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## **An Early Example of Personality Profiling: Henry A. Murray's Study of Adolf Hitler**

**Written for the OSS**

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### **History and psychoanalysis: an uneasy relationship**

Henry A. Murray's memorandum, *Analysis of the Personality of Adolph Hitler with Predictions of his Future Behaviour and Suggestions for Dealing with him now and after Germany's Surrender*<sup>1</sup>, can be discussed from a number of different angles all of which reflect its status as an interesting historical source. To understand its contents more fully, we can ask after its likely origins and purposes. To give insights into political and military thinking as it was developing inside U.S. institutions during the Second World War, we can consider carefully the sort of issues Murray extended his analysis to address and the kind of recommendations about Hitler and the Germans which he was prepared to make. Rather different, but perhaps more provocative, is the fact that Murray's memorandum amounts to a "personality profile" drawn up before "profiling" had become a widely used investigative

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<sup>1</sup> Henry A. Murray, ANALYSIS OF THE PERSONALITY OF ADOLPH HITLER WITH PREDICTIONS OF HIS FUTURE BEHAVIOR AND SUGGESTIONS FOR DEALING WITH HIM NOW AND AFTER GERMANY'S SURRENDER (1943) (on file with Cornell Law Library, Donovan Nuremberg Trials Collection, <http://library.lawschool.cornell.edu/donovan/hitler/>).

police practice. In this respect the document illuminates the history of that particular branch of psychological science. This is a particularly important point to make because it raises the current lack of an overarching scholarly history of profiling. Certainly there is no historical study which extends discussion of law enforcement applications of profiling to cover its possible military and intelligence uses. Furthermore, psychoanalysts can read Murray's memorandum to see how their discipline was developing in the early 1940s. What do the strengths and weaknesses of the author's method say about the theory and practice of their field at that time?

We also have to recognise, however, that Murray's memorandum demands to be treated as more than *just* a historical document. The author was attempting to provide an analysis of Hitler's personality which would stand as (more or less) correct regardless of the time or place it was read. To be fair, many readers might expect a contemporary observer trained in psychoanalysis to have a lot to say of value about the Führer. On this basis alone, it would be highly inappropriate to fail to address whether Murray actually managed to paint a convincing psycho-portrait of Germany's dictator which fits with what we now know about him.

This, unfortunately, is precisely the point at which a historically-based discussion of a psychoanalytical document threatens to become contentious. Laymen could indeed be excused for thinking history - particularly biographical history - and psychoanalysis should have a lot in common. After all, the psychoanalyst tries to construct a life history of a patient with a view to leading an individual to better self-understanding. How different can this be to the historian's attempt to render a biography with a view to explaining why, for instance, a statesman embarked on one course of action rather than another? Even though psychoanalysis proceeds very much on a face to face basis whereas history tends to remain tied to archive documentation (with the odd interview of an eye witness thrown in), and even

though psychoanalysts inform their work with theory more readily than do today's historians, still we should expect more to unite than divide practitioners from the two disciplines, shouldn't we?

The actual relationship between history and psychoanalysis is much more difficult than this. Some historians have been particularly sceptical about the usefulness of applying psychoanalysis to understand the motives of historical figures. For instance, A.J.P. Taylor proposed that psychoanalysis tells us more about the person doing the analysing than the object of research. Unsurprisingly under the circumstances, he went on to say that as many different "Hitlers" seem to exist as there are people trying to unravel his motivation.<sup>2</sup> The jibe raises a number of different issues. One involves the tendency of different styles of analysis to give different perspectives on any given individual. Some might take this as contradictory. Then there is the problem of evidence. When you are trying to apply psychoanalytical insights to a figure from history (or no doubt - and as Murray pretty much admits - anyone whom it is impossible to meet at first hand) there is a distinct problem of getting the right quality evidence about the person in question. The more remote the life temporally and culturally, the more challenging the gap that has to be bridged.

By necessity, the matter of evidence throws up the problem of assessing the impact of an event on the development of an individual. This is particularly taxing when it comes to judging the consequences of a possible trauma. So, for instance, in his two-volume biography of Hitler, historian Ian Kershaw balks at explaining the origins of his anti-semitism and right-wing politics in terms of a possible traumatic response to the overlapping experiences of being gassed in the trenches of the Western Front and the military defeat of his homeland in 1918. Kershaw feels on much firmer ground when talking about a "less dramatic process" of

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<sup>2</sup> A.J.P. TAYLOR, *The Historian as Biographer in BIOGRAPHIE UND GESCHICHTSWISSENSCHAFT* 255-56 (G. Klingenstein, et al. eds., 1979).

political development in which Hitler drifted towards counter-revolutionary politics by virtue of his post-war job as a political agent working for the German military in Munich.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, it is easy to understand Kershaw's position. We cannot talk to Hitler directly to assess what he went through as he lay in the hospital at Pasewalk, consequently, we are confronted with a great many psychological blank spaces. In a situation like this, the extent to which exponents of different disciplines are prepared to put their trust in the insights of psychoanalysis seems to vary. Historians generally are happier constructing interpretations of the past that do not stray far from the documentary record. This is, after all, the terrain they deal with on a daily basis and anyone who has pursued historical research understands well that once you start diverging from a close reading of what the evidence says, it can be hard to know where to stop. By contrast, an analyst who deals on a daily basis with patients who have experienced trauma or who display often repeated sets of pathological symptoms, may be more likely to accept the possibility that shadowy evidence, or an overall impression of events, really is indicative of an important psychological abnormality in a relatively remote figure.

Historians and psychoanalysts, then, start from different positions and bring different perspectives to bear on the life histories of individuals. As a result, even if the goals of the disciplines may seem to have much in common, their differences have led to an uneasy relationship which only adds to the degree of interest we should show for Henry A. Murray's psychoanalysis of Adolf Hitler. To follow A.J.P. Taylor's point: has Murray provided us with a picture of the Führer which is no better than any of the other existing ones; or has he managed to reveal something of lasting worth? With questions such as this firmly in mind, we can begin to discuss his memorandum.

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<sup>3</sup> I. KERSHAW, *HITLER. 1889-1936: HUBRIS* 103, 121 (1998).

## **The document and its likely origins**

*Analysis of the Personality of Adolph Hitler with Predications of his Future Behavior and Suggestions for Dealing with him now and after Germany's Surrender* is dated October 1943. The author, Henry A. Murray, M.D., is not readily associated with studies of Nazism. For all we know, this may be his only extended written treatment of the topic. He identifies himself as based in Harvard Psychological Clinic and as a member of the Committee for National Morale located in New York.

The document we have here is copy number 3 of just 30 and was classified as "OSS Confidential". Obviously it was commissioned by the Office of Strategic Services and was not intended for the public domain. That the memorandum was somehow linked to a wider OSS initiative is suggested by the sources of information on which it was based.<sup>4</sup> In addition to important contemporary texts written by the disaffected Nazi Hermann Rauschning, Hitler's earliest important biographer Konrad Heiden and the collector of the Führer's speeches, Norman Baynes, Murray's sources include "Data supplied by the Office of Strategic services [sic]." The foreword does not explain the exact nature of this information, however.

The document is divided into a foreword plus six sections. The first section is entitled "Condensed Review of the Entire Memorandum." At 53 pages long, it is not actually so condensed but is well written and does provide an interesting view of Hitler's psychology, the future possibilities for his actions and indeed an early analysis of points the Allies would need to address when eventually de-nazifying an occupied Germany. Second, at about 30 pages, comes a case study of Hitler written by W.H.D.Vernon. The foreword identifies this as

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<sup>4</sup> Murray, *supra* note 1, at 2.

originally published in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*.<sup>5</sup> Apparently it was written under the supervision of Murray and the rather better known G.W. Allport. The paper is included as an outline of the group's thinking about Hitler as it stood in Autumn 1941. The third section is about 140 pages long and provides a detailed analysis of Hitler's personality in language aimed at psychologists and psychiatrists. To be fair, modern educated readers should find plenty here that is easily accessible. The final three sections (predictions of Hitler's behaviour, suggestions as to the treatment of Hitler after his capture and suggestions about the treatment of Germany after defeat) all turn out to have been subsumed in the first section. This creates the impression that there might have been a rush to finish the document. Perhaps a deadline was introduced unexpectedly.

The document does not give a clear picture of the process through which it was commissioned, planned or drafted. Nor does it give a clear insight into the organisational structures within the OSS which gave rise to it. Fortunately, Walter C. Langer's text *The Mind of Adolf Hitler* is helpful here. Although published decades after the end of the war, its text was also produced originally as part of an OSS wartime initiative. Langer's study indicates overlap between his work and that of Murray. There are grounds for thinking they both were contributing to the same procedure dedicated to examining the Führer's psychology, so it is worth saying something about Langer's work.

Langer described himself as a kind of "king pin" who organised groups of psychologists and analysts around the U.S. with a view to helping the war effort.<sup>6</sup> Initially, in August 1941, that is to say before USA was at war with Germany, he had been approached by

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<sup>5</sup> W.H.D. Vernon, *Hitler the Man – Notes for a Case History*, 37, J. OF ABNORMAL PSYCHOL. 295-308 (1942).

<sup>6</sup> WALTER C. LANGER, *THE MIND OF ADOLF HITLER* (1972).

Colonel W.J. Donovan with a remit which included various kinds of psychological warfare.<sup>7</sup> At first Langer was expected to contribute to a better understanding of morale among the American population, especially concerning the possible responses of young American males if they were asked to go to war.<sup>8</sup> Once Donovan became head of the OSS, he asked Langer to set up a Psychoanalytic Field Unit in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The unit was expected to draw on both Harvard library and the able academics staffing the university. This initiative, however, was refused funding. Still, it is relevant to note that Murray was based in Harvard and apparently served on a committee for domestic morale. Both these facts show that Murray and Langer shared similar concerns and occupied similar environments during the Second World War.

With funding refused for his field unit, Langer was used by the OSS as "a kind of free-lance psychoanalytic consultant" and during Spring 1943 Donovan started sounding him out about the personality of Adolf Hitler.<sup>9</sup> He wanted a "realistic appraisal" of the Führer's personality which would address his role in the running of the Third Reich and its military command system.<sup>10</sup> Langer was daunted by the prospect, but managed to round up a number of assistants to help him. He also found a number of German émigrés around North America who had known Hitler well and he proceeded to interview them personally in German.<sup>11</sup> The émigrés included people such as long time Nazi Party member Otto Strasser who had left Germany before Hitler seized power (i.e. over 10 years previously). In time Strasser had

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<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 8-9.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 10.

<sup>11</sup> LANGER, *supra* note 5, at 11.

settled in Canada. From the interviews, Langer compiled a source book of documentation about Hitler. This is another historical document which it would be interesting to evaluate, if only to gauge the quality of the information being received by the US military. We can assume that this source book constituted the OSS data on which Murray partially based his work and which is mentioned in his foreword.

It is also relevant to observe that Langer had to end his work prematurely. In late Summer 1943 he was called on to terminate the project at speed and wrote a draft report which was handed in at the last minute. As a result, none of his colleagues had an opportunity to comment on it.<sup>12</sup> The timing fits with Murray's work as does the possibility of a sudden halt to the project.

More important still, even a cursory glance at the "predications" about Hitler's future behaviour made by Murray and Langer suggests strongly that the men were not just inhabiting the same institutions and environments; somehow their work was more closely linked than that. Both authors discuss how Hitler would react in the final stages of war. Their work outlines a number of possible scenarios for the termination of the conflict (e.g. Hitler committing suicide, going mad, leading his troops into battle, being captured, and so on), and although these are discussed in different orders by the two psychoanalysts, there is sufficient overlap in terms of the titles of each scenario and the possible outcome of behaviour for us to conclude that their work was linked. The exact nature of the link, indeed the closeness of the relationship between the two men is, however, unclear. Murray's document makes no mention of Langer at all; equally, Langer's book makes no mention of Murray, Allport or Vernon - not even in the bibliography. This suggests some degree of space between Langer and Murray. It is not impossible that they worked in different sections of the OSS where they

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<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 20.

pursued parallel, but rather separate, projects. Given the evident overlap in their work, however, plus the fact that both men had connections to the same academic institution (Harvard), it seems more likely that they were supposed to be attached to the same intellectual grouping appended to the same OSS branch, but decided to submit separate reports. This might have reflected some kind of falling out (academic or otherwise) or simply that given a short deadline to submit a final report the two men did so separately because there just was not enough time to co-ordinate their work.

It is not impossible, however, that there is a more detailed tale to be told here. If there were a number of psychoanalysts working for the OSS profiling Hitler during the Second World War, it would be a fine story indeed to provide a coherent picture of what exactly they were doing. Although we now have texts from Langer and Murray, there may be a still bigger picture of what was going on. This looks like an as yet unwritten page in the history of psychological profiling.

### **The history of profiling**

At the moment there is no extended, scholarly study of the history of psychological profiling. From an institutional perspective, the accepted wisdom states that the 1970s saw the breakthrough of the activity. At this point Howard Teten pioneered a profiling section within the FBI's centre at Quantico. The work of the unit subsequently became the stuff of legend and has been described in a number of publications by one of its former members of staff, Jack Douglas.<sup>13</sup> The group began by compiling a psychological database drawing on interviews with 36 convicted sexual serial murderers. This was supposed to identify the personal and behavioural characteristics of the men. The aspiration was to create a record of past criminals and their behaviour against which future crimes could be compared. The

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<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., JOHN E. DOUGLAS & MARK OLSHAKER, *MINDHUNTER: INSIDE THE FBI'S ELITE SERIAL CRIME UNIT*. (1996).

characteristics of past perpetrators could be used as a guide for the profiling of future offenders. This method of profiling, in which past records inform current investigations, is known as 'inductive'.

There had, however, been attempts at profiling before the 1970s, albeit ones that typically were less methodical and often unsuccessful. In the late nineteenth century an English doctor passed opinion on wound patterns inflicted on a victim of Jack the Ripper. In 1920s Germany, psychiatrist Ernst Gennert provided advice to the German police as they investigated the murders committed by Peter Kürten (known as 'the Vampire of Düsseldorf'). Unfortunately, the English doctor's comments went unheeded and Gennert's pointers turned out to be wrong. The German advised that the perpetrator most likely had a history of mental instability and probably had been in contact with mental health services. This was not the case and substantial time was lost to the investigation.<sup>14</sup>

The intellectual turning point for profiling tends to be dated to Dr. James A. Brussel's intervention in the George Metsky case which ran from the late 1940s until 1957. Metsky, or "the Mad Bomber", nursed a grudge against Consolidated Edison and planted a number of bombs around New York City. The police were stumped and turned to Brussel who pieced together a profile which turned out to be correct to a degree which seemed almost supernatural. When the police turned up at Metsky's apartment he put on a double-breasted jacket buttoned at the front, just as Brussel had predicted. Jack Douglas says this case was "indirectly responsible for creating the discipline of profiling within the FBI."<sup>15</sup> In due course it inspired Teten to start building his institution within the FBI.

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<sup>14</sup> JAMES MORTON, *MANHUNT: A HISTORY OF CRIME DETECTION* (2001) (giving a brief outline of these cases, aimed at a popular audience).

<sup>15</sup> JAMES E. DOUGLAS & MARK OLSHAKER, *THE ANATOMY OF MOTIVE* 272 (1999).

Murray's personality analysis of Hitler, when taken together with Langer's already well known study, underlines that the American military were years in advance of the Metsky case and decades ahead of Teten when it came to attempting the concerted institutional exploitation of psychological/psychoanalytical insight to get the upper hand over a subject. This was path breaking work and, appropriately, Murray's memorandum and Langer's book both give a sense of men involved in a new and untested enterprise. They were nervous about whether the project would prove possible.<sup>16</sup> They were uneasy about trying to diagnose an individual with whom they could not meet and about whose life evidence was contradictory. As Murray puts it, "there are no thoroughly reliable sources of information about Hitler's early life and what is known about him since 1918 is in many respects insufficient or contradictory."<sup>17</sup> He adds that although the use of metaphor in *Mein Kampf* sheds light on the personality who wrote the text, this was far from a factual document.<sup>18</sup> To such concerns, Langer added that not all of the émigrés he interviewed in North America were strictly impartial or sound. Otto Strasser's brother (Gregor) had been murdered by Hitler and Princess von Hohenlohe was pushing herself forward as a possible go-between to link the OSS to Hitler.<sup>19</sup> Understandably then, there are signs that the psychoanalysts were unsure whether their trade was actually fitted for the demands being made of it.<sup>20</sup> General Donovan's advice to Langer could have been repeated to Murray. The general had little time for academic hedging. He cut through their concerns and said simply, "Well, give it a try and see

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<sup>16</sup> LANGER, *supra* note 5, at 10.

<sup>17</sup> Murray, *supra* note 1, at 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at 2-3.

<sup>19</sup> LANGER, *supra* note 5, at 13.

<sup>20</sup> *See, e.g., id.* at 10.

what you can come up with.... Keep it [your report] brief and make it readable to the layman."<sup>21</sup>

Obviously the approach to profiling undertaken by Murray and Langer had to be different to the database approach later developed at Quantico. Both men were engaged in the production of a profile in which Hitler was treated in his own right as if a "one-off" patient. This is called "deductive" profiling and a useful recent article by Richard Badcock outlines how it can work.<sup>22</sup> It assumes that the way an individual acts, his lifestyle and his personal needs all hang together. This is because the developmental experiences of an individual produce personal psychological needs which call for satisfaction through "persistent behaviour patterns" which may find expression in different aspects of life. Badcock believes that developmental abnormalities give rise to problems which tend to revolve around issues of control, power and fantasy. Fantasy in particular can provide the foundation for pathological rather than "proper" relationships between individuals, opening the way to kinds of jealousy and envy which lead to "demanding, controlling and vindictive behaviour". This modern analyst insists that fantasy can become linked to crime as an individual attempts to realise the delusion in "real life". He also points out that well structured delusional beliefs are particularly likely to become associated with violent behaviour.<sup>23</sup> Even these brief comments from Badcock suggest that deductive profiling should have at least the potential to say something of interest about Hitler: the man does

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<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> Richard Badcock, *Developmental and Clinical Issues in Relation to Offending in the Individual*, in *OFFENDER PROFILING: THEORY, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE* 9-12 (J. L. Jackson & D. A. Bekerian eds., 1997).

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* at 30.

seem to have had a difficult childhood development, fantasised of a Thousand Year Reich and came to persecute vindictively (among others) Europe's Jews.

### **The three purposes of Murray's analysis**

Naturally there were differences between Murray's project and how modern law enforcement agencies conceptualise the purpose of profiling. Take the most obvious current use of profiling: police may call on a profiler when they lack an obvious suspect for a crime. Under such circumstances profiling proceeds roughly in line with Edmund Locard's adage that "every contact leaves a trace." The scene of crime and treatment of the victim are investigated closely with a view to ascertaining how exactly the perpetrator carried out the offence and the kind of satisfaction he wanted to attain from it. The aim is to get an outline of the type of individual the police should be looking for so that the investigation can be managed all the more efficiently by prioritising particular kinds of suspects.

It was thanks to crime scene evidence that Brussel produced the famous profile he did. The psychologist thought the bomber would be foreign-born, because the spelling patterns on his notes to Consolidated Edison showed Central European influences. Brussel thought Metsky would be dressed very carefully because his bombs were constructed meticulously. In other words, using the likely linkages which Badcock says should occur between criminal behaviour and more general lifestyle, and building on a close interpretation of available evidence, Brussel came up with the general characteristics of a hitherto unidentified criminal.<sup>24</sup>

Murray's profiling of Hitler proceeded rather differently. In fact, in some respects modern practices were stood on their head. By mid-1943 the criminal was well known, but the true extent of his offences were still unclear (the full horror of the Holocaust had not

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<sup>24</sup> MORTON, *supra* note 13, at 102-03.

really emerged, for instance). Murray did not spend a long time analysing a single event in great detail, but from the outset attempted to generate a more general view of the perpetrator. Perhaps in part his hands were tied by the nature of the evidence available to him. Murray personally had access neither to government documentation held in Germany nor to individuals involved centrally in Hitler's criminal undertakings at the time. With this said, still he could have spent much more time picking apart, say, the Roehm Putsch of June - July 1934. He could have made much more extensive and detailed inferences about the Führer from the implementation and aftermath of these political murders. Instead, Murray's memorandum (like that of Langer) is a very wide-ranging piece of work. It is more generally biographical and, as a result, seems more impressionistic. Rather than knitting specific evidence and specific personality characteristics together, Murray was concerned with giving a pen picture of Adolf Hitler "in the round." Hence, the analysis starts by depicting Hitler's likely childhood. The aim probably reflects Murray's interpretation of what psychoanalysis had to unveil: the experiences of the child as father to the characteristics of the older man.

A number of distinct aims emerge clearly from the analysis. In the *first* place, the OSS wanted some indication of how Hitler was likely to act as the war drew to a close. It amounted to an exercise in assessing the likely risks that would accompany America's military success. Many of Murray's comments here were predictable. Of course Hitler's neurotic spells were likely to increase in frequency and duration just as his leadership capabilities were likely to decrease in the face of mounting military defeats.<sup>25</sup> More perceptive was the idea that mounting pressure would lead Hitler to become ever more

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<sup>25</sup> Murray, *supra* note 1, at 29.

lethargic and he would find energy only when planning "aggressive offence."<sup>26</sup> There proved to be truth in this.

Occasional comments are more unexpected. Most people would never have imagined that Hitler might stage his own murder for the sake of posterity.<sup>27</sup> Murray even wondered if he might have himself killed by a Jew in order to stimulate a final anti-semitic uprising. Thinking like this shows the sheer scope of possibilities for the end of conflict that people could come up with if they gave their imaginations full rein. It suggests the U.S. military really wanted to be prepared for each and every future possibility. Less fanciful was the prospect of Hitler killing himself by his own hand. Murray felt this was "not at all unlikely", but he also thought it would happen "according to the most heroic, tragic and dramatic pattern". Hitler would retreat to the Berghof in Berchtesgaden and blow up himself together with half of the mountain as Allied troops approached to take him into custody.<sup>28</sup> Such a scenario certainly corresponded to Hitler's taste for theatrical political show and would have left an indelible stamp on world history. In the event, of course, Hitler committed suicide in quite different circumstances: underground in Berlin alongside his wife, Eva Braun, following a simple wedding ceremony. Murray had not considered this more straightforward possibility. If there was symbolism in Hitler's death as it actually happened, it involved the very rejection of the political ceremony long associated with his politics, likewise that it happened not in Bavaria but at the heart of the German capital.

Another variation on the theme of suicide involved Hitler dying while leading troops into battle on the eastern front. This possibility troubled Murray particularly since he felt it could provide the basis for a long lasting Hitler cult. At this point we encounter the *second*

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<sup>26</sup> *Id.* at 222.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.* at 30.

purpose of the memorandum - to recommend ways to influence the Führer's behaviour to the advantage of the Allies.

In general terms, Murray believed it would be possible for U.S. authorities to take steps to "accelerate Hitler's mental deterioration" and "drive him insane." As he put it, there are "various psychological techniques available for accelerating Hitler's nervous breakdown, but they will not be considered here." He continued to say, however, that none "could be so certainly effective as repeated military setbacks."<sup>29</sup> More specifically, Murray also thought it should be possible to prevent Hitler either committing suicide or getting himself killed in action. To this end, he thought Germany should be flooded with propaganda telling Germans that Hitler was planning "to leave them treacherously to their fate by getting himself killed." The propaganda should stress that Hitler was concerned with personal glory rather than the welfare of the nation. In this light, suicide should become an easy way out, "a cowardly betrayal of his people, the act of a bad conscience, the quintessence of vanity." Ridicule was also to be applied and Murray suggested dropping absurd cartoons showing Hitler dashing to his death against the Russians.<sup>30</sup> The analyst felt appropriate pamphlets should be dropped over Berchtesgaden where one certainly would reach the Führer's hands

Having taken steps to prevent Hitler attempting a "glorious" suicide, Murray outlined steps which could be taken to encourage him to surrender to the Allies. Exploiting Hitler's interest in Napoleon he recommended propaganda suggesting a captured Hitler would be sent to St. Helena. This should be written in such a way that the option was described as dire, but in the knowledge that it would actually appeal to Hitler, since he would view it as a future which would allow him to paint and write in peace to a ripe old age. Naturally a more

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<sup>28</sup> *Id.* at 32-33.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.* at 36.

<sup>30</sup> Murray, *supra* note 1, at 36.

cynical purpose stood behind Murray's thinking. He said in due course Hitler would discover "there was to be no Saint Helena for him."<sup>31</sup> He would be turned over to the United Nations, declared "mentally unbalanced" and put in an asylum. He would be studied and tested by psychiatrists and psychologists, with films of his inevitable tirades being issued to the world, especially the German people, with a view to discrediting him. Murray said "the pictures will become quite tiresome after a while and the people will get bored with Hitler in a year or so. (Trust science to take the drama out of anything.)"<sup>32</sup>

Obviously quite an unscrupulous course of action was being recommended here. The police in modern Britain, for instance, certainly are not allowed to call on psychologists to produce quite such dishonest suggestions. But Murray was making his manipulative proposals in a rather different moral context. He was not dealing with simply a "suspect" and he was not working in peacetime. He was also trying to begin laying the foundations for a post-war world in which Germany would not disturb the peace again. This highlights the *third* purpose for his analysis of Hitler's personality.

Murray wanted to pave the way for the de-nazification of Germany. To this end, he thought about strategies to begin replacing Hitler in the minds of Germans. His starting point was to recognise that Hitler was promising Germans global and historical importance. As a result, the image of Hitler had to be severed from the aim, and then an alternative had to be put in his place.

As a first step, Murray recommended dismantling the reverence with which Germans regarded Hitler. He proposed that the Allies send regular newsletters to Germany listing names of captured German soldiers and assuring the German people their relatives were

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<sup>31</sup> *Id.* at 36-38.

<sup>32</sup> *Id.* at 34.

happy at the prospect of going to a 'free land' (i.e. the U.S.). The pamphlets would only ever apply derogatory phrases to Hitler, for instance "Amateur Strategist", "False Messiah", "Corporal Satan" or "World Criminal No. 1". At the same time the propaganda would introduce new images of global importance, for instance with talk of a "World Conscience" or "World Army."<sup>33</sup> In due course, a world court could be constituted to judge senior Nazis. The legal process, of course, would be supplemented by a period of occupation of Germany during which time Murray recommended there should be an emphasis on the split between Nazism's crime and a more worthy Allied/global cause. Germans such as Thomas Mann and Reinhold Niebuhr should be asked to write anti-Nazi literature. Occupying troops should be drawn only from élite regiments and should be taught about German culture in order for them to be respectful about the non-Nazi achievements of Germany. With strategies to push Germans away from the Nazi legacy and towards a more healthy one, in due course Murray thought the nation would become fit for re-integration into the international community. Again a global cause was deemed the most likely effective basis on which this could happen. As Murray put it, "For the conversion of Germany, the most effective agency will be some form of world federation. Without this the Allied victory will have no permanently important consequence."<sup>34</sup> In this way, Murray envisaged the replacement in German culture of a globally-significant malignant political force with a global force for good.

It is worth mentioning that Murray was quite perceptive in his recommendations about de-Nazification. The Allies did apply an international court against senior Nazi criminals (the International Military Tribunal held at Nuremberg) and not long after the war steps were taken to include West Germany in significant international organisations. In particular, much

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<sup>33</sup> *Id.* at 41.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.* at 53.

was done to bind the West German military into NATO and the state into the European project. It is also interesting to observe that the identities of average West Germans did respond to membership of a collectivity larger than that of their own nation. Rejecting the heritage of their recent past, by the 1980s it was not uncommon for younger Germans to regard themselves as "European" ahead of "German". So, if these were the aims addressed in Murray's work, how successful was specifically his reading of Hitler's personality?

### **The academic context for interpreting Hitler's personality**

At this point it is worth spelling out that there does seem to be a problem of coherence in Murray's memorandum. This involves more than just the reproduction *in toto* of Vernon's article in the middle of the study. In fact the author does too little to tie up his discussion of Hitler's possible future behaviour and how to manage it with his own extended analysis of the Führer's personality. The discussion of future behaviour and its management seems to rely pretty much on common sense and, to a great extent, could stand on its own; the extended analysis, however, is a psychoanalytic discussion which at times seems to lose sight of the fact that it is supposed to give practical guidance to a military institution. Since the extended analysis was hardly going to be applied to the benefit of the subject, it becomes a study of carried out largely for academic interest. Before moving on to discuss this extended personality analysis, however, we have to put it in context by outlining the thrust of just a few of the other psychological studies of Hitler. The literature is immense and the findings have been quite varied.

Central to Langer's war time analysis of Hitler was the idea that he genuinely thought of himself as "the Chosen One" destined to lead Germany to greatness.<sup>35</sup> This "Messiah Complex" was interpreted as rooted in an awareness of a number of siblings who died while

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<sup>35</sup> LANGER, *supra* note 5, at 158.

Hitler was young and his survival in the very hostile conditions of the First World War. But, naturally, there was more to Hitler's personality than this. Langer believed that as a boy Hitler was brutalised by his father, Alois. The experience led to repressed hostilities which produced subservience towards authority figures in later life. Hence, Hitler never progressed beyond the rank of corporal during the First World War and later exhibited deference to figures such as Hindenburg and Ludendorff. In addition, the abuse created repressed frustrations within Hitler. These came out later, specifically when Germany was defeated in 1918. Langer thought Hitler exhibited a hysterical reaction to defeat and subsequently projected his frustrations onto the Jews.

G.M. Gilbert was a psychologist dealing with the Nazi defendants at the Nuremberg war crimes trials. Later he published a psychological interpretation of the leading Nazis, including Hitler. Roughly in line with Langer's reading of things, he took up the image of Alois as "an embittered, ill-tempered alcoholic" and went on to propose that the father created an Oedipus complex in his son.<sup>36</sup> What's more, his father's sustained and severe "cruelty and lack of understanding" drove Hitler increasingly into a fantasy world.<sup>37</sup> Knowing that his father had been an illegitimate child, and under the illusion that his paternal grandfather might have been a Jew, Hitler later displaced his pent up frustrations onto the image of "the Jew."<sup>38</sup>

The idea of deep hostility between Adolf and Alois made the transition to post-war academic thinking. R.G.L. Waite accepted that the relationship constituted a textbook example of an Oedipus complex and said bluntly that "in attempting to destroy all the Jews,

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<sup>36</sup> G. M. GILBERT, *THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DICTATORSHIP* 18-21 (1950).

<sup>37</sup> *Id.* at 22-23.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.* at 64.

Hitler was attempting to destroy his father.”<sup>39</sup> Waite also hypothesised that Hitler may have had a borderline personality disorder, perhaps owing something to a damaged left-hemisphere of the brain.<sup>40</sup>

In the 1970s, Rudolph Binion tried to look beyond Hitler's relationship with his father. He paid more attention to the relationship with the mother, Klara. Bearing this in mind, Binion also proposed that Hitler experienced two traumas. The first came in 1907 when Klara died of cancer. Since he believed mother and son had been particularly close, Adolf was devastated and he reacted against the doctor who had failed to save her. This was a certain Dr. Bloch who happened to be Jewish. In time, Hitler began to blame all Jews for the death of his mother. The rage was energised in Hitler's mind specifically by the defeat of Germany in 1918. The death of his mother and the defeat of his Motherland coalesced in his psyche.

Other readings of Hitler's personality have been more pathologically-oriented still. Erich Fromm described him as ”a clinical case of necrophilia.” Semi-autistic as a child, narcissistic, lacking a sense of reality, necrophilious, with a psychotic/schizophrenic side, we may wonder how on earth Hitler functioned in day-to-day life.<sup>41</sup> More recently, Edleff Schwaab has described him as a psychopath who lacked all sentiment for others.<sup>42</sup> Most recent of all however, at the end of an exhaustive study, F. Redlich adjudged him to have been ”a destructive and paranoid prophet.”<sup>43</sup> Others have emphasised the possible impact of substance abuse on Hitler. Heston and Heston hypothesised that during the war years Hitler

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<sup>39</sup> R. G. L. WAITE, *THE PSYCHOPATHIC GOD: ADOLF HITLER* 365 (1993).

<sup>40</sup> *Id.* at 355.

<sup>41</sup> ERICH FROMM, *THE ANATOMY OF HUMAN DESTRUCTIVENESS* 572 (1977).

<sup>42</sup> E. H. SCHWAAB, *HITLER'S MIND: A PLUNGE INTO MADNESS* 45 (1992).

experienced amphetamine poisoning.<sup>44</sup> Park suggested he may even have had temporal lobe epilepsy, with concomitant personality alterations, brought on by too many medications, including amphetamines such as cocaine.<sup>45</sup>

At this point we may recall with some sympathy A.J.P. Taylor's comment that there are as many "Hitlers" as analysts. So does Murray offer anything that is both distinctive and valuable?

### **Murray's personality analysis**

We have to admit that not everything in Murray's profile works well. Talk of Hitler being a sex pervert with a criminal history who might have been involved in a serious sexual event while still at school is not very compelling.<sup>46</sup> There is no good evidence for any of this. Likewise, we just do not know whether or not he favoured sado-masochistic sex. In fact, if Murray was going to speculate about any aspect of the Führer's psyche he should have left sexual perversity and sado-masochism to one side and considered the experience of four years in the trenches of France. "Nervous diseases" were a major problem afflicting German soldiers during the First World War. As many as 613,047 Germans were treated for them between 1914 and 1918.<sup>47</sup> By 1918, 5% of German hospital beds were reserved for hysterical cases.<sup>48</sup> Given that Hitler's blindness of 1918 may have owed as much to hysteria as to

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<sup>43</sup> F. REDLICH, *HITLER: DIAGNOSIS OF A DESTRUCTIVE PROPHET* 335 (1999).

<sup>44</sup> LEONARD L. HESTON AND RENATE HESTON, *THE MEDICAL CASEBOOK OF ADOLF HITLER: HIS ILLNESSES, DOCTORS, AND DRUGS* 11 (1979).

<sup>45</sup> BERT EDWARD PARK, *THE IMPACT OF ILLNESS ON WORLD LEADERS* 150-82 (1986).

<sup>46</sup> Murray, *supra* note 1, at 108.

<sup>47</sup> Doris Kaufmann, *Science as Cultural Practice: Psychiatry in the First World War and Weimar Germany*, 34 *Journal of Contemporary History* 125 (1999).

<sup>48</sup> Paul Lerner, *Psychiatry and Casualties of War in Germany, 1914-1918*, 35 *J. CONTEMP. HIST.* 18 (2000).

mustard gas, there was a case for considering the possible consequences of war for him and the impact (or lack of it) of German treatment regimens.

But not all of Murray's analysis is unsatisfactory. In fact, a surprising amount of it seems to hold water. In general terms, Hitler's personality is described as one of counteractive narcissism [sic].<sup>49</sup> The counteractive quality represented an attempt to overcome early weakness and a desire to revenge early hurtful insults. Elements of the self which, potentially, were regarded as weak became repressed and the individual oriented himself towards a suitable alternative and compensatory goal. In Hitler's case, and in line with both his narcissism and the rejection of weakness, his alternative ideal revolved around dominance and superiority. Hence, Murray talks of Hitler's "craving for superiority coming out of unbearable feelings of inferiority" and the burden of "wounded narcissism".<sup>50</sup> It is quite logical, therefore, that Murray describes Hitler as energised by resentment and opposition to anything that stood in his way. Indeed this characteristic was so well developed that Murray believes Hitler could only work with purpose when energised by someone standing in his way.<sup>51</sup> Although Murray's argument might go a bit far here (since Hitler certainly could be motivated by creative architectural projects too), it is hard to disagree that Hitler responded to perceived opposition with particular passion.

As his analysis unfolds, Murray manages to describe a recognisable Hitler. In the process he provides a good selection of perceptive and plausible insights. Whether or not we agree that Hitler had a "weak ego", Murray is right that the Führer could be hopelessly indecisive and that his writings made plain a certain mental disorganisation. The ideas that

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<sup>49</sup> Murray uses "narcissism" throughout, which is in modern parlance "narcissism."

<sup>50</sup> Murray, *supra* note 1, at 195.

<sup>51</sup> *Id.* at 25.

Hitler lacked the capacity to be self-critical, never applied the same standards to himself as to others, and tended to work according to the dictates of emotional energy and intuition more than rational planning are all hard to quibble with.

Furthermore, Murray's depiction of the dictator tends to be more nuanced and balanced than is often the case. Like so many other psychoanalysts, Murray tries to begin interpreting a personality in terms of the relationships which grew up between the son and his parents. He believes the roots of Hitler's counteractivism and narcissism are to be found here. The problem, as Murray recognises readily, is that we lack quality information about these early years. Nonetheless he proceeds to paint a picture of the Hitler family's dynamics which seems less mono-dimensional than most. The memorandum tries not to permit too narrow a reading of Freudian theory to obscure the wider complexities of relationships which develop between parents and children. In this way, Murray provides a more textured picture of the past than, say, Gilbert and Waite. So while Hitler may have been intimidated by his father's rage, still he stood in awe of the older man's power. Plausibly, given what we know of Hitler, Murray suggests that this respect in fact was more important for Adolf than love.<sup>52</sup> The analysis continues to argue that Alois' background as an upwardly mobile and a stout member of the Austrian bourgeoisie left a heritage for his son which helped condition the possibilities open to him in later life. As Murray says, a counteractive personality such as Hitler's might well have been attracted by Communism. In this case, however, there was no attraction because Hitler could not give up the feelings of social superiority which he took from specifically his father's social success.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Id.* at 108-09.

<sup>53</sup> *Id.* at 112, 127-29.

To balance the parental equation, Murray also contributes novel ideas about Hitler and his mother. He proposes that this relationship was less intense and devoted than tends to be assumed elsewhere (perhaps in areas of Binion's work). He argues that it would be consistent with Hitler's general contempt for weakness that, in the end, he repudiated his mother's femininity and warmth. Hitler may even have felt contempt for her submission to his father's will.<sup>54</sup> This reading of Hitler's personality development certainly fits with his more general contempt for those he judged to be weak. As he said of the European statesmen who lined up against him in 1939, "Our opponents are little worms. I saw them in Munich."<sup>55</sup>

Fromm's talk of Hitler as necrophilous and schizophrenic - a clinical case - perhaps also Schwaab's use of the tag "psychopath", might be taken to imply a personality untroubled, even satisfied, by the damage it inflicted on others. Here too Murray provides an insight more in line with the involved nature of Hitler's personality. He maintains that Hitler was "no healthy amoral brute" but rather a "hive of secret neurotic compunctions" which reflected "the unconscious operation of a bad conscience."<sup>56</sup> According to this analysis, Hitler was prepared to pursue increasingly radical ends precisely because deep within him there lurked a bad conscience which he had to assuage. That is to say, once Hitler had started on his course of brutality, he had to keep going because only continued successes using his chosen techniques could prove that his path was actually justified.<sup>57</sup> This interpretation is quite attractive. After all, a number of Hitler's cruel acts, such as the Roehm Putsch of 1934, were

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<sup>54</sup> *Id.* at 114-15.

<sup>55</sup> By "Munich", of course, Hitler meant the Munich Conference of Autumn 1938 at which key European statesmen agreed to permit Hitler to occupy the Sudetenland (an area of Czechoslovakia inhabited by a large community of ethnic Germans). THOMAS LECKIE JARMAN, *THE RISE AND FALL OF NAZI GERMANY* 222 (1955).

<sup>56</sup> Murray, *supra* note 1, at 11.

<sup>57</sup> *Id.* at 147-51.

followed by a period of anguish (with symptoms such as nightmares) which gave the impression of a conscience at work which Hitler had a hard time to repress.<sup>58</sup>

With this said, Hitler showed no sign of bad conscience over his treatment of the Jewish Question. Murray's idea that Hitler's anti-Semitism spoke of self-contempt and personal weaknesses which were projected onto Europe's Jews is not exactly novel, but he does develop the argument further. The analyst is correct to highlight that Hitler frequently linked Jews with images of disease, particularly syphilis, and that this also needed explanation.<sup>59</sup> That Hitler had a deep personal fear of syphilitic infection and blamed a Jewish source for the possibility (maybe a prostitute in Vienna) is one possible interpretation.<sup>60</sup> The trouble, of course, is that even today we have no definite evidence on the topic. This flaw in Murray's analysis is a general problem no one can solve.

The last point we want to make here about Murray's memorandum, however, is probably the most important. Psychoanalysts are not necessarily trained to cross cultural and historical boundaries. Some seem to assume quite simply that their trade should move easily from one society to another, from one cultural context to another. This is the point at which Murray's study comes into its own; he manages to show a good leap of empathy with a subject who came from quite a specific cultural context, the detail of which did matter. Murray emphasises, quite rightly, that Hitler was not a so-called "Reich German" but an "ethnic German". In other words, he came from beyond the borders of "Germany-proper" and that this fact alone had important consequences. On the one hand, it meant that Hitler's idea of "Germany" encompassed the whole area in which Germans lived, from Alsace to the

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<sup>58</sup> *Id.* at 11-12.

<sup>59</sup> *Id.* at 65.

<sup>60</sup> *Id.* at 76-78.

Volga. On the other hand, it also meant that his idea of German identity had much about it that was rather artificial. Living outside the German heartland, he was left to create an imaginative representation of what exactly it was like to live within the German state.<sup>61</sup> Hence, when Hitler moved from Vienna to Munich, he took with him a particular set of images, even fantasies, of what it meant to be German. Likewise the general political project he developed for the German nation did not simply reflect the values of Germanness as it actually was, but in part represented a fantastic construction of Germanness held by an outsider.

In fact, Hitler was an "outsider" in a number of ways. He was an ethnic German who looked jealously towards the German state from beyond its borders. In Vienna he was a "down and out" who looked enviously at bourgeois society. During the First World War he was an Austrian serving in a Bavarian regiment. During the Weimar Republic he was an Austrian leading a political party in Germany, one which actually attempted a revolution in 1923 and which sometimes seemed poised for something similar during the crisis of 1930-32. Approaching government, and as Chancellor (initially at least) he was looked down on by Germany's conservative élites as a "corporal" or a "post master" whom they could use. In this light, Murray is probably correct that he was a resentful outcast who wanted to construct a homeland as he imagined it should be, not in line with its more "natural" development. If in the course of this imaginative career he showed delusional symptoms similar to those of paranoid schizophrenia, Murray is also probably correct that the condition never became significantly debilitating because he managed to manipulate reality according to his views.<sup>62</sup> He persuaded people to buy into his vision and in the process managed to avoid a sense of

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<sup>61</sup> Murray, *supra* note 1, at 180.

<sup>62</sup> *Id.* at 26, 147.

isolation which might have precipitated serious illness.<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, the outcome was that he managed to damage others as he lived out his fantasies and assuaged the pent up resentments.

## **Conclusion**

Murray's analysis of Adolf Hitler is interesting in two main respects. First, it is a historical source which starts to fill out a generally ignored phase in the history of personality profiling. Clearly, the deductive variety of profiling began to be pursued by the U.S. military some time before the success of Dr. Brussel in the Metsky case, not to say the organisational efforts of Howard Teten inside the FBI. This fact suggests that the investigative technique has had quite a varied history and we can only hope that someone soon takes up the challenge of writing a good, academically credible and comprehensive history of it. Second, Murray did manage to develop quite a credible picture of Hitler. He really was a resentful, emotional outsider who worked at least as much on the basis of intuition and artificial images as on rational judgement and given realities. Murray's suggestions about possible strategies to manipulate Hitler's behaviour and how to approach the German people both had a certain plausibility about them, although we might wonder whether these really were informed by his hundred-plus pages of personality analysis or just a kind of self-evident street wisdom.

Of course a great many questions come out of Murray's memorandum. Most obviously, we do not know whether anyone took much notice of it. Whether it informed OSS strategy directly or was something of a footnote to Langer's better known report is unclear. All we know for sure is that it was a contribution to a rather unclear process unfolding within the OSS. It is fair to say, however, that the document makes us want to know more about the full range of psychological initiatives developing inside this institution during the Second

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<sup>63</sup> *Id.* at.26.

World War. No doubt in addition to the more extensive work on profiling Hitler which was going on, there were all manner of other initiatives. This essay alone has touched on topics to do with maintaining morale at home, manipulating enemies abroad and preparing the way for the de-Nazification of Germany. Even if Murray's career was marginal in these areas, the fact that he touched upon them probably indicates that they were being addressed more directly elsewhere. In any event, Murray's memorandum highlights the potentially interesting theme of studying psychology as applied by the American military during the Second World War.

Turning to Hitler himself, Murray's analysis really does highlight the potential importance of fantasy in Hitler's mind. As things stand, there is no extended study of the likely full range of Hitler's fantasies. Certainly there is no such study which gives adequate weight to Hitler's position as ethnic German whose conception of Germany was artificial and imaginative rather than rooted in lived everyday life. In this respect, there is scope for studying the origins and significance of his fantasies at greater length.

As a final point, it is indeed suggestive that Hitler became the subject of a technique (personality profiling) which today is used most frequently for criminals. Does this suggest we would do best to understand him as a criminal like any other? Taking this line further, it is impossible to ignore the fact that a well-known classification of serial killers includes a type of "mission oriented" or "missionary" killer. Such a person is not regarded as psychotic or obviously insane. He does not hear voices or see visions. Typically he is aware of his actions, but still comes to believe the world has to be made rid of a particular category of person (not unusually prostitutes).<sup>64</sup> It would be interesting to see a really detailed profile of such criminals, perhaps good quality individual case studies too. Could people like this

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<sup>64</sup> RONALD M. HOLMES & STEPHEN T. HOLMES, CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON SERIAL MURDER 12 (Ronald M. Holmes & Stephen T. Holmes eds., 1998). It is suggestive that "mission-oriented" serial murderers often pick on prostitutes and that Hitler *may* have had a

actually have had anything in common with a man who once became Chancellor of one of the most important states in Europe? It's quite a thought.

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bad experience with a Jewish prostitute in Vienna. Unfortunately, of course, we lack the evidence for this observation to be anything other than speculation.