

8-20-2012

# Revealing and Concealing Hitler's Visual Discourse: Considering "Forbidden" Images with Rhetorics of Display

Matthew G. Donald  
*College of Arts and Sciences*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english\\_theses](http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_theses)

---

## Recommended Citation

Donald, Matthew G., "Revealing and Concealing Hitler's Visual Discourse: Considering "Forbidden" Images with Rhetorics of Display." Thesis, Georgia State University, 2012.  
[http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english\\_theses/134](http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_theses/134)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@gsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gsu.edu).

REVEALING AND CONCEALING HITLER'S VISUAL DISCOURSE: CONSIDERING  
"FORBIDDEN" IMAGES WITH RHETORICS OF DISPLAY

by

MATTHEW DONALD

Under the Direction of Mary Hocks

ABSTRACT

Typically, when considering Adolf Hitler, we see him in one of two ways: A parodied figure or a monolithic figure of power. I argue that instead of only viewing images of Hitler he wanted us to see, we should expand our view and overall consideration of images he did not want his audiences to bear witness. By examining a collection of photographs that Hitler censored from his audiences, I question what remains hidden about Hitler's image when we are constantly shown widely circulated images of Hitler. To satisfy this inquiry, I utilize rhetorics of display to argue that when we analyze and include these hidden images into the Hitlerian visual discourse, we further complicate and disrupt the Hitler Myth. This study aims to contribute to recent scholarship that aims to learn more about the "hidden" Hitler as well as to rhetorical studies of display.

INDEX WORDS: Adolf Hitler, Rhetorics of display, Hitler Myth, Revealing and concealing, Visual rhetoric, Terministic screens

REVEALING AND CONCEALING HITLER'S VISUAL DISCOURSE: CONSIDERING  
"FORBIDDEN" IMAGES WITH RHETORICS OF DISPLAY

by

MATTHEW DONALD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2012

Copyright by  
Matthew Gordon Donald  
2012

REVEALING AND CONCEALING HITLER'S VISUAL DISCOURSE: CONSIDERING  
"FORBIDDEN" IMAGES WITH RHETORICS OF DISPLAY

by

MATTHEW DONALD

Committee Chair: Mary Hocks

Committee: Michael Harker

Nathan Atkinson

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

August 2012

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the direction, patience, and support of my committee, this project would have not been possible. Not only have you all played a significant role in assisting me in transferring these ideas from ambitious thoughts to an articulated product, your kindness and insight throughout this process has truly been inspiring.

To my mom and dad, this project is the latest example of how your teachings and encouragement has resulted in a successful result. Thank you both for listening to my discussions of this topic for hours on end and keeping me grounded when this study seemed so overwhelming.

And thank you to my girlfriend, Lexi Bellasai, who has been subjected to months of hearing about this topic and, most importantly, made me laugh and smile so often despite the seriousness of the project.

Thank you all for your unwavering support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>1 SETTING THE STAGE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 “The Hitler Myth” and the comfortable visual narrative of Hitler.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.3 Rhetorics of Display .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.4 How rhetorics of display illuminates “forbidden” images .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2 VISUAL/TEXTUAL ANALYSES .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2.1 Hitler wearing glasses .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2.2 Hitler rehearsing elocution.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2.3 Hitler in shorts.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>2.4 Close-up of Hitler in Stormtrooper uniform .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>3 CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>3.1 How images serve as starting point of revisualization.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>3.2 Challenges of re-approaching Hitler .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>WORKS CITED.....</b>	<b>52</b>

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Hitler in glasses .....	16
Figure 2: Blindness as a disease.....	20
Figure 3.1: Hitler rehearsing elocution.....	25
Figure 3.2: More elocution poses.....	26
Figure 4: Campaign image from 1932 election; taken circa 1926-27 .....	32
Figure 5: Hitler in shorts .....	33
Figure 6: Close-up of Hitler in Stormtrooper uniform.....	39



# 1 SETTING THE STAGE

## 1.1 Introduction

“The broad masses of a population are more amenable to the appeal of rhetoric than any other force” (Hitler from *Mein Kampf* 170).

“The function of propaganda does not lie in the scientific training of the individual, but in calling the masses’ attention to certain facts, processes, necessities, etc., whose significance is thus for the first time placed within their field of vision” (Hitler 179).

“Hitler himself had a horror of appearing ridiculous” (Heinrich Hoffmann 196).

In April of 1942, at the height of the Third Reich and only months before the pivotal battle at Stalingrad took place, Adolf Hitler met with Finland Baron C. G. E. Mannerheim in Finland for the purpose of celebrating the latter’s birthday, and to discuss various political and wartime topics. As they discussed these matters aboard a saloon railcar, it was unknown to Hitler that a Finnish engineer had equipped the car with a recording device. A copy of the recording survived, and originally aired on Finnish radio (YLE) on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October, 2004, creating quite a stir amongst the listening audience. Due to the popularity of this recording, which features Hitler discussing the war, ways to “handle” Stalin, and even various “moral threats”, the recording was aired numerous times and news of this tape travelled via new sources worldwide, piquing listener interests around the world (“Historic”).

Having listened to this recording quite a few times myself (although I do not speak German), I can see why this simple 11-minute recording was the subject of much thought and discussion upon its discovery. While anyone even remotely familiar with Hitler as a speaker and a public figure can conjure up images of him shouting to huge audiences, pounding the podium with passion and fury, and building his performances up to a blaring crescendo, the audio on this tape is strikingly different from what we are so used to hearing from Hitler’s vocal delivery. On this tape, Hitler speaks in such a candid, calm, and relaxed manner, it is almost difficult to

believe that the voice actually does belong to the same man who remains so infamous for his aurally flamboyant speeches even today. I believe this recording gained worldwide popularity for two main reasons. One, despite the existence of millions of artifacts, books, films, narratives, testimonials, and an array of additional texts on Adolf Hitler, due to the undeniably enormous impact he generated on the world, academics and the general publics alike are prone to polarize to virtually anything “fresh” or new on Hitler; simply put, we desire and even demand to know as much about Hitler as possible. Two, as I will discuss more in detail below, while examining texts that were widely circulated and known to many audiences certainly lend us access into the mind, makeup, and rhetorics of Hitler, previously unpublished texts (such as the recording) that contemporarily emerge grant us new insights and ways of knowing and viewing Hitler’s image. In other words, perhaps it is possible to more thoroughly understand a virtually ubiquitous figure such as Hitler (whose image has such peculiar staying power) by considering texts that reveal not only how he did position himself to various audiences, but what he chose not to reveal to his audiences as well. In the case of the “calm Hitler” audio, the text enables us to understand that when Hitler spoke/yelled to his audiences in feverish tones and tremendous volumes, he made the deliberate choice to refrain from speaking calmly for a variety of rhetorical reasons.

While the example is a rather simple one, I believe that the above story serves as a way to center this discussion on how rhetorics of display helps us draw conclusions about the ways in which he both showed and concealed himself to his publics. Rhetorics of display are concerned with how demonstrations work together to create a common basis for how audiences view, interpret, remember, discuss people and events in order to collectively understand them. By using rhetorics of display as a framework, then, the recording invites us to ask, when Hitler displayed himself to his audiences (through speaking, photographs, film, performance, etc.),

what about his image, performativity, and rhetorics did he intentionally leave out of sight? Equally important is to ask *why* he made such rhetorical choices to direct the attention of his publics to a particular object or idea while deflecting/hiding away other visual re-presentations of himself. These questions function as the fundamental inquiries for this study.

In addition to the importance of these questions, an essential tool for this work is a book entitled, *Hitler Was My Friend* published by Heinrich Hoffmann (Hitler's personal photographer) in 1955, five years after his release as a war criminal for profiteering (Hoffmann 247). The work catalogues Hoffmann's experience alongside Hitler dating from Hitler's release from Landsberg Prison in 1924 to the aftermath of the fall of the Third Reich. The book contains a collection of black and white photographs taken by Hoffmann at various times in Hitler's political career. Many of these photographs were only seen by Hoffmann, Hitler, and a few members of Hitler's inner circle. Paramount to this project, the photographs I discuss in my analyses were deliberately censored by Hitler himself. These forbidden images grant us fresh insight in re-viewing how Hitler constructed his public image as well as serve starting points for suggesting that we more thoroughly consider concealed images of Hitler he did not want us to see.

It is certainly no secret that public figures and especially political leaders take great care in fashioning, maintaining, and even controlling the ways in which their publics view them and their images. Marie-Jose Mondzain puts forth a succinct yet compelling statement concerning images and audiences when she posits, "Images appear as objects that can be examined" (Mondzain 24). While this assertion may seem simple, this concise view of the functionality of images begs a number of questions. For example, how do images inform the way we envision and examine historical figures? How do these images work together to form typical and even

comfortable visual discourses? When we only consider popularized images of these historical figures, what alternative possibilities do we miss about these figures' lives, power, and rhetorics? Is it possible to re-vision the way we collectively view historical figures by examining images and visual narratives that lie outside of typical depictions of these subjects? Particularly with a figure as evil and powerful as Adolf Hitler, how can images of himself that he deliberately censored from his publics' gaze perhaps alter, expand, or at the very least complicate the way we approach, discuss, and ultimately view Hitler? In order to ground these questions, I focus on Hitler as a historical and rhetorical figure in little-known images who continues to function as a powerful force in the gaze of a contemporary world.

## 1.2 “The Hitler Myth” and the comfortable visual narrative of Hitler

At the time of this writing, almost six decades have passed since the fall of the Third Reich. Despite this passage of time, throughout academic disciplines, popular culture, online discourse communities, and everyday conversation, people all around the world continue to lend their attention to Hitler. Hitlerian historian, Ian Kershaw, accurately puts forth that Hitler continues as perhaps the most frequently studied figure in history (Kershaw, *Hitler* xxi). By my count over fifty full-length biographies have been published on the leader of the Reich since Hitler's rise to power, with the most recent biographies emerging in 2005. Even today, his image is almost ubiquitous in media such as *The History Channel* and *The Military Channel*, two outlets that are indeed two “...of the nation's main sources of historical interpretation and knowledge” (Karpinski 142). His image still seeps its way into contemporary political cautionary tales, ad hominem attacks, sloppy comparisons, and general discussions (Schmölders 1). Furthermore, Hitler seems to “pop up” all over the Internet from memes to virtually any message board to blogs and beyond. Godwin's Law, one that only half jokingly claims that all online

conversations will inevitably result in at least someone comparing a point made in the discourse to Hitler and his Nazis (Hugill 8), continues to keep Hitler's presence prevalent and the slippery slope fallacy alive. This "survival" and persistence of Hitler through his image is interesting to say the least. In an age packed with social media, sports obsessions, political circuses, and "reality" television, the world refuses to forget about Hitler, and rightfully so. Through the seemingly constant Hitler parodies that leak out via the Internet, we see an actualization of Burke's comic frame, or, a response to tragedy that "...offers hope to society because the efficacy of human agency, reason, and community affirm[ation]" (Christiansen and Hanson 160). Comedy in the form of parody lends credence to the laughter-as-the-best-medicine sentiment, though I think we can laugh ourselves to forgetfulness from what we are trying to rework. Although this risk of over-parodying can shift the attention away from the terribleness of his acts and to a discourse that has become rather silly,<sup>1</sup> at the very least, publics continue to display consciousness of a figure who was arguably the most influential person of the twentieth century.

Scholarship is no different concerning a continued interest in virtually anything having to do with the Third Reich, and examining recent works on Hitler yields telling results about how, I observe, the academic conversation on Hitler is shifting to new and fascinating areas. Above all, Hitlerian scholarship in the past fifteen to twenty years (or so) largely focuses on uncovering, or "unmasking" who Hitler *really* was and what made him tick. These texts range from collections of testimonials from those claiming to know a young Hitler to explications on Hitler's medical

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, a simple Google search for parodies of a scene featuring an angry Hitler from the 2004 film *Downfall* yields over 15,000 results ranging from seemingly innumerable trivial topics.

records and even somewhat sensational accounts on Hitler's sexuality functioning as the most significant factor of his downfall.<sup>2</sup>

All of these texts and those like them utilize manifestations from Hitler's life in one form or another in order to actively seek out new ways of understanding Hitler in various new ways. However, while these additions to the Hitlerian cannon are certainly interesting, Ian Kershaw's *The Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* is most directly useful for this study. In this work, Kershaw attempts to shift the focus on Hitler as a public figure to "...the *image* of Hitler as Führer" (Kershaw *Myth* 2, emphasis in original) and discuss various ways in which Hitler as image and Hitler in reality vastly differed. "The Hitler Myth" describes the intentional "...heroic image and popular conception of Hitler imputing to him characteristics and motives for the most part at crass variance with reality" (Kershaw *Myth* 2). Kershaw dedicates much of his attention in the book to how images of Hitler served to create, maintain, and even enforce Hitler as a god-like and omnipotent image of power and leadership amongst his German audience. Concerning appearance and representation of the self, "Hitler believed that a leader must be different than the masses" (Redlich 109), or at the very least appear that we was different in a superior way. Kershaw unpacks and discusses the many ways in which "Hitler himself, as is well known, paid the greatest attention to the building of his public image" (Kershaw *Myth* 3), much of which has to do with Hitler's deliberate and even painstaking ways that he presented himself to his publics. This effort of controlling his image closely monitored by Goebbels and of course Hitler himself, is manifested in uncountable photographs, visual news reports depicting Hitler as Führer, film (such as Leni Riefenstahl's Hitler-commissioned and critically acclaimed *Triumph of the Will*, 1934), and postcards of Hitler that widely circulated

---

<sup>2</sup> See August Kubizek's *The Young Hitler I Knew* (2006), David Irving's *The Secret Diaries of Hitler's Doctor* (1983), and Lothar Machtan's *The Hidden Hitler* (2001), respectively.

throughout Germany throughout his rise and fall (Phillips 39). Each of these texts—all of which were deliberately constructed, edited, and circulated by Hitler and the Ministry of Propaganda and subsequently seen by his publics—worked together (in addition to the SA and later the SS) in order to enforce the Hitler Myth, especially before the defeat at Stalingrad (Kershaw *Myth* 169).

The images that I have so far discussed, ranging from published photographs of Hitler to films he commissioned that continue to air on contemporary documentaries and television shows, make up what I call the typical Hitlerian visual discourse. Images of Hitler gazing confidently into the camera lens, perched above perfectly symmetrical and seemingly endless crowds, delivering speeches with the camera lens pointed up at him in order to enforce a visual power dynamic, seen with right arm outstretched while being driven through a mass of frenzied flag-waving supporters—these are the ways in which we are typically positioned to view Hitler. Despite our inclination to learn more truths about him, the Hitler Myth sustains even to this day. It is of paramount importance to remember that these images that comprise the Hitler Myth and the typical Hitlerian visual discourse are depictions of Hitler as Führer; they are all texts he intentionally placed in front of his audiences' views and desired them to see. This concept certainly contains consequent effects.

The repercussions of this typical Hitlerian visual discourse are twofold. The first consequence concerns what I call a comfortable visual narrative of Hitler, and the second, which I address in the next section, involves the dynamic of revealing and concealing, or, what Lawrence J. Prelli discusses as rhetorics of display.<sup>3</sup> First, I argue that while we certainly have not (nor could not) ever become desensitized or indifferent to Hitler, the terribleness of his actions, or his image, I do contend that we are in danger of succumbing to a visual narrative that

---

<sup>3</sup> See Prelli's 2006 publication, *Rhetorics of Display*.

is all too comfortable. Because we have been bombarded with so many repeated images of Hitler as Führer, images that show Hitler as a monolithic figure of power, we fail to consider alternate possibilities of Hitler's image, and thus inadvertently position ourselves as passive viewers, accepting these images of power as absolute. Sara Karpinski provides thoughts on the concept of this comfortable narrative when she states, "Hitler has become an approachable figure whose name and regime is referenced frequently and casually with little thought of the meaning and power behind such historical images" (Karpinski 39). Karpinski's take on this comfortable narrative slightly differs from my own but our arguments do intersect at a key locale. My critique concerns a passive acceptance of Hitler as Führer due to repeatedly subjecting ourselves to rhetorically constructed images depicting him as an immovable force, while she argues that Hitler is taken far too lightly by contemporary audiences due to the over-parodying I previously mentioned. Where our arguments correspond concerns how we are indeed susceptible to becoming too comfortable with Hitler as a historic, public, and rhetorical figure through how we interact (or fail to interact) with Hitler's image. She ultimately suggests that we shift away from casual mention and the constant array of parodies in order to "...attempt to understand the gravity of the image of Hitler" (Karpinski 145). I tend to agree with the potential result of her suggestions, but I suggest a different method to perhaps achieve similar outcomes. Instead of only considering and ultimately accepting popularized and Hitler-commissioned images of Hitler as Führer, I put forth that we make a collective push towards taking into consideration manifestations of Hitler that he deliberately forbade his publics to bear witness, which leads me to rhetorics of display upon which I elaborate below.



### 1.3 Rhetorics of Display

Lawrence J. Prelli, contributor and editor of *The Rhetorics of Display*, refers to rhetorics of display as "...the dominant rhetoric of our time" (Prelli 2). In his introduction, he devotes significant attention to the ubiquity of rhetorics of display in our contemporary existence, and the diversity of chapter topics and case studies that make up the book confirms the prevalence of this rhetoric that situates on considering "appearances rather than reality" (Prelli 1). Through this consideration of the contrast between appearance and reality, we are invited to closely investigate what remains hidden by what is shown as a means to draw conclusions on how displays (images, for example) create common worldviews. This study aims to contribute to rhetorics of display and, like Prelli, "...incorporates the presumption that displays are constituted rhetorically through situated resolutions of the core dynamic between revealing and concealing" (Prelli 11). In order to present the dynamic of revealing and concealing as "...the core presumption behind rhetorical studies of display" (Prelli 11), I include a brief anecdote as an example.

A few years ago, I found myself in a struggle of locating and eventually purchasing a new vehicle, as my other car was on the verge of annihilation. I drove my old jalopy to a used car dealership, where a salesman, obviously noticing the undeniably dilapidated state of my car, pounced on me immediately, seizing his chance to make a sale to a desperate customer. After I told him what type of car and price range I was in the market for, he showed me a car way out of my price range. He delivered a speech about the car's greatness, special features, dependability, and overall attractiveness. Concerned about the price, I asked him if he was sure that this car best matched my budget and preferences; he was adamant that this car was the one for me as he continued to perform his sales pitch. Feeling unsure, I denied to buy and instead came back to

the lot another day when he was not working, only to find a handful of nicer, more fuel-efficient cars that more appropriately fit my budget; I purchased a car substantially cheaper than the one the previous salesman had tried to dump on me, and another salesman earned the commission.

Upon hearing this story, one might understand the anecdote as simply an example that enforces stereotypes of used car salesman. The salesman was obviously lying about the cars on the lot, and he tried to bamboozle me into a car that would boost his commission rather than help me into the best possible situation for his customer. He employed a rhetoric that was disingenuous and obviously “canned” while attempting to flatter me into buying the car via rhetorical demonstration. This interpretation would in no way be incorrect, but there is also another important aspect to this story. By showing me the expensive car through a selective process of display—his dress, his rhetoric, the car itself, directing my attention to the car—he simultaneously *concealed* that there were indeed more inexpensive cars on the lot that I could have more easily afforded. When the salesman made the decision to display the expensive car as “the” car for me, he intentionally attempted to rule out any possibility of other cars on the lot; in other words, by focusing my attention on one visual object and presenting the object in a deliberate way, he was literally making all other cars invisible. Although the narrative is a simple one, the anecdote shows this dynamic of revealing and concealing, as stated by Prelli, “...is display’s rhetorical dimension” (Prelli 2).

This anecdote, one that tells of the dreaded act of purchasing an automobile, assists in lending legitimization to Prelli’s statement that “...rhetorics of display are nearly ubiquitous in contemporary communication and culture” (2); additionally, the story reflects the claim that the dynamic between revealing and concealing “...is the core presumption behind rhetorics of display” (Prelli 11). Simply put, rhetorics of display gives consideration not only to what we do

see, or, what is placed before our field of view, *but also what we do not see*, what is either intentionally or unintentionally hidden from our gaze. In other words, to make a text—a photograph, a speech, performance, etc.—visible always makes something else invisible. An integral aspect of rhetorical studies of display, then, seeks to examine what remains hidden by what is displayed/shown. Just as I originally was left unaware of the additional cars on the lot by fixating my gaze on the object placed before me, rhetorics of display invites us to further inquire about what we may miss when we only fixate on objects that are placed before us.

In his work *Language as Symbolic Action*, Kenneth Burke provides the reader with an anecdote of his own to introduce “terministic screens”, a concept that involves, as stated by the title’s subheading, “Directing the Attention” of the viewer (Burke *Language* 44). On terministic screens, Burke remembers a set of photographs he once examined in order to highlight how an object can be manipulated via representation for an aesthetic and/or rhetorical purposes:

They were different photographs of the same objects, the difference being that they were made with different color filters. Here something so “factual” as a photograph revealed notable distinctions in texture, and even in form, depending on which color filter was used for the documentary description of the event being recorded. (*Language* 45)

By viewing the exact same objects that had been captured with something as slight as different color filters, he was able to notice how what we are shown and in what way(s) we are shown shapes our interpretation of an object or an idea. Because these photographs were taken with different lenses, the attention and thus the interpretation of the viewer was altered with each version of the object captured. For Burke, the “...corresponding differences in the nature of the event as perceived, recorded, and interpreted” (*Language* 46) are affected by what an image shows and what it simultaneously does not.

While the breadth of Burke's chapter discusses terministic screens in the context of language and how terminologies shape our observations and thoughts, terministic screens certainly lends itself to the visual, and more specifically, rhetorics of display. For Burke, "...any such screen necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another" (*Language* 50). This statement is important to keep in mind when thinking about visuality, or, where the attention of audiences are directed when they are shown an object and how this showing informs their interpretation of the object. Of equal importance is to reflect on how this process of showing and directing deflects audiences' attention from something else altogether. Therefore, since rhetorics of display concerns revealing and concealing, Burke's terministic screens provides us with a framework that fits snugly within rhetorics of display in regards to the dynamic of directing and reflecting attention of viewing publics.

Finally, rhetorics of display lends close consideration to Richard Weaver's idea that "...displays emphasize and diminish, amplify and mute, select and omit, disclose and conceal", that simultaneously create and restrict possible meanings and interpretations of audiences (Prelli 15). It is these dynamics of revealing and concealing objects, meanings, interpretations, and memory that I draw upon to attempt to suggest ways to shift our focus from well-known visual texts of Hitler that continue to permeate our viewpoints to little-known photographs that reveal Hitler as a figure far from godlike.

#### **1.4 How rhetorics of display illuminates "forbidden" images**

In the introduction, I gave mention to the primary text for this study, Heinrich Hoffmann's *Hitler Was My Friend*. There are two important thoughts to present about this book before continuing. One, Hoffmann's overall narrative operates as a deliberate and fairly obvious attempt to present himself as a virtually flawless figure, and ultimately to distance himself from

all Nazi ideology, claiming that he never once addressed Hitler as “mein Führer”, that he “...had no desire for political office”, and overall, that his “...friendship with Hitler was a purely personal relationship” (Hoffmann 70). However, despite Hoffmann’s calculated effort to disassociate himself from the stigma of a Nazi, he was far from simply an innocent bystander capturing history with his “objective” camera. Hoffmann’s body of work during the Reich reveals that he was not at all absent from purposefully engaging in political rhetorics for the benefit of himself and Hitler’s political career.<sup>4</sup> Based on this divide in Hoffmann’s narrative and his other works that clearly reveal he was a Nazi enthusiast and an anti-Semite, we have to approach the total veracity of Hoffmann’s narrative with caution.

The second essential aspect to point out about *Hitler Was My Friend* concerns the photographs of Hitler that are included in this volume. I mentioned that a few of these black and white images were flat-out rejected by Hitler himself. While we cannot trust the words of Hoffmann with absolute confidence, in many ways, the photographs speak for themselves. Still in other ways, rhetorics of display helps us to engage with these “forbidden” photographs in order to discuss how these visible manifestations serve as ways of re-viewing Hitler and ultimately disrupting the typical Hitlerian visual discourse.

Recall that an integral aspect of rhetorical studies of display seeks to examine what remains hidden by what is displayed, or shown. These visual representations of Hitler in the form of photographs that he purposely hid from his viewing audiences, then, represent manifestations of what Hitler hid by displaying himself through a multitude of other intentional ways that depict how Hitler wanted to be seen by his audience—a subject of control, constant leadership, power,

---

<sup>4</sup> For example, Claudia Schmölders points out that Hoffmann published a book entitled *The Führer’s Countenance* in the late 1920s when Hoffmann had been working alongside Hitler for years. The book is a gross adaptation of history, which traces white German lineage to so-called “Aryan” greatness while propping Hitler up as the “true” national leader (Schmölders 109).

and a spectacle free from “any hint of human failings” (Kershaw *Myth* 3). Based on Prelli’s assertion that one of the primary aims of rhetorical studies of display concerns itself with interrogating “...the core dynamic between revealing and concealing” what is shown and therefore simultaneously hidden (11), the photographs I examine, images that Hitler’s contemporary publics were denied access via concealment, deserve attention in that they serve to illuminate this dynamic relationship between showing and hiding. By considering these untypical photographs of Hitler, we shift away from thoroughly-discussed visuals of the Third Reich such as the swastika, the eagle, and the components of the typical Hitlerian visual discourse and lend attention to the Hitler he did not want us to see, analyze, or discuss. Lastly, the popular images that make up the typical Hitlerian visual discourse function as displays, and as Prelli states, displays “...address a claim about value and attitude to [witnesses] who somehow become audience to [them]” (9); these typical images put forth and “...dispose our attitudes, emotions, or sentiments” (9). In the case of the popular images, I argue that these texts continue to shape and enforce our attitudes, emotions, and sentiments of Hitler to be ones where we are constantly made to witness Hitler’s image as one of unchallengeable power, a manifestation of a shrewd rhetor. The photographs I examine also function as displays. However, unlike the popular images, these rare texts themselves and the utilization of rhetorics of display attempt to promote a move in a direction of complicating, shifting, or even expanding our attitudes, emotions, and sentiments about his image as a whole.

## 2 VISUAL/TEXTUAL ANALYSES

### 2.1 Hitler wearing glasses

In order to see examples of display and concealment, I now consider a specific visual example of a photograph that Hitler censored from his public's view. Consider Figure 1 below. Strikingly, the picture appears in stark contrast in comparison to the ways in which Hitler's image is usually displayed. In most photographs and videos of Hitler, he is usually shown either by himself, leading a small company of men, or at the heightened center of a massive symmetrical display of myriad guards and officers; these typical positioning are designed to evoke an ultimate sense of power and control as well as to focus the viewing eye on Hitler as *the* leader (Schmölders 34-35). However, this image above clearly falls outside the typical Hitlerian visual discourse that Hitler intentionally circulated to his audience. I also consider Hitler's gaze. As expressed by a multitude of images of the Führer spanning from his 1924 release from Landsberg Prison all the way to his suicide in 1945, Hitler's gaze typically either fixated directly into the lens of the camera, focused sternly on another subject in the picture, hovered over/down upon a mass audience, or confidently positioned off to the peripheral. In short, in the normal visual discourse showing Hitler, Hitler's gaze is one of control, power, and regal performativity. In the above photograph (according to Hoffmann to be taken sometime in 1942), however, his infamous "strangely compelling eyes" (Waite 32) escape the viewer as they cast downward onto a document on which he writes. Instead of mounting a podium perched above an enthusiastic crowd, he crouches over his work, and an officer hovers over him while another officer stands above him in Hitler's left peripheral; this positioning of Hitler seated to the left of the picture with two men standing over him presents a vastly different narrative compared to the photos that Hitler approved for circulation. The fact that Hitler is shown wearing glasses constitutes the

most striking feature of the picture in comparison to the normal visual discourse of Hitler images. In Hoffman's book, one that contains one hundred and one photographs of the Fuhrer, only one shows him using a magnifying glass to read while only two depict him wearing glasses. Concerning this particular photograph, when this picture came into the view of Hitler, he rejected any further reproduction and circulation of the image outright by chastising Hoffmann for even taking the photograph in the first place (197). In a stroke of outrage, Hitler slashed an "X" through the photo because as Hoffmann later wrote, "No photograph [of Hitler] in spectacles was to be published" (177).



Figure 1: Hitler in glasses.



Hitler's strict forbidding of the public bearing witness to his image wearing vision-correcting glasses harkens back to his stint as a soldier in World War One where his vision began a steady decline due to his exposure to a British mustard gas attack that jeopardized his vision and his potential ability to serve as the political figurehead of Germany (Hitler 77). But although he wrote about this blinding experience in the trenches in *Mein Kampf*, the question remains: why was he so vehement about hiding visual representations of himself that signified his poor eyesight? Although Hoffmann does not offer any explicit information as to why Hitler always concealed images of himself in glasses, an examination of specific "scientific" beliefs prevalent in Hitler's era provides answers for this inquiry.

Cara Finnegan observes that when addressing the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, academics have spilled much ink in writing about the construction of "character" and the prevalent belief in the "sciences" of phrenology and physiognomy. With the growing popularity of photographic images, these two "moral sciences" prevailed towards the turn of the twentieth century in both the United States and Europe (Finnegan 43-44). Plenty of proof shows that Hitler embodied this popularity with his known belief in phrenology and physiognomy along with his anti-Semitic contemporaries. Claudia Schmölders provides comprehensive evidence that Hitler utilized these "sciences" in order to spread anti-Semitism throughout Germany, especially after he declared himself dictator of the Reich in 1933 (109). In fact, in *Mein Kampf* Hitler "bragged" that he could visibly identify a Jew based on physical characteristics; he then identified himself as an anti-Semite. This "realization" functioned as a cathartic moment for Hitler. In 1937 with the formation of The National Political Institutes of Education, which of course functioned under the supervision of the Nazis (Shirer 255), through radical educational revamping, Hitler aimed to project this same anti-Semitic experience onto young Germans of the

Reich. Specifically, the NPIE required schools to use Hitler's experiences in Vienna as he dictated in *Mein Kampf* in order to teach/train students to distinguish "Aryans" from "non-Aryans" based on visual characteristics of the face and head size and shape (Schmolders 109). Thus, not only was Hitler aware of the two "moral sciences" that impregnated Europe before and during the Reich, Hitler forced these two philosophies (among many others) upon his audience. This connection between popular "sciences" and Hitler's self-representation/concealment is crucial to understand why Hitler "offended the image"<sup>5</sup> depicting him wearing glasses by first slashing an "X" through the text and ultimately concealing it from the view of the public eye.

Finnegan's work assists us in connecting the relationship between the phrenological and physiognomic practices of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and how Hitler showed and concealed discrete images of his face. In discussing Samuel B. Wells' "contributions" to the fields of phrenology and physiognomy, Finnegan illustrates that many "doctors" writing on these "moral sciences" felt that physical facial features served as viewable portals into one's character. Specifically, "Such rhetorics tied a hermeneutic of the face to individual aspects of morality as well as to broader typologies of *national character*" (45, emphasis added). Certainly Hitler's face functioned as (or at the very least represented) *the* visual representation of the national character of Germany post-1933, especially when we recall Rudolf Hess speaking at the Nuremberg Rally in Munich in 1934 wherein Hess shouted the closing words of his climactic speech: "The Party is Hitler. But Hitler is Germany, just as Germany is Hitler. Hitler! Sieg Heil!" (qtd. in Peterson 21). For Hitler, the visage of the national character and an avid believer of phrenology and physiognomy along with many of his anti-Semitic contemporaries, then, weakness of the eyes—revealed by the wearing of eyeglasses—signified feebleness in one's character and suggested incompetency as a leader (Kershaw *Myth* 3-4). His all-important image

---

<sup>5</sup> See page 27 of Mitchell's *What Do Pictures Want?*

and its critical relationship to his leadership and power as *the* leader of the Reich, or what Kershaw calls the “function of the Fuhrer”, could only be tarnished by the appearance of his image wearing glasses. Fitting snugly within a framework of rhetorics of display where to show is to conceal, when Hitler showed his audience his face without glasses, he deliberately concealed the fact that his vision needed correction in the midst of a historical period where the physical components of a leader’s face weighed heavily on a popular audience’s determination of one’s competence, intelligence, and one’s overall strength as a national identity.

While physiognomy and phrenology were certainly prevalent during Hitler’s time and assisted in informing his image construction and concealment, these pseudo-sciences are not the only reasons that explain why Hitler was so anxious about his publics seeing him with glasses. Brenda Jo Brueggemann’s work on disability studies during the Third Reich further illuminates the “hidden” Hitler and provides additional insight why Hitler censored photos depicting him in glasses. In her chapter “Economics, Euthanasia, Eugenics: Rhetorical Commonplaces of Disability in the Nazi T-4 Program”,<sup>6</sup> Brueggemann puts together a comprehensive study of how the Nazis identified those who had “disabilities” that made them subject to separation from “normal” society and their eventual euthanasia, or, “mercy killing” (Brueggemann 142). Essential to Hitler’s rhetorics of nationalism and presenting himself as the flawless leader (see the Hitler Myth) were his beliefs in the need for the euthanizing of any “disabled” person living in the Reich in order to carry out the “Final Solution.” Hitler used *Mein Kampf* as a platform where he introduced to a widespread reading audience his ideas on the “necessity” of “racial cleansing” in order to cleanse Germany from non-Germans who he identified as depleting

---

<sup>6</sup> See chapter seven of Brenda Jo Brueggemann’s work, *Deaf Subjects: Between Identities and Places*. The T-4 Program was the name given to the Nazi effort to transport to death camps and kill over 240,000 people who, according to the Nazis, had various “disabilities.”

“Aryans” of valuable resources and space.<sup>7</sup> Hitler identified anyone with hereditary diseases as a target of elimination (Hitler 402), and Brueggeman’s work identifies how Hitler and the Nazis classified specific types of these hereditary diseases. Blindness made up one of nine types of disabilities that constituted cause for “sterilization” and eventual extermination (Bruggemann 145).

Her analysis of one of the propaganda photographs featuring one of the so-called genetically contaminated who appears to be blind provides insight into how Nazi propaganda presented blindness as a cause for Othering and elimination, and can help explain why Hitler took such great care to keep his bespectacled image from public view. The analysis concerns the following visual that currently is on display at the U.S. National Holocaust Museum (Brueggemann 149).



Figure 2: Blindness as a disease. The caption reads, “Hereditarily diseased ‘Negro’ (from England) institutionalized 16 years costs 35,000 RM” (Brueggemann 149).

In her visual analysis, Brueggemann points out that the subject’s “...fixed gaze of his eyes to his right indicates that he may be blind” (149). The purpose of this photo (and others

<sup>7</sup> See the chapter entitled “The State” in Volume Two of *Mein Kampf* wherein Hitler emits his thoughts on “Racial hygiene” (403), “State Selection of the [Racially and Healthily] Fit” (429), and keeping any non-Aryan outside of German territories (Hitler 405).

similar to the image) along with the accompanying caption is to present Hitler's public with a visual representation depicting blindness as a sign of readily-identifiable disability. Just as the "fixed gaze" of the subject in Figure 2 indicates that he is possibly vision impaired, glasses serve as a visual indicator of visual capabilities in need of correction. Therefore, according to Hitler's own dogma, to show his publics that even he experienced a "hint of human failing" (Kershaw *Myth* 3) by donning glasses would mean that he suffered from the very "disability" he used to identify, animalize, and eliminate "genetically inferior" Others. Hitler knew the aversion to blindness as made into a normative weakness and cause for separation and annihilation by Nazi propaganda could not be associated with his image, both in a pictorial and a metaphorical sense. Therefore, each time Hitler forbade photographers from taking and circulating images depicting his eyesight as weak indicated by glasses, he concealed that he needed them; a man who appears as the Führer cannot be seen by his publics as the Other.

Rhetorics of display assists us in realizing that when Hitler repeatedly made the deliberate choice to appear before his audiences without glasses, he simultaneously, "...diminish[ed], amplif[ied] and mute, select[ed] omit[ed]...and conceal[ed]" (Prelli 15) his dependence on glasses. Applying Burke's terministic screens, Hitler's decision to show his face as bare (other than the little mustache, of course) literally screened the audiences from his poor eyesight, which became progressively worse as he aged (Redlich 228). With each photograph, public appearance, and film where he presented himself as one who maintained a competence in visual ability, he directed the collective public attention away from the fact that he suffered from cataracts, eye pain, and Anisohypermetropia <sup>8</sup> (Redlich 228). To apply Burke, each one of Hitler's approved visual representations functioned as a "...*refection* of reality, [and] by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as

---

<sup>8</sup> An unequal amount of farsightedness in both eyes (Redlich 228).

a *deflection* of reality” (Burke *Language* 45, emphasis in original). In the case of this particular photo of Hitler in glasses, the truth deflected by the intentional Hitlerian visual discourse disseminated by the Nazi propaganda machine is Hitler’s visual impairment that, through this photo, is reflected to its viewers, a vision he did not want his publics to behold.

This particular analysis is not a typical parody or a discussion that centers upon a commonly-seen photo or visual text from the Third Reich, but rather reveals a telling gap between image and reality in Hitler’s vast visual narrative. While such a forbidden photograph and analysis cannot by themselves alter the visual/rhetorical narrative, at the very least, such texts can shift our focus from the image of “Führer” to reproductions of a leader who, through censorship of these images, acknowledged certain personal flaws seen in these forbidden photographs. Furthermore, the very extant of the image serves to challenges the comfortable visual narrative of Hitler to which most of the world has accepted by way of disrupting the Hitler Myth; unlike the texts that make up this comfortable narrative, with this photograph, we have an atypical text that allows us a “new” way of seeing Hitler in an unfamiliar way, one he did not want us to see. Likewise, the analysis shows ways to re-view Hitler to consider not just images of Hitler he intentionally displayed. By reflecting on how the “...dynamic between revealing and concealing...enables partial and always potentially contestable perspectives” (Prelli 16), I suggest that audiences expand their consideration to rarely seen images in order to ultimately complicate how his image is understood. Both the image and analysis, I contend, serve as starting points for this move and perhaps shifting the way we view Hitler, collectively. I now address additional self-representations of Hitler that he screened from his publics’ gaze.

## 2.2 Hitler rehearsing elocution

In “Visual Power? The politics of Images in Twentieth-Century Germany and Austria-Hungary”, David F. Crew asks of revealing and concealing power dynamics in the Third Reich, “Does the attempt to control images actually promote the viewer’s visual desire to see what has not been shown in the ‘right pictures’?” (271). If the answer is not a resounding “Yes”, I contend that audiences should desire to see what is hidden by what is shown. When audiences accept a pictorial fragment as the whole rather than a partial representative of a complete rhetorical body, they risk allowing the totality of their attentions to be manipulated and narrowed; therefore, their comprehension of given subjects is incomplete. Keith Erickson calls these snippets of what publics see of politicians’ performance fragments, or performances of political leaders that “constitute political illusions—aesthetically framed images that manipulate the public’s emotions and perceptions of political reality” (Erickson 141).<sup>9</sup> Hitler disseminated performance fragments in the form of his public speeches which “swayed millions “ in Germany during his rise, peak, and fall (Shirer 35). We are familiar with these performances themselves—the shouting, the rise to a crescendo, the pounding of the podium—but rhetorics of display invites us to peel back the curtain and consider what his publics were not shown about their leader’s rhetorical display when Hitler took the stage.

In addition to appearing in a stately manner in public speeches and in published photographs, Hitler intrinsically relied on his self-championed elocutionary gestures and movements when rhetorically displaying his image to his audiences. Hitler provides us with a glimpse into how he devoted significant—if not excessive—attention to his execution of his

---

<sup>9</sup> Erickson’s “Presidential Rhetoric’s Visual Turn: Performance Fragments and the Politics of Illusionism” concerns the visual rhetorics of American presidents, but the overarching concepts he puts forth apply nicely to a general discussion of how a powerful figure rhetorically crafts his public image.

visual elocution in Volume Two of *Mein Kampf*.<sup>10</sup> In relaying to his reader his metamorphosis from NSDAP party member to Nazi leader, he addresses the importance of the body as a rhetoric of display: “I gradually transformed myself into a speaker for mass meetings, that I became practiced in the pathos and the gestures which a great hall, with its thousands of people, demands” (468). But Hitler’s transformation from basement speech leader to the fervent master orator for which he still remains famous was not a mere product of natural ability. In Hitler’s words, we see that he learned that oratory for mass audiences did not restrict itself to excellence in verbal communication. After his 1924 release from Landsberg, Hitler devoted himself to mastering nonverbal communication, or effective elocutionary theatrical gestures (Phillips 35). Since Hitler realized the gravity of ways in which he displayed himself to his audiences, Hitler felt it essential to see himself as his audience saw him. Therefore, he practiced his movements in front of Hoffmann’s camera in order to “vet” them later (Hoffmann 74).

Consider the following collection of photographs (Figures 3.1 and 3.2). The template features visual representations that reflect Hitler’s dedication to nonverbal elocution, a conglomeration of visual images of the Fuhrer that he purposely concealed from the gaze of his audiences.

---

<sup>10</sup> Published in 1926, two years following the first volume.





Figure 3.1:<sup>11</sup> Hitler rehearsing elocution.

<sup>11</sup> The more numerous collection (Figure 3.1) has recently been reprinted/circulated in Phillips' *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* (2009) while the second set of elocutionary photographs (Figure 3.2) appears in *Hoffman's Hitler Was My Friend*.

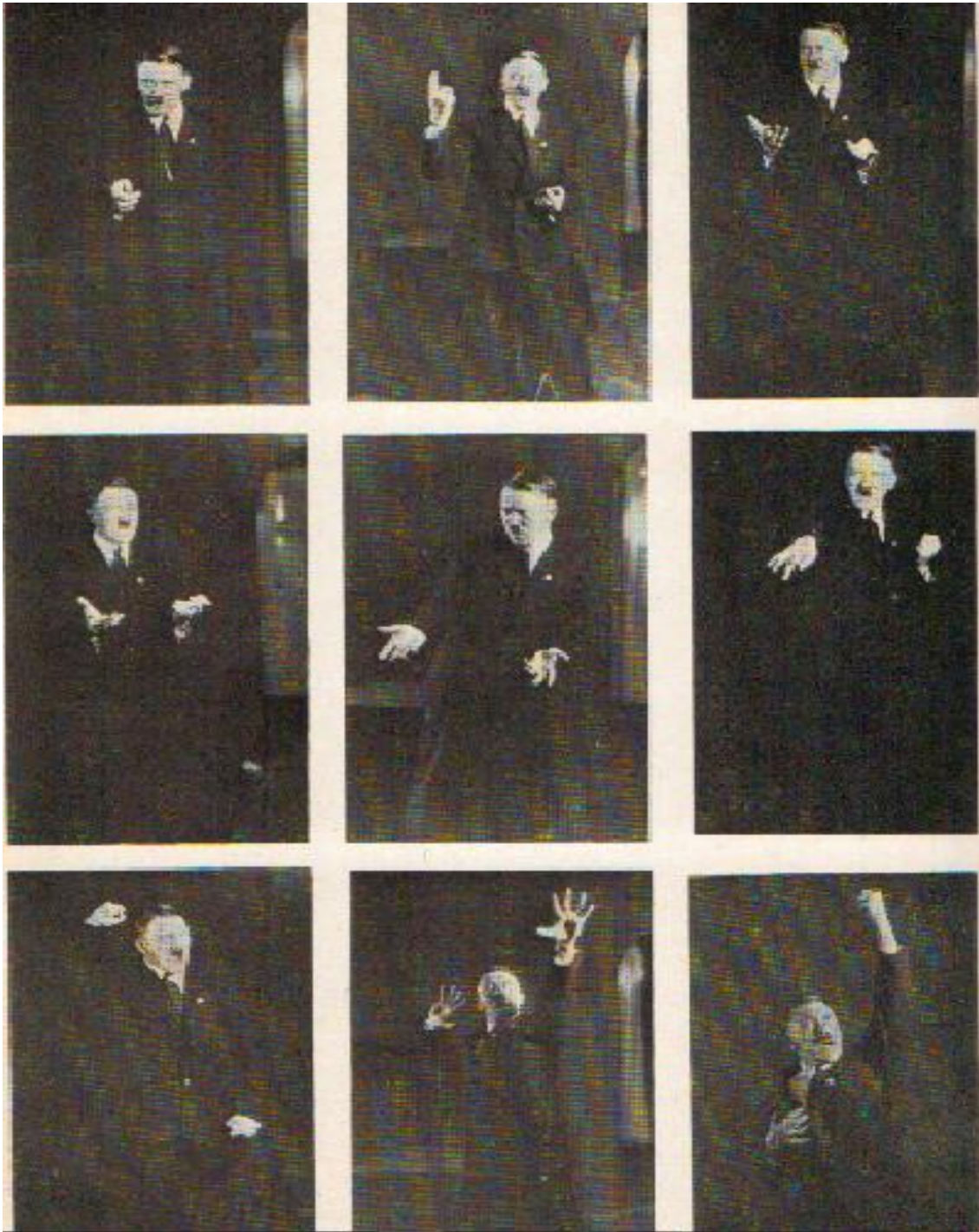


Figure 3.2: More elocution poses.

As apparent in the photographs above, effective charismatic leaders possess the ability to master an illusion of sincerity in their appearance, speeches, and their overall delivery of their

public images. Hitler himself bragged to his inner-circle that his capacity to shroud the truth with lies while appearing sincere to his publics made up one of his greatest abilities as the Führer (Victor 101). This supposed visual sincerity radiated from Hitler to his audience in large part due to Hitler's histrionic bodily movements. But despite Hitler's appearance of confidence when speaking in public and his well-documented ability to compel, persuade, even "mesmerize" his audience (Rosenbaum 65), Hoffmann's accounts of photographing the private Hitler provide us with a different view of Hitler's self-assurance, especially his physical appearance and his bodily gestures.

Hoffman's text that accompanies the above photographs (taken early 1926, less than two years from his release at Landsberg) reads: "Hitler was sensitive about his appearance, and relied on my camera to check this [set of photographs] before appearing in public...[so] he could 'vet' gestures and expressions" (74). Such a statement from Hitler's personal photographer surely challenges the popularized normal visual discourse of Hitler images that depict him as a poised, self-assured, *natural* speaker and political identity. Furthermore on the subject of naturalness (or at least appearing in such a way), in the early rise of Hitler as politician, he expressed clearly to Hoffmann that the latter was not to publish any photographs of Hitler practicing his speeches, for Hitler wanted his live performances to "come off" as natural, laced with the zeal of spontaneity (Hoffmann 62-63). Although Hitler always held steadfast to the notion that propaganda should be of a "low intellectual level" when delivering party messages to mass audiences, from his miserable days living through the Weimar Republic, he knew that even the dullest of audiences could spot a "plastic" fraud politician (Hitler 180). In fact, when speaking in public, he never used many of the gestures depicted in these rehearsal photographs (Schmölders 72). Thus, he maintained a cautious awareness that the circulation of images of himself practicing his

movements in front of a camera could very well diminish one of his most famed traits of performance—his appearance as a naturally gifted and passionately moving speaker.

In the context of rhetorics of the display, then, these photographs become even more interesting and important for the purpose of examining the relationship between the Hitler images that he showed to his audience and the Hitler images he purposely concealed. Considering that Hitler kept his elocutionary rehearsal photos from the gaze of the public, in the most basic form, when Hitler displayed himself to his audiences in the role of impassioned speaker, he simultaneously concealed from his publics that his performance was not derived only from innate ability but rather a result of meticulous practice. The claim that circulation of the above photographs of Hitler rehearsing could have presented possible threats to Hitler's overall believability is supported by Hariman and Luicates' work on the awareness politicians devote to the potential damaging effects photographs can play on their public image: "Professional politicians are well aware of this fact [that photographs 'provide continual opportunities for both error and dissent'], which is why specific images are continually being used (or avoided) to advance partisan interests" (33). While the two authors are concerned with images in the context of liberal democracy in *No Caption Needed*, this statement certainly correlates with Hitler's refusal to allow photographs such as the glasses and elocution photos to be seen by his publics because public viewing of such photographs would have almost certainly invited "dissent" from his well-documented early opposition, especially in the mid-20s before Hitler's power reached its absolute height. Learning from the public humiliation he endured following the failed Beer Hall Putsch, from the day he left Landsberg to the last living moments in the Führerbunker twenty-one years later, Hitler's preeminent fear always remained constant. Specifically in the words of Hoffmann, the man that perhaps knew him best, Hitler constantly feared that, "...he

would lose face in the eyes of the people, and he would frequently quote instances of how the publication of some private snapshot had jeopardized the popularity of a statesman” (Hoffmann 197). Here, Hitler’s fears makes it clear that even a private photograph, a living performance Barthes called *Tableau Vivant* (31), carries with it a rhetorical power that can disrupt the powerful image of a national figure. Such photographic performances above, ones Hitler intentionally disallowed his public to bear witness, exist as visual re-presentations of the Fuhrer-as-human, and when viewed in the context of Hitler’s anxieties about self-presentation through the visual serve as valuable texts for better understanding the dynamic relationship between the Hitler the public “knew” and the Hitler it could not and did not see. Keeping in line with how we must deeply consider the Hitler that he did not desire his publics to know, these collections of rehearsal photographs exists as previously understudied visual texts that offer fresh ways to view Hitler. Not only do these visual collections grant us new insights into Hitler’s image construction process, these photographs function as performance pieces in ways that can possibly disrupt the comfortable visual narrative. Although his audiences were never privy to the fact that Hitler’s proficiency in elocutionary gestures that he displayed in public were the product of meticulous rehearsal, contemporary audiences can pit these concealed “practice pieces” against the typical Hitlerian visual discourse in order to complicate the comfortable narrative that memorializes Hitler’s image as a powerful force. Here, we have the opportunity to complicate the spectacle of Hitler as an innately gifted speaker by shifting our attention to these candid texts that, along with other forbidden images, counter and interfere with the myriad images that have constructed and maintained our collective ways of seeing and remembering Hitler.

However, I suggest that when we consider these “new” texts, we resist the apparent urge to marvel at Hitler’s rhetorics like we have done for so long. To my surprise and initial delight,

popular website *Mail Online* included these elocutionary images and a brief description of the rehearsal photographs on February 9<sup>th</sup> of 2012. The article, which followed the recent reissue of *Hitler Was My Friend* refers to the elocutionary photographs as “extraordinary” and “incredible” in the process of gushing over the “rediscovery” of Hoffmann’s work. The article also includes shots of the additional images I will discuss below (Figures 5 and 6), and somewhat hyperbolically cites these images of portals into Hitler’s evil genius, or stated by the author, “the method behind the madness” (Enoch).<sup>12</sup> While the article helps to extend an attention of the unseen Hitler to a widespread Internet audience, the piece slips back into the comfortable visual narrative of Hitler. After a brief discussion of the photographs, the author concludes the piece by claiming the rehearsal sessions greatly contributed to Hitler’s “...hypnotic speech style” (Enoch). At the very least, the author leans upon the rehearsal photographs to laud Hitler’s ability as an orator as cultivated genius. The final lines of the piece conclude in an awe-stricken manner, specifically stating, “And he displayed well. In his carefully orchestrated public addresses, with its grand ritual and sense of unity, Hitler gave the people what they wanted” (Enoch). Again, by limiting the discussion to what was “displayed” rather than the concealed images the author discusses, the normative tendency to see Hitler as a spellbinding figure seeps through the piece. The article then comes to a close by including an eight minute video (a YouTube imbedded video) of what quite possibly is Hitler’s most significant speech: His first speech as chancellor on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1933 in front of a frenzied crowd of supporters. Although at one point in the article, the author refers to Hitler as “the monster”, the piece concludes with a familiar performance of an impassioned Hitler bringing an audience to hysteria. When we revert back to

---

<sup>12</sup> The reissuing of *Hitler Was My Friend* and the appearance of the *Mail Onliner* article are both complete coincidences, and welcomed ones at that. Although I had been working for quite sometime on this project at the time of both the reissue and the article, I express excitement that people in academic and general public spheres are becoming more aware of these photographs.

displays of the spectacle to which Hitler directed his viewers' attention, we lose sight of the Hitler that he did not want us to know; in other words we blind ourselves while discounting alternate possibilities of his rhetorics. Therefore, to maintain this comfortable visual narrative is to unwisely preserve Hitler's visual discourse as absolute and unchangeable.

### 2.3 Hitler in shorts

Sometime in 1926 or 1927, as Hitler was near realizing his ultimate aim of becoming the supreme German leader, his power as the Führer in the NSDAP was growing on a daily basis (Kershaw *Hitler* 278). During this period, he took major steps in crafting the Hitler Myth through a deliberate effort to solidify his “enigmatic” image (Kershaw *Myth* 25). He aimed to present himself to audiences beyond yes-men of the party and beer hall spectators (Kershaw *Hitler* 278). While *Mein Kampf* functioned as a lens into his military, political, and racial ideas, he wanted more publics to actually see the author of *Mein Kampf* as the eventual leader of the state, an image formulation Schmölders deems, “steps toward a führer image” (Schmölders 70). Therefore, he turned to his personal photographer set these next political advancements in visual motion.

Figure 4 and Figure 5 represent two of the results from various photo shoots that took place in 1926 and 1927. The compositional differences between these two texts need very little explanation. Figure 5 was never published while the glaring image of Hitler (Figure 4) was eventually generated for the purpose of Hitler's aggressive presidential campaign in 1932 (Phillips 13). While Hitler fell short of toppling then-incumbent Hindenburg, Hitler's audiences were positioned to see this image of Hitler, a portrayal that contrasts drastically with Figure 5.

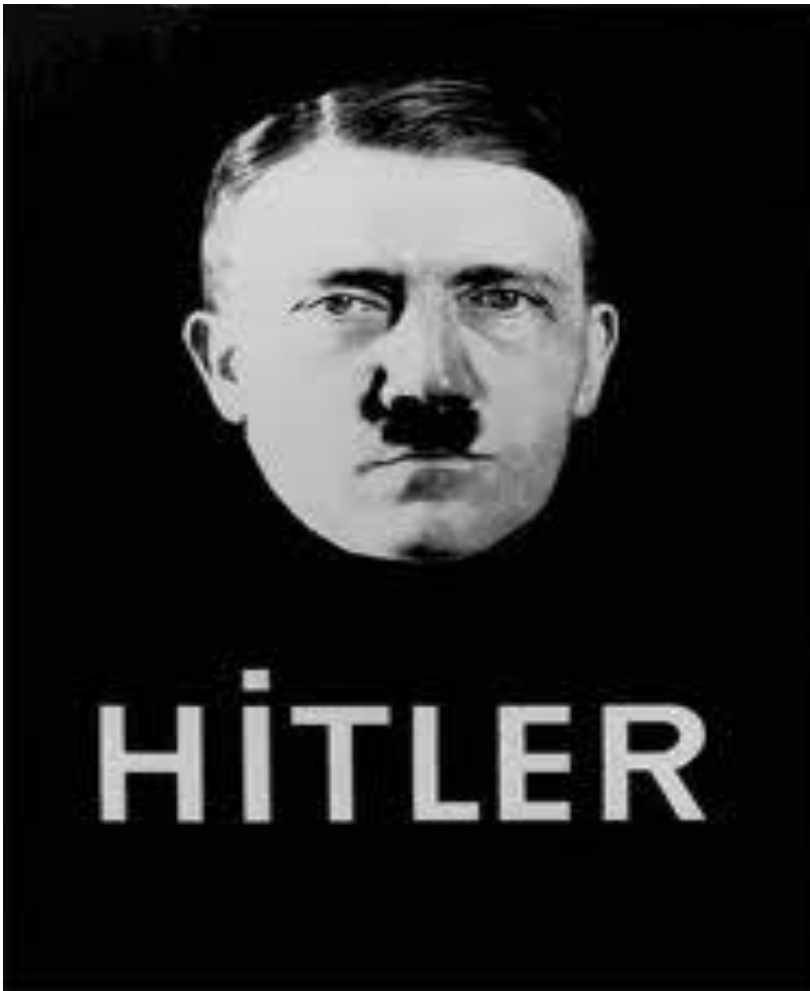


Figure 4: Campaign image from 1932 election; taken circa 1926-27.

In order to not allow this study to be sidetracked by slipping into the comfortable visual narrative, I will not devote a significant degree of attention to the campaign poster. It is important to note, however, that the text was what Hitler deliberately made known to the German citizens in the late 1920s and early 1930s while the picture of Hitler wearing short exists as a manifestation of what Hitler concealed from his audience. The campaign poster functioned as “...the first truly massively stylized poster portrait of Hitler: his brightly lit face fully “without chest,” like a close up-from a silent movie” (Schmölders 72). Additionally, the way the image works with the alphabetic text, which simply reads, “HiTLER”, is an example of the rhetorical



“success” of the poster in that “...the totality of the impression on a reader and viewer is made by a collaboration of image and word within an economy of display” (Farrell 70). Ultimately, the visual impact of this campaign advertisement assisted in making Hitler’s “powerful” image virtually ubiquitous in the months leading up to the election (Shirer 158). Now, consider Figure 5.



Figure 5: Hitler in shorts.

Here, we have another visual of Hitler that contains completely different rhetorical implications in Figure 5. If the image of Hitler wearing glasses is unusual and the elocutionary

photos when seen together appear as a bit odd, it is safe to call the photograph of Hitler donning tight shorts and high socks bizarre in contrast with other images that make up the typical Hitlerian visual discourse. Anyone even slightly familiar with Hitler is probably inclined to chuckle at this photo, especially since the text is in such glaring contradiction with other images of the man. This image that captures the hilarity of the style of dress, Hitler's rather gauche way of propping himself against the tree, and his forced gaze into the camera did not emerge from a Photoshop session, nor is the text a product of cutting and pasting various garment images together in a clumsy pastiche. The image is most striking and comical because the image itself actually shows Hitler wearing this puerile costume; the content of the image is not faked. Here, we do not have to rely on kitsch, parody, or invention in order to laugh at a man who so often induces a comfortable narrative of marvel in his audiences. Instead, this text itself allows us to humanize and rationalize the image of Hitler, even if only slightly. The visual content of the photograph—taken circa 1926-27 while he was working towards his Führer image (Schmölders 70)—coupled with audiences' probable reaction of laughter reflects Burke's comic frame since one who is inclined to laugh "...has a greater faith in the bonds of human connection and reconciliation than in the victimage and mystification that tragedy requires" (Christiansen and Hanson 160). Instead of parodying or mystifying Hitler's image, here, we have an actual example over which we can see he himself as an unintended comical, and even ridiculous-looking figure.

However, to dismiss this photograph as simply peculiar would be to overlook important reasons as to why Hitler told Hoffmann never to publish the image. If we only share a laugh over his awkward lean upon the tree with knees exposed, we miss out on alternate possibilities of meaning contained in text. When we ask ourselves, "Why did Hitler censor this photograph?",

the answer may seem simple: He looks absurd and he indeed had a terror of appearing foolish in public. While that thought is true, other factors were at play in the creation and concealment of this image. Always obsessed with how his public perceived his image, Hitler's intense anxiety of appearing with bodily skin exposed derived from his own perception of how a figure of power should be visually represented based on Hitler's knowledge of historical and contemporaneous representations of other leaders. Of this picture and general anxiety and corporal bareness, Hoffmann recalls the following:

He was very shy in the face of nudity—not in the field of Art, in which he encouraged it, but as regards his own person. He was obsessed with the idea that if anyone saw him or took a photograph of him in bathing trunks, he would lose face in the eyes of the people, and he would frequently quote instances of how the publication of some private snapshot had jeopardized the popularity of a statesman. (Hoffmann 197)

Hoffmann quotes Hitler as expressing repugnance towards Weimar president Friedrich Ebert who appeared on the front page of the *Berliner Illustrierte* clad in a bathing suit. In response to this memory, the German dictator considered “the loss of prestige [as] very great.” Another of Hitler's contemporaries, Benito Mussolini, often allowed the publication of photographs showing him relaxing in swimwear, much to the abhorrence of his fellow Axis partner. Of the Duce's regular publicized appearances relaxing while scantily clad, Hoffmann recalls Hitler saying, “Mussolini frequently exposes himself to ridicule...and it always angers me when I see photos in the Press of him and his family in bathing costumes on the Lido. A really great statesman wouldn't do it” (Hoffmann 197).

I mentioned when introducing Hoffmann's text that we must approach the absolute veracity of Hoffmann's narrative with caution. As true as this caveat is, Claudia Schmölders

provides research that verifies Hoffmann's account of Hitler's nervousness of being seen relaxing in shorts. The purpose of this photo session was a failed attempt to construct Hitler's image as one that would make him appear as identifiable with the youth movement at the time (mid-1920s). However, based on Hitler's scorn for leaders presenting themselves in silly, weak, and even ways which depicted them as "everymen", Hitler knew that publicizing the shorts photograph would have opened him up for ridicule among his opposition and moderate members of the public. Therefore, Hitler chose to visually represent himself in a completely different way altogether. Instead of displaying himself as a sympathetic and approachable figure, he instead decided on the portrait used in the campaign as an image of absolute authority, a stern body of confidence and control (Schmölders 72). His contemporary audiences never laid eyes on the shorts photograph, and therefore this image functions as a manifestation of concealment, as evidence of alternate possibilities of re-viewing Hitler's image and power. In essence, the campaign poster is evidence of a propagandistic and rhetorical success while the shorts image is evidence of an utter failure. We have only devoted the fixation of our gaze on the deliberately displayed success for quite too long.

When examining both the shorts photograph and the election poster where Hitler's glare projects onto the viewing audience, viewers are inclined to ask an important question: Which one of these images best represents the *real* Hitler? Is the answer both? Neither? These images were both taken around the same time and are so obviously different from each other in as far as their textual compositions, the way one was used and one deliberately forbidden to be seen, and the "success" of the one that was seen by audiences. For this study, then, when placed side-by-side, these images most clearly lend themselves to terministic screens. Like a magic trick whereupon the magician shows his audience a shiny object as he performs a slight of hand in order to hide

what he does not want to be seen, Hitler reflected his image by way of this poster while he deflected the representation of him in shorts and the corresponding “look” that he quite literally tried on. Just as with the Hitler’s disquietude about the elocution selection potentially appearing in front of his audiences, this pairing of images functions as a telling insight on the gulf between image and reality in the visual discourse of the ambitious Führer and that of a figure braced upon a tree with the swastika overshadowed by sheer visual awkwardness and comedy. Both images are important for consideration. The emergence of the shorts image, however, a real and un-doctored text that Hitler considered to be “infra dig” for the stature of a leader, enables audiences to ponder about Hitler’s concealment without simply dismissing the text as simple comic relief.

When we keep in mind the shorts image when we are confronted with widely-circulated visual depictions of Hitler, we see that the texts that make up the typical visual discourse indeed, “...emphasize some meanings even as they diminish or conceal others” (Prelli 13). With popular images of Hitler, rhetorically constructed meanings that are emphasized involve Hitler’s image as a body of authority, control, and even domination. What these typical images direct our attention away from, or what is diminished and concealed by typical images, can be seen in photographs such as the shorts photo. That is to say, when we examine the shorts photograph and include this image in the vast Hitlerian visual narrative, we not only expand the discourse, but we further disrupt the Hitler Myth by bearing witness to an actual visual text; when we compare these hidden images to Hitler’s deliberately manufactured image, we see that the hidden images can contribute to reshaping (and at the very least complicate) our common basis for remembering and understanding Hitler’s image.

## 2.4 Close-up of Hitler in Stormtrooper uniform

By the start of 1928, less than a year before the Wall Street crash collapsed the world economy, Hitler's NSDAP had grown to boast over 108,000 card-carrying members (Kershaw *Hitler* 307). Always the rhetorician with a keen understanding of visual politics and self-representation, Hitler did not slow down in crafting a Führer-like image of himself that would influence as many voters as possible for the turbulent years following the crash. He desired to present himself as the answer to the Treaty of Versailles along with the rest of Germany's problems (Shirer 135). Neither Hoffmann nor anyone else can provide us with exact dates, but sometime in 1939, inevitably, Hitler, once again positioned himself in front of his personal photographer's camera lens for the purpose of projecting to his audiences what he and Goebbels felt as the ideal image of the Führer looked like (Kershaw *Hitler* 418). Not surprisingly, crafting this ideal image took practice, requiring trial and error, acceptance and rejection. Just as with the photo sessions in 1926-27, as the pivotal election of the early 1930s approached, Hitler—along with his swelling propaganda machine—aimed to depict himself as *the* leader Germany desired.

The following photo (Figure 6) was not published during the Third Reich, yet the text survived the cutting floor and now deserves our analytical consideration.



Figure 6: Close-up of Hitler in Stormtrooper uniform.

With the glasses photograph, we have evidence of Hitler with a normative “human failing.” In the elocution photos we see a crafted act rather than innate performance art. The shorts photograph enables us to lay eyes on a figure that further makes known the selection process of Hitler’s deliberate image creation and dissemination. With the SA (*Sturm Abteilung* or “stormtrooper”) photo, however, we have a figure that at the very least appears anonymous and un-special in virtually every way. It is important to note as well that out of the images discussed

in this study, we know the least about the specifics of this image by far. All we know comes from the brief caption from Kershaw who tells us that the photograph was taken in sometime in 1929, and Hoffmann's caption which states that Hitler never wore the uniform again. Still, due to the fact that Hitler did not want anyone outside of his inner circle to bear witness to this visual, the image deserves analysis.

While the photograph does not show a "typical" Hitler perched over a symmetrical audience with right arms zealously outstretched, compositionally, the picture is not a bad one. The deliberate blur that backgrounds the body projects the visage as clear and situated as the primary object of the viewer's gaze. The photograph neither features a comical figure nor an undeniable body of power. The image is simply a close-up of a man who appears to be a soldier wearing a cover upon his head, held tightly by two straps that hold close to his clinched jaw that meet at the base of the chin. In the photograph, Hitler appears as a perfectly normal SA soldier. And therein lied part of the problem for Hitler.

By 1929, Hitler was financially comfortable due to the success of *Mein Kampf* (Shirer 133). In the book, he devotes much attention to his stint as a soldier in the First World War, zealously giving his account as an "old soldier" who "...had the good fortune to fight" in a losing effort that resulted in disaster for Germany (Hitler 198). He often spoke of his service to the "Fatherland" in various speeches, and, not unlike American presidential candidates (John McCain's repeated POW anecdotes, for example), he leaned upon his wartime injuries to show the bodily sacrifices he endured for the sake of his country (Williamson 30). Despite the success of his soldier rhetoric, personal economic stability, and swelling popularity, I contend the decision to direct his publics' attention away from the SA photograph shows that Hitler was careful not to distance himself from his Austrian and German audiences that for the most part



were battling inflation, out of work and were without funds. However, I have documented Hitler's aversion to presenting himself as an everyman, since he needed to enforce the projected rhetoric that claimed "Providence" had chosen him as the Führer (Maser 233). Clearly, he took careful steps to represent himself in such a way that revealed visual qualities of leadership without coming off as too regal. Therefore, he tried on this SA uniform, had Hoffmann take his picture, and never wore the uniform ever again. This photograph serves as a visual insight into his close attention to his dress and his acknowledgement of his audience. Of Hitler's consciousness of his attire and his audiences, Phillips writes, "Whether he chose to wear a business suit or the party uniform and armband, or whether he spoke in a conversational or more strident tone of voice, depended on his assessment of the audience" (Phillips 35). Here, we have evidence of another potential form of dress that Hitler promptly removed from his visual rhetorical closet due to this awareness of his appearance.

His reading and listening audiences had already metaphorically "seen" him as a soldier in the pages of *Mein Kampf* and his almost daily speeches, so why then would Hitler not want to be seen wearing the ensemble of the SA, a militia that he created and that contributed to his political success, show of force, and personal safety? Perhaps the answer is best found by briefly examining public and political perceptions of the SA in 1929 to show why Hitler refrained from directly associating his body with this organization.

Formulated in 1914, the SA, or, "Brownshirts" because of the color of their uniforms, was a motley crew consisting of ex-soldiers and able-bodied men who through intimidation and violent acts protected Hitler from the early days of his political aspirations (Shirer 38) all the way through his appointment as chancellor in 1933.<sup>13</sup> Without a doubt, the SA played a crucial role in

---

<sup>13</sup> The SS quite literally killed off the SA in June 1934 in a blood purging assault known as "The Night of Long Knives." The SA contained members that began to speak out against Hitler's

transferring Hitler from a beer hall rabble-rouser to a legitimate political presence backed by a militia of support and intimidation. In fact, it is highly unlikely that Hitler would have ever had the means to infiltrate the government were it not for the strong-arming thugs that made up the army of terror (Shirer 38). By the time the picture of Hitler adorning the SA uniform was taken, the SA's presence had swelled to over 400,000 members (Kershaw *Hitler* 365) and their strength in numbers was only matched by their well-known acts of violence in support of the Nazi party. In fact, in 1929, the "Brownshirts" would assault and even murder Hitler's political opposition. According to Shirer on the "activity" of the SA near the turn of 1930, "No election, national, provincial or municipal, took place without savage battles in the gutters" (Shirer 147). As much as Hitler remained physically safe and benefited politically from the SA's presence and vicious deeds, these advantages did not come without consequences for the Nazi party, especially Hitler's image.

I have observed that when casually discussing Hitler, many people seem to think that Hitler's becoming the supreme Nazi dictator was an inevitable and even natural rise who had the support of the German people due to the post Versailles conditions of inflation and unemployment. On the contrary, Hitler ran up against a plurality of opposition, one such way being that there were many who were antipathetic to and fearful of the thuggish tactics of Hitler's anti-Semitic rhetoric and the SA. To put it plainly, towards the close of the 1920s, the Brownshirts were making Hitler look bad and placed legitimacy as a leader in jeopardy (Staudinger 91). As a matter of fact, before Hitler seized absolute power and took complete control of the German press, he received a steady stream of criticism from the communist and

---

policies and legislative moves, and the SA overall had grown beyond Hitler's control. On this night, Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, and Himmler's SS carried out a full-scale surprise attack on the SA, killing key members such as Hitler's longtime comrade, Ernst Roehm. The exact number of the slaughter that night is not known (accounts vary from 401 to over 1,000), but this event marked the immediate and brutal end of the SA (Shirer 221-23).

socialist Left, Catholics, and the bourgeois-conservative Right. Of his brutal rhetoric and the violence as carried out by his SA, newspapers in staunch opposition to Hitler often warned of the violence and inevitable havoc that he would bring to Germany (Kershaw *Myth* 32).<sup>14</sup> To reveal to his publics an image of himself wearing what many could see as a literal “thug costume” would be a huge political mistake; such a move would have undoubtedly spilled copious amounts of ink in anti-Nazi presses both in Germany and abroad. This photograph, then, marks a conscious visual turn that Hitler made from a dismissible radical figure made infamous by the failed Beer Hall Putsch of 1923 to a legitimate contender for the office of the presidency. When he revealed to his audiences a crafted image of himself as a visually distinguished presidential politician in photographs and public appearances, he concealed that he at the very least considered displaying himself as a body of brutal force. In this gap between what was shown and hidden away, we see a deliberate choice of self-representation. By once again looking past the smoke and mirrors and to this forbidden image, we expand and complicate the visual discourse of this subject while making better known the events that took place behind the curtain of this propagandistic performance.

In *Hitler: Legend, Myth, and Reality*, Werner Maser claims, “[Hitler] never once considered the possibility of tailoring his political actions and knowhow to ‘the practical reality of the moment’ in turn for transitory fame, which, in *Mein Kampf*, he describes as the politicians’ lot” (Maser 233). These analyses suggest otherwise. I argue that this SA photograph, taken at a crucial time in Hitler’s ascent to power (along with the other banned images included here) shows quite the opposite. Instead of accepting the view of Hitler as an unwavering embodiment of commitment and rhetorical proclivity, these photographs reveal that Hitler

---

<sup>14</sup> Such papers included the *Münchener Post*, and the *Fränkische Tagespost* (Kershaw *Myth* 32).

always paid close attention to the “practical reality of the moment” in return for fame, power, and rhetorical outcomes.

While the content and context of the images I have discussed differ, all of these images show Hitler giving off some sort of bodily expression. In the context of rhetorics of display, “expression” is not limited to only designate a look one wears on his face (a facial expression), but rather contains many other implications. As Joshua Meyrowitz points out, “Expressions include body and facial movements, gestures, and vocalizations” (Meyrowitz 388). Although photographs do not project literal vocalizations, expressions in the form of photographic performance inform and shape viewing audiences’ ways of interpreting the object placed before them. In other words, “While one can start and stop communicating verbally, expressions are constantly given off. Expressions suggest how a person “really feels” and what they are “really like” (Meyrowitz 388). Crucial to understanding expressions in this way is to consider the opposite implication; when an audience views an expression given off by a human image, the audience bears witness to a representation of what the person is really *not* like. When Hitler made public appearances (including the circulation of images) without glasses, he expressed to his audience that he did not have vision issues. When he censored the elocutionary photos and gave off his histrionic expressions in the form of nonverbal communication while speaking, he expressed to his audiences that his abilities were natural. Hitler’s decision to hide away the shorts photograph in favor of the campaign poster expressed a stern image of leadership rather than communicating a leisurely everyman. Finally, Hitler chose to express himself in a stately manner rather than visually representing himself in the dress of group known for its radicalism and terror. Therefore, the ways in which Hitler chose to deliberately express himself to his audience all worked together in rhetorical ways to suggest what Hitler was “really like.” Not only did

Hitler's intentional ways of rhetorically displaying and concealing himself shape his contemporary audiences' immediate interpretation of him, he worked to construct re-presentations of himself that he deemed worth remembering. This aspect of rhetorics of display in the context of re-presentations of Hitler is important because public memory is always shaped by "...assumptions of what is worth remembering about the past and about whether the remembered is worthy of praise or condemnation, acknowledgment or disparagement, celebration or lamentation" (Prelli 11). Therefore, how Hitler intended his contemporaries to view him as a monolithic force has subsequently informed and shaped the way we remember and view him. With these forbidden photos and their analyses serving as a starting point, I suggest that we further investigate the gap between appearance and reality, or, what was shown and what remained hidden (and still remains hidden) from Hitler's viewing audiences.

### **3 CONCLUSIONS**

#### **3.1 How images serve as starting point of revisualization**

These analyses participate in an ongoing discussion that centers on expanding how we can learn more about Adolf Hitler. Drawing from rhetorics of display where show-and-tell simultaneously implies hide-and-hush, I suggest that those interested in unwrapping Hitler as a rhetorical force of display keep the typical images of Hitler in mind while more thoroughly addressing images of Hitler that he never wanted his publics to see.

While putting this study together, I have participated in countless conversations with colleagues, friends, and total strangers about the topic of re-viewing Hitler. After telling people that at its very core, this project suggests that by starting with these concealed images, we re-view Hitler without the dependency on parody or staying fixated on oft-circulated texts, this

information elicited one of two general responses. Both responses illustrate a need for re-approaching how we engage with the man, memory, and image(s) of Hitler. One typical response involved at least a mention of the seemingly endless parodies of the film *Downfall*; others with whom I have conversed have even pulled out their phones and shown me their favorite *Downfall* parody in an attempt to express interest in the subject. The other typical response centered on discussing texts of Hitler that are widely known. I was repeatedly asked if I had read *Mein Kampf*, if I watch a great deal of *The History* and *The Military Channel*, and if I was familiar with Leni Riefenstahl's work. These are not at all "bad" responses and I thoroughly appreciated and enjoyed engaging in the discourse. Almost no one I spoke with expressed utter disinterest or indifference about what they interpreted as the subject matter, and the repeated interest that I received confirms that we have not, should not, and will not stop discussing Hitler. However, both general responses involved either a dynamic of viewing Hitler as a comedic figure or as an immovable and even static object. This study identifies these two ways of essentially "knowing Hitler" and suggests that we quit our need for *only* leaning on the comic frame (in this case healing through laughter) and make a move away from our repetitive tendency of viewing and thinking that allows Hitler to remain atop historical and rhetorical pedestals.

So where can we look to participate in such a move? Photographs are certainly a start. David F. Crew points out that "Heinrich Hoffmann's black and white photographs of Hitler have dominated the visual representation of the Führer" (277). However the images I have considered in this study—all of course taken by Heinrich Hoffmann—are not included in this dominant visual representation of Hitler, which I have called the typical Hitlerian visual discourse. The glasses photograph, the elocutionary collection, the awkward shorts image, and the discarded Stormtrooper picture not only operate outside of this typical visual discourse, they also serve as

tangible displays that work together to complicate and disrupt the discourse. Further, they help to more thoroughly demystify the Hitler Myth in a way that places the analytical emphasis on un-doctored images of Hitler rather than outline the narrative of the myth's creation, enforcement, and collapse.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, in many ways, the images that make up the typical Hitlerian visual discourse continue to screen viewing publics from considering the alternate possibilities inherent in this modest collection of forbidden, untypical photographs. For Burke, each terministic screen constitutes rhetorical ways of expression that "...necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another" (Burke *Language* 50). The images approved by Hitler that we continue to view represent a collective field that has directed our attention away from another/others. Here, the "other" fields are manifested in each of these images. We have to first acknowledge that Hitler-approved images have screened us from addressing other ways of inspecting and understanding Hitler. Therefore, despite incalculable discreet images that compose the typical Hitlerian visual discourse, our viewpoints are limited to a repetitive narrative; we still screen ourselves from expanding our ways of seeing and ways of knowing. Hitler himself knew the importance of the functionality of repetition in the overall success of propaganda:

"...the most brilliant propagandist technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly and with unflagging attention. It must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over. Here, as so often in this world, persistence is the first and most important requirement for success. (Hitler 184)

---

<sup>15</sup> I am certainly not suggesting that Ian Kershaw's work falls short in any way whatsoever. His contribution to Hitlerian studies is invaluable, particularly his work on the Hitler Myth. Whereas he places his focus on chronicling the myth, I suggest that these images provide us with ways of further deconstructing any potential contemporary believability of the myth.

The careful crafting and the circulation of visual images unquestionably constituted a major component of propaganda for the Third Reich and the overall success of Hitler. I ultimately suggest that we not turn a blind eye to Hitlerian images that have been thoroughly reproduced, but rather to extend our viewing lens to consider what we miss out on when we position ourselves as viewing audiences, passively accepting this rhetoric of repetition. Considering and analyzing these forbidden images represent small, yet important ways to disrupt this cycle of visuality, interpretation, and understanding.

Furthermore, Burke reflects this way of seeing and thinking in “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s ‘Battle’.” He opens this deliberation by appropriately deeming Hitler’s book as “exasperating, even nauseating” (Burke “Rhetoric” 149) before addressing the specific text itself. He also offers a statement to which this text finds itself in agreement: “If the reviewer [of *Mein Kampf*] knocks off a few adverse additunizings and calls it a day, with guaranty in advance that his article will have favorable reception among the decent members of our population, he is contributing more to our gratification than to our enlightenment” (Burke “Rhetoric” 149). I make a similar claim about Hitler’s visual discourse. If we simply sit back and only lay eyes on images he desired us to see rather than engage with those he did not, we inadvertently contribute in advancing the comfortable visual narrative while selling ourselves short on seeing the whole picture(s).

### **3.2 Challenges of re-approaching Hitler**

I recently saw a colleague wearing a T-shirt that read: THE FIVE CANONS OF RHETORIC: INVENTION, ARRANGEMENT, STYLE, DELIVERY, I FORGET. Not surprisingly, this colleague told me that the joke usually flies over the head of the vast majority of people, but always induces laughter and sparks conversation when he wears the shirt while on campus. In an age that is becoming more digitalized by the minute, ironically, we can fall victim



to diminishing our collective abilities to remember information, and even (as expressed by the humorous shirt) forgetting about memory altogether. Plato delegated the rhetorical concept of memory to a matter of spatiality "...where ideal forms and true knowledge reside" (Bizzell and Herzberg 7). Additionally for Plato, "...the presence of memory in the system of rhetoric raises in yet another form the question of how knowledge is represented in the mind" (Bizzell and Herzberg 7). I extend that thought to consider how what we know (or what we think we know) is represented in our various *cultures*. Whether through storytelling, film, paintings, historical narratives, or by way of images, what and how we remember are always determined with what we are presented, or, in the case of the visual, what we are shown.

I have tried to make clear that we have accepted what various texts have shown us concerning the visual and rhetorical narratives of Adolf Hitler and why this unquestioned acceptance fosters consequences. I have also pointed out that while the recent push in academia that proclaims to "unmask" the "real" Hitler is commendable, we need to maintain responsibility when making new claims. We should always avoid making profound and tell-all statements based on the excitement of finding previously undiscovered "evidence." Such "evidence" appears in Lothar Machtan's *The Hidden Hitler* wherein he argues that, "Hitler's great secret...was his homosexuality and his homoerotic relationships" (Machtan 21).<sup>16</sup> This particular study, then, has maintained a strong focus on resisting the urge to make decisive yet shaky conclusions based on questionable texts and claims.

Despite new studies on Hitler that teeter on falling "...off the deep end" of logic and historical accuracy (Williams 41), other recent texts offer new ways of seeing and knowing. For

---

<sup>16</sup> Such "evidence" exists in the form of ambiguous photographs that Machtan interprets as showing Hitler engaging in homoerotic behavior (Machtan 83), and the author's claim that Hitler's love for Wagner indicated his homosexuality because "...many [homosexuals] admired Wagner and his music" (39).

example, German historian David F. Crew points out that “In recent years, the producers of TV documentaries have increasingly turned to...relatively unknown colour images [of Hitler] in search of an antidote for the deadening ‘effects of the presentation, over and over again, of the...same pictorial motifs from the Nazi period’” (Crew 277). Although these documentaries need to be careful in refraining from slipping back into the repetitious Hitlerian visual discourse, such a move to include fresh visual documentation into the discussion constitutes an indication of progress with this subject. These pictures I examined serve as starting points in shifting focus away from these “same pictorial motifs” and onward in challenging the comfortable visual narrative over which Hitler maintains a rhetorical stranglehold.

Lastly and importantly, the suggestion to see Hitler in new ways does not mean to forget ways we view and remember him. Interpreting this study as one dismisses Hitler’s deeds as the undertakings of a “normal” man suffering from an identity crisis—one simply chalking up his character to anxieties about appearing before his publics—would be missing the point entirely. The point is not to marginalize the horrific events that occurred (either directly or indirectly) due to this man’s regime but to consider additional texts that can assist us in gaining new and more comprehensive insights into his rhetorics and self-construction. Greig Henderson supports this statement when he puts forth, “That Hitler’s representations were ontologically unanchored and obscenely false did not matter at all; their consequences were invidiously real” (Henderson 164). Real the horrible consequences were indeed; instead of laughing him off, writing him off, or remaining stagnant in our ways of viewing his image, we will always remember his evil while closely attending to what elements have shaped and will shape our memories.

In many ways, despite our desire to uncover as many of Adolf Hitler’s truths as possible, seeing the whole of Hitler in full may never be possible. After all, as stated by Burke, “...every

insight contains its own special kind of blindness” (qtd. in Henderson 164). Keeping this statement in mind, when discussing Hitler in new ways, we must make ourselves aware of these blind spots, while doing our best to shed light on what remains hidden from our view.

## WORKS CITED

- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981. Print.
- Bizzell, Patricia, and Bruce Herzberg, eds. *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford, 2001. Print.
- Brueggemann, Brenda Jo. *Deaf Subjects: Between Identities and Places*. New York: New York UP, 2009. Print.
- Burke, Kenneth. *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1966. Print.
- . "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle.'" *Readings in Propaganda and Persuasion: New and Classic Essays*. Eds. Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell. Thousand Oaks: Sage: 2006. 149-68. Print.
- Christiansen, Adrienne E. and Jeremy J. Hanson. "Comedy as Cure for Tragedy: Act Up and the Rhetoric of Aids." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 157-70. Print.
- Crew, David F. "Visual Power? The Politics of Images in Twentieth-Century Germany and Austria-Hungary." Rev. of *Das Auge des Dritten Reiches. Hitlers Kameramann und Fotograf Walter Frentz*. Ed by Hans Georg Hiller von Gaertringen. *German History* 27.2 (2009): 271-85. Print.
- Downfall*. Dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel. Perf. Bruno Ganz, Alexandra Maria Lara, Corinna Harfouch, and Ulrich Matthes. Newmarket Capital, 2004. Film.
- Enoch, Nick. "Mein Camp. Unseen Pictures of Hitler...in a Very Tight Pair of Lederhosen." *Mail Online*. 9 February 2012. Web. 25 June 2012. <

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2098223/Pictures-Hitler-rehearsing-hate-filled-speeches.html>>.

Erickson, Keith V. "Presidential Rhetoric's Visual Turn: Performance Fragments and the Politics of Illusionism." *Communication Monographs* 67.2 (2000): 138-57. Print.

Farrell, James Michael. "'This Horrible Spectacle': Visual and Verbal Sketches of Famine in Skibbereen." *The Rhetorics of Display*. Ed. Lawrence J. Prelli. U of South Carolina P, Columbia: 2006. Print.

Finnegan, Cara A. "Recognizing Lincoln: Image Vernaculars in Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 8.1 (2005): 31-58. Print.

Hariman, Robert and John Louis Lucaites. *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2007. Print.

Henderson, Greig. "Dramatism and Deconstruction: Burke, de Man, and the Rhetorical Motive." *Kenneth Burke and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Ed. Bernard L. Brock. State U of New York P, Albany: 1999. Print.

Hitler, Adolf. *Mein Kampf*. Trans. Ralph Manheim. Boston: Houghton, 1999. Print.

"Historic, Secret Recording of Hitler's 1942 Visit to Finland Aired on Radio." *Canadaeast.com*. 21 October, 2004. Web. 25 June 2012.

<<http://www.canadaeast.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041018/CPW/86687037>>.

Hoffmann, Heinrich. *Hitler Was My Friend*. Trans. R. H. Stevens. London: Burke, 1955. Print.

Hugill, Andrew. "Some Issues in the Creation of Online Music." Hugill, A. (2001) Given at *Music Without Walls? Music Without Instruments?* De Montfort University. Web. 25 June 2012.

- Kershaw, Ian. *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality in the Third Reich*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987. Print.
- . *Hitler*. New York: Norton, 1999. Print.
- Irving, David. *The Secret Diaries of Hitler's Doctor*. New York: Macmillan, 1983. Print.
- Karpinski, Sara. "Envisioning Hitler: America's Historical Imagination of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Power." *Communications of the International Brecht Society* 39 (2010): 135-49. Print.
- Machtan, Lothar. *The Hidden Hitler*. Trans. John Brownjohn. New York: Basic Books, 2001. Print.
- Maser, Werner. *Hitler: Legend, Myth & Reality*. Trans. Peter and Betty Ross. New York: Harper, 1971. Print.
- Meyrowitz, Joshua. "Displaying the Body Politic: Televisual Exposures and Concealments." *The Rhetorics of Display*. Ed. Lawrence J. Prelli. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2006. Print.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005. Print.
- Mondzain, Marie-José. "Can Images Kill?" *Critical Inquiry* Trans. Sally Shafto 36 (2009): 20-51. Print.
- Murray, Williamson. "The Making Of Hitler's Army." *Military History* 25.5 (2008): 28. *MasterFILE Premier*. Web. 25 June 2012.
- Peterson, Edward N. *The Limits of Hitler's Power*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969. Print.
- Phillips, Edward, ed. *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda*. New York: Norton, 2009. Print.

- Prelli, Lawrence J. "Rhetorics of Display: An Introduction." *Rhetorics of Display*. Ed. Lawrence J. Prelli. Columbia: U of South Carolina, 2006. Print.
- Redlich, Fritz. *Hitler: Diagnosis of a Destructive Prophet*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. Print.
- Schmölders, Claudia. *Hitler's Face: The Biography of an Image*. Trans. Adrian Daub. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2000. Print.
- Shirer, William L. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*. New York: Simon, 1990. Print.
- Staudinger, Hans. *The Inner Nazi: A Critical Analysis of Mein Kampf*. Eds. Peter M. Rutkoff and William B. Scott. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1981. Print.
- Victor, George. *Hitler: The Pathology of Evil*. Washington: Brassey's, 1998. Print.
- Waite, Robert G. L. *Kaiser and Fuhrer: A Comparative Study of Personality and Politics*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998. Print.
- Williams, David. "The Invented Hitler." Rev. of *The Hidden Hitler* by Lothar Machtan. Trans. John Brownjohn. *Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide* 8.6 (2002): 41-42.