city of Hamburg and an illustrated history of the German navy in the First World War. Hitler's copy of the writings of the legendary Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz, who famously declared that war was politics by other means, shares shelf space beside a French vegetarian cookbook inscribed to "*Monsieur Hitler végétarien.*"

When I first surveyed Hitler's surviving books, in the spring of 2001, I discovered that fewer than half the volumes had been catalogued, and only two hundred of those were searchable in the Library of Congress's online catalogue. Most were listed on aging index cards and still bore the idiosyncratic numbering system assigned to them in the 1950s.

At Brown University, in Providence, Rhode Island, I found another eighty Hitler books in a similar state of benign neglect. Taken from his Berlin bunker in the spring of 1945 by Albert Aronson, one of the first Americans to enter Berlin after the German defeat, they were donated to Brown by Aronson's nephew in the late 1970s. Today they are stored in a walk-in basement vault, along with Walt Whitman's personal copy of *Leaves of Grass* and the original folios to John James Audubon's *Birds of America*.

Among the books at Brown, I found a copy of *Mein Kampf* with Hitler's ex libris bookplate, an analysis of Wagner's *Parsifal* published in 1913, a history of the swastika from 1921, and a half dozen or so spiritual and occult volumes

Hitler acquired in Munich in the early 1920s, including an account of supernatural occurrences, *The Dead Are Alive!*, and a monograph on the prophecies of Nostradamus. I discovered additional Hitler books scattered in public and private archives across the United States and Europe.

Several dozen of these surviving Hitler books contain marginalia. Here I encountered a man who famously seemed never to listen to anyone, for whom conversation was a relentless tirade, a ceaseless monologue, pausing to engage with the text, to underline words and sentences, to mark entire paragraphs, to place an exclamation point beside one passage, a question mark beside another, and quite frequently an emphatic series of parallel lines in the margin alongside a particular passage. Like footprints in the sand, these markings allow us to trace the course of the journey but not necessarily the intent, where attention caught and lingered, where it rushed forward and where it ultimately ended.

In a 1934 reprint of Paul Lagarde's *German Essays*, a series of late-nineteenth-century essays that advocated the systematic removal of Europe's Jewish population, I found more than one hundred pages of penciled intrusions, beginning on page 41, where Lagarde calls for the "transplanting" of German and Austrian Jews to Palestine, and extending to more ominous passages in which he speaks of Jews as "pestilence." "This water pestilence must be eradicated from our streams and lakes," Lagarde writes on page 276, with a pencil marking bold affirmation in the margin. "The political system without which it cannot exist must be eliminated."

British historian Ian Kershaw has described Hitler as one of the most impenetrable personalities of modern history. "The combination of Hitler's innate secretiveness," Kershaw writes, "the emptiness of his personal relations, his unbureaucratic style, the extremes of adulation and hatred which he stirred up, and the apologetics as well as

distortions built upon post-war memoirs and gossipy anecdotes of those in his entourage, mean that, for all the surviving mountains of paper spewed out by the governmental apparatus of the Third Reich, the sources for reconstructing the life of the German Dictator are in many respects extraordinarily limited—far more so than in the case, say, of his main adversaries, Churchill and even Stalin.”



Books were frequently the gift of choice for Adolf Hitler. The Nazi leader receiving presents on his fiftieth birthday.

Hitler’s library certainly contains its share of “spewed” material; easily two-thirds of the collection consists of books he never saw, let alone read, but there are also scores of more personal volumes that Hitler studied and marked. It also contains small but telling details. While perusing the unprocessed volumes in the rare book collection at the Library of Congress, I came across a book whose original contents had been gutted. The front and back boards were

firmly secured to the spine by a heavy linen cover with the title, *North, Central and East Asia: Handbook of Geographic Science*, embossed in gold on a blue background. The original pages had been replaced by a sheaf of cluttered documents: a dozen or so photonegatives, an undated handwritten manuscript titled "The Solution to the German Question," and a brief note typed on a presentation card that read:

My Führer

On the 14th anniversary of the day you first set foot in the Sternecker, Mrs. Gahr is presenting to you the list of your first fellow fighters. It is our conviction that this hour is the hour of birth of our wonderful movement and of our new Reich. With loyalty until death.

Sieg Heil!

The Old Comrades

The card bore no date and the list of early Nazi Party members was missing, but the mention of "Mrs. Gahr," presumably the wife of Otto Gahr, the goldsmith, whom Hitler charged with casting the first metal swastikas for the Nazi Party, as well as the reference to the fourteenth anniversary of Hitler's first appearance in the Sternecker Beer Hall, preserves in briefest outline the trajectory of Hitler from political upstart in 1919 to chancellor of the German Reich in 1933.

For this book, I have selected those surviving volumes that possessed either emotional or intellectual significance for Hitler, those which occupied his thoughts in his private hours and helped shape his public words and actions. One of the earliest is a guidebook he acquired for four marks on a dreary Monday in late November 1915 while serving as a twenty-six-year-old corporal on the western front. The last is a biography he was reading thirty years later in the weeks leading up to his suicide in the spring of 1945. I have attempted to be judicious in my choice of Hitler volumes, selecting only those books for which there is compelling

evidence that Hitler had them in his possession. I have exercised similar caution when it comes to the marginalia since the “authorship” of penciled intrusions cannot necessarily be determined definitively. Once again, I have relied on corroborating evidence, and I discuss individual cases in the text, drawing when available on the determinations of previous scholarship. To make titles accessible to the non-German reader, I generally use English translations of the original titles except in such obvious cases as Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, or My Struggle.

In closing his essay on book collecting, Walter Benjamin considers the emotional as well as financial investment he has made in individual volumes. He recalls vividly the day in 1915 when he purchased a special edition of Honoré de Balzac’s *The Magic Skin (Peau de chagrin)* with its magnificent steel plate engravings, and details the exact circumstances under which he acquired a rare 1810 treatise on “occultism and natural philosophy,” *Posthumous Fragments of a Young Physicist*, by the German writer Johann Wilhelm Ritter.

The books flood Benjamin with memories: “memories of the rooms where these books had been housed, of my student’s den in Munich, of my room in Bern, of the solitude of Iseltwald on the Lake of Brienz, and finally of my boyhood room, the former location of only four or five of these several thousand volumes.”

Hitler left no equivalent narrative of his own collection, no account of how one or the other volumes came into his possession or its particular emotional significance, but the various inscriptions, marginalia, and other details provide insight into their personal and intellectual significance for his life. What follows are the stories they tell.



Adolf Hitler, thirty-six, posing with his books in his first Munich apartment.

BOOK ONE

Frontline Reading, 1915

What the world of the twentieth century finds most fascinating about the capital of the German Reich are things other than the beauty of its historical monuments or its rich cultural heritage.

MAX OSBORN, *Berlin*, volume 41 in the series *Famous Cultural Sites*, published in Leipzig, 1909

ON A DREARY Monday in late November 1915, Adolf Hitler, then a corporal in the Sixteenth Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment, left his billet in a two-story farmhouse on the edge of Fournes, two miles behind the front in northern France, and with his trench coat pulled tight against the autumnal chill and his hobnailed boots clacking on the dank cobblestones, walked into town to buy a book.

For the twenty-six-year-old frontline soldier, it promised to be a quiet week, not unlike the previous one whose tranquillity had been broken only occasionally by enemy gunfire and the threat of gas attacks. On the previous Tuesday, when the dense fog had briefly lifted, three British biplanes had circled the sector for several hours. Their appearance was followed by clanging gas alarms that sent frontline soldiers fumbling for their rubber masks and goggles. In November 1915, poison gas was relatively new to the front.

Only a few weeks earlier, several “black soldiers,” subjects from India pressed into British service, had defected to the German lines, warning of an imminent

attack. Fearful of this silent new weapon, the men built fires and stood in the billowing wood smoke to test these awkward contraptions. That evening, they watched as an eerie yellow cloud drifted into no-man's-land, lingered menacingly, and then, as the breeze shifted, returned with equal leisure to the British lines. Several gas alarms had followed since, but without incident. For Tuesday, November 16, 1915, the regimental log records: "false alarm."

The following Monday, when Hitler bought his book, the day dawned gray and cold with a dense ground fog that continued to dampen all but the most sporadic gunfire. As the mist lifted in late morning, British artillery peppered the regiment's two-mile sector with scattered barrages, targeting the command posts and littering Sector H with shrapnel shells. From his "rest quarters" in Fournes, Hitler would have heard the bombardments as muffled thunder along the horizon.

As a *Meldegänger*, or "message runner," assigned to regimental headquarters, Hitler generally worked a rotating shift: three days at the front and three days resting in Fournes. From Fournes, Hitler would walk along a country road to the neighboring village of Fromelles, where the frontline command post and dressing station were located amid the ruined buildings, and from there through a series of communications trenches into a nightmare landscape of cratered fields and ruined villages. To facilitate troop movements and help orient the message runners, the French villages had been assigned German names.

The place-names echoed the devastation: *Knallhüte* (Blasted Hut), *Backofen* (The Oven), and at a bend where the British and German trenches nearly touched, *Totes Schwein* (Dead Swine). One village was named Petzstadt after Friedrich Petz, the regimental commander. On the left flank, where the RIR 16 abutted on the RIR 17, a razed farm had been dubbed "Dachau," after the picturesque artists' colony just north of Munich, which had earned two stars in

the Michelin guides of the era, but would acquire very different resonances in the decades to come.

While *Meldegänger* assignments were frequently mundane, the work could be perilous in the extreme. When shelling disrupted telephone lines, runners were forced to dart amid flying shrapnel while most soldiers huddled in underground bunkers. The messages were supposed to be coded for priority—X for normal delivery, XX for heightened importance, XXX for urgent—but men frequently found themselves placed at gratuitous risk. “I was repeatedly exposed to heavy artillery fire even though it was nothing but a postcard that needed to be delivered,” Hitler later recalled. During the first day of fighting at the battle of Wytshaete in the fall of 1914, the eight-man unit was cut in half, with three men killed outright and one critically wounded. By the autumn of 1915, Hitler was the only original member left in the unit.



* Kriegsfreiwilliger Adolf Hitler,
Gefechtsordonnanz des List-Regiments, Mai 1915

Regiment, exquisitely bound in brown leather, in which the misery and desperation of those weeks is vividly preserved. When the incessant rain pushes a river over its banks, the water floods into the RIR 16 trenches with near apocalyptic consequences. “Two of our company units . . . were so surprised by the deluge that the men in the trench barely had time to grab their guns and equipment and to rescue themselves on the rampart,” the regimental history records. “They clung there and cowered, a mire before them and a raging stream behind them, many of them exposed without protection to the open view of the enemy.” Their only salvation was the fact that the British were equally occupied with rescuing themselves from the flood. The regimental history calculates that for each frontline soldier poised to fight the British, ten men were battling the mud.

The daily log, now at the Bavarian War Archive in Munich, not only confirms the frontline soldier’s uneven battle against the elements but also his equally uneven struggle with technology at the frontline pumping stations. For November 22, 1915, the regimental commander records a typical day:

*Electric pumps in Sector A 6-11 in the evening power shortage
11-11.30 evening, Damaged hose
7.45 morning-12.30 afternoon power shortage
In sector c 8-12 morning power shortage*

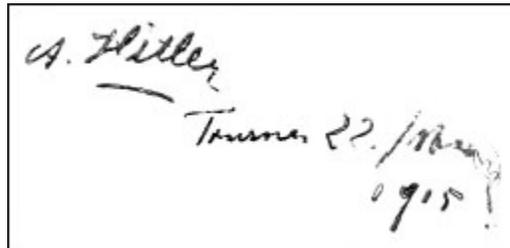
In these rain-idled weeks, Hitler was quartered in Fournes with only occasional assignments. On October 21, Petz dispatched him and another message runner, Hans Lippert, to the city of Valenciennes, to requisition a new mattress. According to the requisition slip, Hitler and Lippert were permitted to remain there overnight. On the return trip, Hitler carried the mattress most of the way since Lippert held a superior rank.

A month and a day later, still idled by the elements, Hitler walked into Fournes and purchased an architectural history

of Berlin by the celebrated art critic Max Osborn. Despite its three hundred pages, Osborn's *Berlin* is a notably slender volume, as easily slipped into the pocket of a trench coat as into the handbag of a cultural tourist, with a water-resistant, olive drab cover with *berlin* embossed in bold crimson and complemented by a profile of the Brandenburg Gate, whose six Doric columns stand in parallel ranks with the rigidly spaced letters of the book's title.

At some point that day, Hitler returned to the relative comfort of his two-story farmhouse billet, opened this hardbound volume, and laid claim to its content in a notably timid hand, scribbling his name and the place and date in the upper-right-hand corner of the inside cover in a space no larger than that of a small postage stamp.

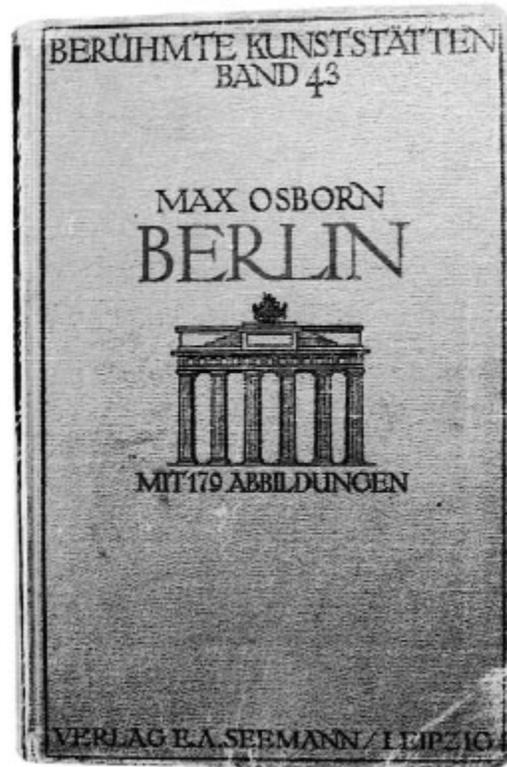
Eighty years later, Osborn's book attests to its frontline service.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature and date. The signature is "A. Hitler" written in cursive. Below it, the date "Tours 22. / 11. 1915" is written in a similar cursive hand. There is a small mark above the date that looks like a horizontal line or a checkmark.

Blunted and brown, the corners curl inward like dried lemon rind. The spine dangles precariously from fraying linen tendons, exposing the thread-laced signatures like so many rows of rope-bound bones. A mud stain blots out the final letters in "November." When I opened this fragile volume in the Rare Book Reading Room of the Library of Congress, with the muffled sounds of late-morning traffic wafting through the hushed silence, a fine grit drizzled from its pages.

At roughly the same time that Hitler acquired his copy of *Berlin*, Max Osborn passed within a few miles of Fournes, on the road from Lille to Auber. He had arrived at the front the

previous January, a few months after Hitler, on assignment for the *Vossische Zeitung*, the prestigious Berlin newspaper for which he had been writing for nearly two decades.



Hitler acquired this architectural guide to Berlin in late November 1915, while serving on the western front.

Born into the same privileged Berlin milieu that had shaped Walter Benjamin's intellectual tastes and interests, Osborn had established himself as one of the leading art critics of the day, gaining a wide readership with his irreverent commentaries on aesthetics and culture. In a cultural history of Satan, Osborn declared angels "the most boring of God's creatures" and devoted three hundred pages to chronicling diverse satanic follies in art, music, and literature. He befriended the painter Max Liebermann and coined the phrase "expressionist rococo."

In 1908, when the publisher Seemann Verlag asked Osborn to author a guide to Berlin, he agreed but with the understanding that he was an art critic not a tour guide.

Thus, he welcomed the reader to his *Berlin* with this impious caveat: Why would his publisher consider this city among the “cultural capitals” of Europe when “what the world of the twentieth century finds most fascinating about the capital of the German Reich are things other than the beauty of its historical monuments or its rich cultural heritage”?

Osborn arrived on the western front with this same sporting diffidence. As he traversed the battlefields of northern France, visiting the devastation along the Somme, at the Marne, and near Verdun, Osborn found little that was new or shocking. The human slaughter there appeared to be little more than flesh-and-blood re-creations of the sprawling canvases he had studied in the National Gallery in Berlin. Osborn had seen it all before.

The German soldiers in their spiked headgear and with their bayonets appeared as latter-day incarnations of the pike-bearing warriors from sixteenth-century murals. The flamethrowers with their plumes of smoke and fire spewing across the broken earth had been vividly woven into these early tapestries. “And that favored horrific instrument of close combat today, the hand grenade,” Osborn wrote for his readers in Germany, “already played a role in the seventeenth century, as well as in the armies of the grand dukes.” When the battlefront critic glimpsed a message runner on a horse galloping across an open field, both man and beast fitted with gas masks, he likened it to a scene from a canvas by Hieronymus Bosch.

In late May 1915, Osborn and Hitler nearly crossed paths on the battlefield at Ypres, where the Germans had repulsed the second major British offensive along this front, with both sides suffering massive casualties. The RIR 16 lost more than half its men: sixteen hundred soldiers and all but one officer. Osborn arrived shortly after the slaughter and surveyed the battlefield from the unscathed spire of the Ypres cathedral, which towered miraculously above the

ruined town. Amid the ravage, Osborn found himself witness to the “second act” of the war’s greatest battle.

“Crushed trench defenses and bunker emplacements rise from the ground,” he observed. “Crumbling walls of earth, crushed sandbags, scattered debris, stretches of barbed wire twisted and broken: Filthy remnants litter the ground, shreds of uniforms, bloody rags, socks, canteens, fragments of French newspapers, torn pages from English magazines, ration cans, empty cartridges, unspent ammunition.” The bodies had already been removed, but the smell of death lingered, tainting the air with an aroma of antiseptic and decaying flesh.

That autumn, Osborn toured the battlefields west of Lille, visiting the frontline towns of Richebourg and Neuve-Chapelle and passing along the front near Fournes. “When you arrive at the villages, they are pathetic and ruined, houses gutted by bombs, farms burned, walls riddled with bullet holes,” he wrote. “A hopeless landscape!”

By then, Osborn’s poetic enthusiasms had tempered. “There lie the rotting corpses the attackers have left behind,” he observed. “Hordes of rats feed on them, growing large and fat, almost like disgusting little dogs, nauseating to look at, and when they mistakenly run into the trenches, the soldiers, filled with disgust, kill them.” He found it “terrifying, simply incomprehensible” that “all the images of grace have transformed into images of horror.”

As the war entered its second full year, with no end in sight to the butchery, Osborn sensed a shift not only in himself but also among the soldiers. On both sides of no-man’s-land, men were growing increasingly antagonistic and embittered. “The fierce days of fighting toward the end of September have brought a new emotion into the war that has moved from trench to trench,” Osborn wrote on October 22, 1915. “The fighting has grown grimmer, more bitter, more vicious. The bitterness with which the great offensive