



Er ist wieder da

Timur Vermes

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Sommer 2011. Adolf Hitler erwacht auf einem leeren Grundstück in Berlin-Mitte. Ohne Krieg, ohne Partei, ohne Eva. Im tiefsten Frieden, unter Tausenden von Ausländern und Angela Merkel. 66 Jahre nach seinem vermeintlichen Ende strandet der Gröfaz in der Gegenwart und startet gegen jegliche Wahrscheinlichkeit eine neue Karriere - im Fernsehen. Dieser Hitler ist keine Witzfigur und gerade deshalb erschreckend real. Und das Land, auf das er trifft, ist es auch: zynisch, hemmungslos erfolgsgeil und auch trotz Jahrzehnten deutscher Demokratie vollkommen chancenlos gegenüber dem Demagogen und der Sucht nach Quoten, Klicks und "Gefällt mir"-Buttons. Eine Persiflage? Eine Satire? Polit-Comedy? All das und mehr: Timur Vermes' Romandebüt ist ein literarisches Kabinettstück erster Güte.

Er ist wieder da Details

Date : Published September 21st 2012 by Eichborn (first published September 1st 2012)

ISBN : 9783847905172

Author : Timur Vermes

Format : Hardcover 400 pages

Genre : Fiction, Humor, European Literature, German Literature, Contemporary

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Lina says

Update, 24th July 2014

I think I can now safely assume that it's a generational thing. There's been a rather heated argument with an older female reviewer of this book, and I figured I'd ask my grandparents about their opinions on the book. My grandmother was born in 1937 in northern Germany, my grandfather 1933, equally in northern Germany. As my grandpa was at that point old enough, he had had to join the Deutsche Jugend (German Youth - the group you entered before you entered the Hitler-Jugend). They send me a letter, and I will directly translate what my grandma wrote:

"[...] I am sorry, but I couldn't warm myself up to the book, albeit being amused sometimes. I can imagine that it's like that for anyone who comes back into our world after 66 years.

The arguments about certain people in our country have disgusted me so much, that I have not ended the book (A/N: I assume my grandma links the character's opinion with the author's opinion; I hope most of you don't make that mistake)

Then grandpa read it and, well, you see in the addition what he thinks about it.

I am born in 1937 and know the story only by having it told to me, for which I am grateful.

I hope that you forget it soon, and that you can engage yourself with nicer subjects."

Well, yeah... not really, eh? :D And now for my grandpa's thoughts (It's so cute, he even added a subject title at the beginning. Ah, old people xD).

"This book seems to be written for the generation who were grandma's parents. The doings of the Gröfaz (Gröfaz = Größter Führer/Feldherr aller Zeiten; Greatest leader of all time (Gröfaz is ironically used, mostly. At least I never heard anyone not using it for mocking purposes, and it's fun, yeah)) Adolf Hitler was in the time of 1924 - 1945.

The book is written humorously in some passages, but only understandable if one shoves the gruesome events during the leadership of the Nazis aside. (A/N: Grandpa's opinion; obviously, I disagree)

This, in turn, insults in the most awful way that part of the people who were directly or indirectly affected by the unimaginable schemes. Even today there are survivors who can report on this convincingly. I am convinced that this book at best had never been written; or after heavy editing measures, in many parts separated, serve as a cabaret draft."

Granted, those are only two more older people whose opinion I know now, but granted, for one I could not have asked my other grandparents, because one is dead and both have been too young to remember anything (born in the 40s), and for second I can't just walk around asking older people to read this book, and if I did so with my landlady I'm not so sure if that would end well...

It says, however, that of three older people who have come across this book, one dismissed it almost instantaneously, and the other two tried to read it and gave up somewhere midway through. And, also, they have given almost the same reasons as to why they did so. Which I understand, really, since, yeah, that generation is far more likely to be so opposed even towards a satire.

But that brings up what is, in my mind, so important with the author and many of the readers: *We are not from that generation.*

We are younger. We only know about the events by history lessons, because no, people don't talk about it in their families. I grew up without knowing that a man named Hitler ever existed, had it not been for school lessons I wouldn't have known. Which again brings up a point: We need to STOP the silence. We need to address those issues. The wounds have mostly healed, the current young generation is far enough apart from

this history to still feel connected to it, and therefore to feel the duty to think about it, while being far enough apart from it to not have the emotional ballast of the older generation.
We are now. We are reflecting on ourselves. And we are not silent.

... sorry, grams. ^^'

This is a very difficult book. As much as I would like to give it a humorous review - I can't.

So, let's start from the beginning. What do we know about the plot? Hitler wakes up in modern Berlin, in the summer of 2011, is quite confused at first, but, as he so proudly points out(Repeatedly and repeatedly and repeatedly), he's the kind of guy who's so focused on achieving his goal that he ignores the fact that 1. he oughta be dead 2. he traveled through time. He goes on exploring the new world - and gets a career on TV.

Now, the very premise of this work does turn many people off immediately, I have seen that quite often, both in private discussions and reviews, but also in interviews, commentaries by journalists and in one german talk-show. The question many people ask is this: Is this book pro-Hitler? It often is paired with another question: Is the author a Nazi?

01. "Is this book pro-Hitler?":

If you've read the blurb you could say "Maybe". If you've read the book, you should say "No!". Because it's very, very direct in that aspect. In fact, it's so direct that the very fact that Hitler is not a cuddly neighbours dog jumps in your face with rocket-speed and breaks your nose.

Don't be mistaken: It is not impossible that this work brings across the wrong message. But *mind you*, this needs something to already be there *in the reader*: Pro-Nazi sentiments. Anti-semitism. Racism. Ignorance towards logic and empathy. Still: That is not the fault of the author. Also, those cases are the minority. I am not making this up, pretty much every reaction towards this book can be categorised in two ways. 1: "*Oh God, it's Hitler, I hate it!*" or 2: "*This is satire, criticism and a well-deserved warning against Nazi ideology!*"

What I essentially want to say is this: If it so happens that someone gets the wrong idea, then that's not the author's fault, simply because he made it so apparent that you should *not like the protagonist*.

Let's take a closer look. So, there are jokes involved. There's humour in many things Hitler does and gets confronted with. Try to cut that all out - nobody would read it. Seriously, Vermees managed to grasp Hitler's style so wonderfully, it could be Hitler himself writing, were it not for the lesson in it. Have you, dear reader(And I know you're reading this!), ever tried to read "Mein Kampf"? I tried. I failed. It's just unendurable. No kidding, a law textbook reads like a children's book compared to that. The sane mind cannot endure Hitlers very own book for longer than a paragraph. Trust me, I tried.

Does the humour in this book make Hitler look good? It doesn't make him look bad, I assure you - until he says something misogynistic, racist or anti-semitic right after that.

An example: There's a point where Hitler complains about the overloading of electronical devices, e.g. mobile phones, with unneeded crap that leaves the young people pressing their noses against the screens so much thousands of them get knocked over by cars. His comment: "*It will be this one of my first plans to forbid these telephone devices, actually to only allow them for elements of sub-races or maybe even order those to use them. Those can lie for days on the major streets of Berlin like dead hedgehogs, that's at least a practical advantage.*"

Do you notice that he doesn't pay any thought or emotion to the lives of people he deems unworthy? Do you notice that he talks about teenagers being killed by cars because of his order, and that he's fine with that? Yes? So why do you complain?

Hey, be all against Hitler the way you want, if you so choose to avoid anything that portrays him in less than

the light of the psychopath you think he was, that's your choice. But for the love of sanity, look at what the author does. Yes, he portrays Hitler like a human being, like a person very close to the original. But that's exactly the thing: That's what makes it so evident that Hitler was thinking and doing bad things!

I mean, come on, would you view any protagonist who promotes the organized extermination of specific human races as something worth doing as positive? Yes? Please think again.

It's not that this Hitler says the bad things. That's obvious and it doesn't go away just because he makes some funny jokes(Most of those actually more related to the time travel than anything else). It's that the people around this Hitler *hear those things* and *don't do anything about it!* Why, yes, there are people who stand up against him. Those are either the politically over-correct types or modern Nazis. The first because they're concerned, the latter because they think he's making fun of their Führer(When actually they're already good at making themselves ridiculous). Others are in general charmed by his, as they think, satirical portrayal of the dead Austrian. So much that they fail to notice his misogyny. His racism. His anti-semitism. Which is a pretty accurate portrayal of our society(Speaking of Germany here, but if you're from the US you should also check your views on those topics, just to be sure. There's an easy test for misogyny: Do you think that a woman is guilty if she get's molested or raped? Then yes, you're misogynistic.). Misogyny nowadays? Not discussed! Dismissed! Always a part of some conspiracy against politicians! Yes, that's idiotic. And racism? Good heavens, no, we don't even talk about that, how could we be racist? How? How? ... or maybe we just are? And don't even get me started in anti-semitism, that deserves a whole school subject.

Back to Hitler(This one just sounds so weird...): What's left to say? Not much, actually. There's still the issue that not everything Hitler says is wrong: There are problems in modern Germany. There is a horrible waste of resources. There are the unemployed who are calmed with money by "social care", when all the economy wants the government to do is taking care of those peoples ability to buy their products. Those problems exist, they are facts. The question is if you want to believe Hitler when he ascribes them to jewish or communistic conspiracies, or if you actually want to use your sanity. But that's entirely up to you, reader. I suggest you go and see for yourself what you think about this Hitler. Maybe, just maybe, it helps you to grasp the feeling of just how dangerous that man was.

Before I forget it, let's quickly look at the second question I have quoted above: **02. "Is the author a Nazi?"**

Judging by interviews with Vermes, I'd say: No. He deliberately wrote this as a satire, to show the dangers of Hitlers thoughts and the ignorance towards those coming from anyone else than Hitler himself(Or just the one who's regarded as someone else).

But, of course, people can lie. So, what does the book say?

Hey, book, is your author a Nazi?

Book: "Are you fucking kidding me?!"

Sorry, book, I just had to.

With all I have stated above, does anyone really think it's possible that the author of this particular book is a Nazi? Can you really think that someone who shows how Hitler would be very willing to exterminate at least a few millions of our fellow citizens who are of foreign descent, that someone who warns us to be careful for our fellow human beings, all of our fellow human beings, that someone like this is a Nazi? Yes? Well, then I can't help you and you should really check in with your doctor just to be sure. Because facts are facts and some things are so obvious facts that it's very bothersome to not be able to see those.

Well, I think I'm kind of done here. If it so happens that I want to add anything, I'll put a note at the top of the review that informs you of any changes that have been made. If anyone wants to add a comment: Feel free to do so, I'd love to hear other thoughts on this book and my review.

And just because I can't resist:

Die Krankenschwester kommt herein: "Ich wollte nur kurz nach dem Rechten sehen."

Hitler: "Dem geht's gut."

And in English(Free translation by myself, so sorry if it's not so funny as the original):

Nurse enters the room: "I just wanted to look if everything's alright."

Hitler: "Yes, I'm all right."

Darwin8u says

"It is in times of crisis that the true Führer is revealed. When he shows his nerve, persistence, and sheer determination." ? Timur Vermes, Look Who's Back

"And of course without an established ideology, in the modern entertainment industry one hasn't got a chance, nor even a raison d'être. The rest is taken care of by history -- or the TV ratings."

? Timur Vermes, Look Who's Back

"The rest is silence. Left like sperm.

In a stranger's gut, waiting its term,

Each thought, each step lies; the roots spread.

They'll believe in us when we're dead."

? W.D. Snodgrass, The Führer Bunker

In 2011, Hitler (yes, Adolf, that Hitler) wakes up in a park in Berlin. Unaware of what happened between April 30, 1945 and the day he awakens in a modern Germany, but given his skills at oration, his shock value, his nice uniform, and his ability to move the German Volk, Adolf becomes an instant YouTube star, then TV Star, then author. In a world where Donald Trump is taken seriously as a US Presidential Candidate, and ties for second most Admired man in America (he tied with Pope Francis) this book almost seems anti-climactic. We live in an age where the best news analysis often comes from a comedy channel, where 24-hour news channels are largely considered a joke, where memes of Cthulhu for President appear every four years. So, the idea of social satire coming out of not a simulacrum of Hitler, but an actual resurrected (thanks GOD!) Adolf, feels appropriate.

The fact that it came out of Germany, a country that has been a bit sensitive about the whole Nazi thing, is a bit amazing. Overall, it feels like a good attempt. Probably not the darkest piece of social satire involving Hitler, nor the strongest. Somewhere near the Downfall meme or Springtime for Hitler or Chaplin's The Great Dictator, it reads like a solid Chris Buckley (Thank You for Smoking) or William Safire. Mostly, towards the end, it felt a bit like the Colbert Report with an edge ('cause you know? Hitler).

Anyway, it was fun, a diversion, oh, and had a great cover and a bunch of great quotes about the press, TV, celebrity, political parties, war, the Volk, and German women, oh, and Germany.

Joana Marta says

The first thing was the hair.. I looked at the cover so white and I was like 'I know that hair from somewhere'. Then I approached the book and I was like: OH THAT'S ORIGINAL!!! After, it was the fact the title is making his mustache that made me laugh in the place I was. I couldn't avoid, it was too hilarious!!!

This book is really good... honestly, I doubt a second before if I should buy it or not. I was afraid this was one of those books with lame jokes about famous characters and so on, but hey.. it was a good thing that I was wrong!

Sometimes it was a bit hard for me, reading some things and think: 'wow, how could ever exist such a human being.. with this kind of thoughts..' but he existed. I haven't read 'Mein Kampf' but I can imagine that this book is somehow trying to be very close to the way that other book was written..

The book is very clever, the author was very intelligent indeed. He talks about some subjects using this character, and not just stupid subjects, really important things that are happening nowadays. The problem is that we have Hitler as the main character, and the solutions for the problems we face, are not solved with his drastic measures, thank God! The way Hitler gains relevance in this book is scary too, the author chooses Hitler but, in fact, in these days this is something very common to happen, with the internet, the media.. easily a person can become famous, just need something to catch the eye and then **BAM!!** IS EVERYWHERE! It becomes viral..

I really hope this book to have a sequel, because the ending was not solved and (even if sometimes I thought, 'damn, I shouldn't laugh about this') there are some parts very funny, not just easy jokes..

Emily says

Although I read this book in German, there are already lots of German reviews and it may get published in translation, so I'll review auf Englisch. The title translates as "He's Back" and it's about Hitler, who mysteriously reappears in Berlin in 2011 and becomes a TV star. His audience apparently believes him to be some kind of method actor or nth-degree Stephen Colbert character, and is alternately discomfited by his unironic profession of Nazi ideals and interested in his updated ideas, for example, about how protecting the German homeland environment should be a highest priority, which makes him a strange bedfellow of the Green party. Meanwhile, Hitler himself remains resolutely oblivious of how reviled he is by nearly everyone in the modern world, which sets up many scenes of dramatic irony when his modern producers and viewers are too polite to call him out on his occasionally outrageous statements, which they believe are part of his act.

What makes this the book somewhat groundbreaking is that it's a *German* comedy about Hitler. This doesn't feel special to Americans and British people, who have been making fun of Hitler since Charlie Chaplin, but in my experience, even when Germans do want to be funny, anything around Nazism is the last place they would go, rather like the German tourist who tells Basil Fawlty that his goose-stepping is not funny: "Not for us! Not for any German people!" That said, this book isn't a straight-up, laugh-out-loud kind of comedy. A lot of the time the emotion the reader experiences is the kind of cringe that *The Office* (British version) evoked so relentlessly.

Although I enjoyed reading the novel for my own purposes--to exercise my German and find out what all the talk in Germany was about--I'm not sure I'd recommend this to American readers. It relies on a pretty detailed knowledge of contemporary German society (its immigrants, laws against promoting Nazism, other TV shows) that I doubt many Americans are up to speed on. Also, much of its style stems from the author's mimicry of Hitler's oratory, which involved torrents of high-flown, hyperbolic, old-fashioned language, in this book applied to such observations as the fact that there are lots of Starbucks around, or that reality TV shows are repetitive and insipid, or that Ikea furniture is made of firewood. It starts to be funny, and then you realize you're being amused *with Hitler* and you want to stop.

Ultimately, what made this book satisfying can only be described in German: Schadenfreude. It turns out that watching Hitler lost, diminished, irrelevant, a joke--but not a good one--is a little thrilling. Not everyone would agree with me, but as an American, I think the Germans (especially of my generation) are better at confronting their historical demons than we are, and I'm not surprised that this book, both for the symbolic reason of finally making Hitler a subject of comedy and for the thematic reason of revealing the panorama of a more pluralistic German society, became a bestseller there. However, the book ends on an eerie warning note, as Hitler moderates his rhetoric to match the times and uses his power of personal fascination to rebuild a circle of followers and fans.

howl of minerva says

Do the Germans have the right to find Hitler funny? That's the (mistaken) question which seems to drive much of the controversy over this wildly popular novel in which Adolf Hitler, by mechanisms which are wisely left unexplained, returns from the dead and finds himself whole and well in modern day Germany. What does he make of the world and what does he do with himself?

He does what he does best: rapidly grasps a socio-political situation and delivers impassioned rants that lead to immediate stardom. An instant TV and YouTube hit, he is taken to be a hilarious Hitler impersonator who can speak truths that no-one else dares to in the era of political correctness.

The parts of the book that show Hitler's reaction to contemporary society are in fact quite funny. He's appalled by the profusion of newspapers purveying mindless dribble. Television, that splendid propaganda tool, shows gardening shows and melodramas. Mobile phones, the internet and chain stores are all developments which a transplant from the first half of the twentieth century finds wondrous and monstrous.

But as the book goes on, you realise what Vermes is doing. You've started to *like* Hitler. He's a stropky, avuncular, highly articulate, tee-total vegetarian who loves children and loves nature, loves order and discipline and wants his country to be strong and successful. He finds unlikely friends in the Green party as he enthusiastically supports energy independence and renewable energy. He makes some good points about the debacle in Afghanistan. He states bluntly that with the recipe of internet, mass-entertainment and a minimal baseline of social-welfare, global capitalism has found an opiate that lets it continue its accumulation unchecked and unquestioned. And he has some chilling observations on Germany's uneasy relationship with its nationalist-socialist past. When a colleague accuses him of defending the Nazi swine, he replies:

Es wird heute gerne so hingestellt, als hätten damals einige überzeugte, zum letzten entschlossene Nationalsozialisten ein ganzes Volk übertölpelt. Und das ist nicht ganz falsch, es hat diesen Versuch in der Tat gegeben. 1923, in München. Doch er ist unter blutigen Opfern gescheitert. Die Folge war ein anderer Weg. 1933 wurde kein Volk mit einer Propagandaaktion überwältigt. Es wurde ein Führer gewählt, auf eine Weise, die sogar im heutigen Sinne als demokratisch gelten muss. Es wurde ein Führer gewählt, der in unwiderlegbarer Klarheit seine Pläne offengelegt hatte. Die Deutschen haben ihn gewählt. Ja, sogar Juden... Die Partei hatte damals schon vier Millionen Mitglieder. Und auch das nur, weil ab 1933 keine weiteren Mitglieder mehr aufgenommen wurden. Es hätten 1934 auch acht Millionen, zwölf Millionen sein können. Ich glaube nicht, dass eine der heutigen Parteien nur annähernd diese Zustimmung genießt... Es gab entweder ein ganzes Volk von Schweinen. Oder das, was geschehen ist, war keine Schweinetat, sondern der Wille eines Volkes.

[Today you like to portray things as if back then, a few utterly fanatical Nationalist-Socialists duped an entire people. And that is not entirely false; in fact that attempt was made. In Munich, 1923. Yet it failed, in a

bloody martyrdom. Consequently, another way was taken. In 1933 no people was overpowered by a propaganda action. A leader was elected in a manner which even now would be considered legitimate democratic process. A leader was elected who set out his plans openly, with crystal clarity. The German people elected him. Yes, even Jews... The party at that time had 4 million members. And only because from 1933 no further memberships were accepted. It could have been 8 million; 12 million by 1934. I do not believe any of the parties today enjoy anything near such popular support... Either there was an entire people of swine. Or, what happened was no swinishness, but the will of a people.]

As the book closes, Hitler is beginning to establish a new mass movement. As, all over the world, the political centre of gravity drifts to the extreme right, this is a warning we would do well to heed.

Jr Bacdayan says

ADOLF MEETS DONALD: A LAUGH UNTOLD

****Cue in 3, 2, 1****

Gagmez: Ladies and Gentlemen tonight we have a special guest. Tonight our beloved Fuhrer will have a special one on one interview with a formidable opponent. Has he finally met his match? Well, stay tuned and hold on tight to your seats if you want to find out, because tonight we have something really exceptional for you. Tonight we are graced by the presence of the man himself, the frontrunner and Republican Presidential Nominee Mr. Donald J. Trump!!

****applause****

Gagmez: Thank you for accepting our invitation, Mr. Trump.

Donald: Thank you, Ali. It's a pleasure to be here. Hello, Fuhrer!

Adolf: Sieg Heil!

Donald: I'm sorry. I don't say things like that. I'm American.

Adolf: I apologize I forgot you are of a lesser race, one without manners.

Donald: Now, listen here...

Gagmez: Okay, okay, let's keep things civil gentlemen. Let's stick to the relevant issues at hand. Fuhrer, you can begin.

Adolf: Herr Trump, I have heard you say quite a number of times that you will bring greatness back to America. What does it mean?

Donald: Well, for starters, we will give America back to its rightful owners. Right now America is filled with millions of illegal immigrants and we want to remove those people from our country, leeching off from our resources and taking away work that should be given to true Americans.

Adolf: I am of the same mind. Here in Germania wherever I turn my head, I see Turks, I see Arabs, I see mixed blooded men, a shame to see the efforts of Goebbels wasted and the beautiful Aryan race soiled by

these Asiatic types.

Donald: Our problems are more pressing we have Mexicans, Asians, Africans, these people come to our country illegally and scrounge of our taxpayers, the result is that the hardworking American's work is stolen from him by these people who will work for less and whose work is far inferior. To fight this problem I have come upon a simple very American solution: we will build a wall!

Adolf: I believe we had a wall here in Berlin as well, of course it was built during a time I was indisposed, but it did prove to be serving its purpose until Bolshevists tore it down.

Donald: You know who has a wall? China! But I bet you their wall has a lot of defects, you can't trust those China-made products. Our American wall, which will be built by blue collar, hard working Protestant Americans will be much superior. The wall of the Chinese couldn't keep the Mongols out, but our wall will keep out those Mexicans. You have my word.

Adolf: It would please you greatly then, Herr Trump to know that I am an architect. It should delight you to know that I designed a lot of Germania, of course, the war has torn down most of my handiwork but here and there some have survived. I can design your desired wall without any misgivings that is if you promise that no Jew will be involved in its construction whatsoever.

Donald: I'll have to decline your offer, Fuhrer. A lot of our funding come from good, hardworking, Jewish bankers. We have no problem working with them.

Adolf: A soiled country through and through, financed by Jews, utterly hopeless. There can be no greatness in such a thing.

Donald: You hate Jews I hate bigots!

Adolf: the irony...

Gagmez: Okay, as things are getting a little too heated right now. Let's take a short break from the politics and go to the audience. We've got DeLaSean here with a question for the gentlemen.

DeLaSean: Yow, peaz! I'z here ta ask which o ya ikunik hairz iz betta? Donald's toupee or mah main man Adolf's 'stache?

Gagmez: Thank you, DeLaSean. Interesting question. So here we are. Which of your gentlemen's iconic hair is better: the Trump toupee or the Hitler moustache?

Adolf: I am appalled! I stand before you, my beloved Volk, with not an inch of untruth present in my body. Every fiber of my being is true because the Fatherland deserves nothing but the truth. I have never deceived those which I aim to serve, never has an ounce of deceit emanated from a pure blooded child of the Rhineland. Thus why is it that my purity is compared to a falsity? A natural part of my body, my moustache, is in no question superior to a sham of a monstrosity as a toupee! A wig! The very essence of the object is to deceive! Its wearer is nothing but a deceiver. One can even say that the practice of wearing a toupee is very Jewish! Mr. Trump you must have Jewish blood running in those veins, clearly any part of you is inferior to a pureblooded member of the Aryan race like myself.

Donald: I disagree, Mr. Hitler. You see a moustache is not a very American thing. In fact, facial hair is something that is grown by the uneducated, by barbarians, by people who only want chaos and evil, by people without God. You know what I'm talking about, Mr. Hitler? I'm talking about Muslims; I'm talking about terrorists. Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, Yasser Arafat, and of course Adolf Hitler, what do

these people have in common? That's right, facial hair! You, sir, are a terrorist responsible for the death of millions of white people, and thousands of Americans! Your facial hair is a disgrace to the freedom of America! My toupee was manufactured by the sweat and hard work of faithful Americans, the product of our greatest gift to the world: Capitalism. My toupee, made in America, is the symbol of the blue collar, church going, gun wielding, tax paying American and that is miles better than a symbol of terrorism and evil.

Adolf: My naïve friend, you know who has facial hair? The person America reveres the most.

Donald: George Washington doesn't have a moustache!!!

Adolf: But Jesus Christ does have facial hair, am I right?

Donald: Well... er...

Adolf: He is also a Jew. The person you Americans love most is a Jew, no wonder your government is deceiving its Volk with your CIAs and FBIs. A country that mistrusts its own Volk is a disgrace to the Aryan race! A very Jewish government indeed!

Donald: America is on the verge of collapse right now, but once I become president we will make America great again!

Adolf: How do you aim to do that, Herr Trump?

Donald: By staying true to our Protestant values, by valuing the true American, and by replacing the present policy of globalism – which has moved so many jobs and so much wealth out of our country – and replacing it with a new policy of Americanism. Under this American System, every policy decision we make must pass a simple test: does it create more jobs and better wages for Americans?

Adolf: Shouldn't your priority be the procreation of more pureblooded Aryan males? The American army, indeed, is an enemy of mine. But from my observation during previous encounters it is weakened by the species of the Jew, the Mongoloid, the Navajo, the Oriental, and the Negroid it counts among its ranks. Not to mention those of mixed descent, deceptively Aryan but tainted with impurity. The truly Aryan were few and far between. I think this can be attributed, and this figure has disturbed me greatly, to the great number of abortions your country has permitted. Its number is alarmingly one of the greatest in the world. Of course if those aborted were women, it would be of no consequence, but the male are a very important asset of the Fatherland. In twenty years time a year's worth of abortions has cost you more than thirty divisions of pureblooded Aryan soldiers. A great pity. It would surprise you to know that there lays the secret to an impenetrable army: impeccable lineage. But you are too busy with this Americanism none sense to know better. You will never have true Americans without pure lineage.

Donald: We can thank President Barrack Obama for that, letting in all these foreign people and turning them into so called 'Americans.' An Asian Moslem would want that no doubt but we must remain vigilant to emphasize that America is for the true American born.

Adolf: It was a great surprise indeed to learn that the President of a largely Aryan nation is a Negroid. But looking at his policy and record, he seems to be competent. When I look at his skin, he is not that dark, I see traces of Aryan in him. Surely the supremacy of the Aryan blood in him has overpowered the Negroid and it manifested itself in his competency. Of course, there can be no question that he would have been a great deal more proficient if he were purely Aryan, but in such cases one can't but look at it appreciatively, the power of the Aryan blood never fails to amaze me.

Adolf: However in your last words "America is for the true American born" am I wrong to ascertain that you

saying America belongs to the Indian?

Donald: I'm saying America belongs to Americans.

Adolf: What is an American?

Donald: A Whii...ssse and hardworking person whose ancestors are Americans.

Adolf: Were you about to say White or Aryan, Herr Trump?

Donald: Now you're putting words in my mouth. I'm sick of this farce! You're a bigot! You've been asking me nothing but discriminating questions. It's clear you have an agenda. I'm done here!

****Trump walks out****

Adolf to Gagmez: Is he truly a Presidential candidate? I am quite taken aback. He is undoubtedly squeamish and a squeamish person cannot be expected to rule a country. The Volk will not trust him. He gives off a rather comical impression. Ohh, I understand. Perhaps he is a humorist, what do you call those in America? Ohh, indeed! He is quite the comedian; maybe his campaign is a running joke of sorts.

Gagmez: Fuhrer, you do know that you're a comedian too right?

Sam Quixote says

Adolf Hitler awakens in 21st century Berlin, his last memories being in the Fuhrerbunker 70 years earlier before the Allies broke through. Though understandably perplexed by his situation, Hitler quickly adapts and is mistaken as a Hitler impersonator, the most dedicated method actor who never breaks character. He's put on TV where he becomes a hit politically-incorrect "comic". Hitler once more begins his rise to power in Germany...

Before picking it up, about the only thing I knew about Timur Vermes' novel Look Who's Back was the setup – Hitler in 21st century Germany – and that it was a comedy/satire. I had no idea what German comedy could possibly look like but I was eager to find out – and then discovered it was exactly what I thought it was: non-existent! I also thought a satire with Hitler as the main character had potential. The idea seems to but Vermes doesn't realise it here - German society wouldn't take Hitler seriously today? Weak.

It does have one thing going for it though and that's its subversiveness. Hitler is challenged once about the Holocaust to which he replies matter-of-factly that he would never have achieved it without the full support and help of the German Volk – and he's right. I'm sure the German people would like to believe that the Holocaust was down to Hitler and a handful of villainous cronies and that millions of ordinary people had no part in it; but given the scale of the operation, that's impossible.

The novel is told in the first person with Hitler speaking directly to the reader. Vermes writes him in such a way that he sometimes comes across simply as an old gentleman who loves animals and children and who believes in strong leadership for his people. He's not an over-the-top cartoon peppering his speech with constant racial slurs (given how hard it must've been to get the basic concept of the novel published, I expect it would've been even harder had it included repeated insults against the you-know-whos!); Hitler comes off as an almost likeable, relatable person.

And that's what's so subversive about the novel. If at any time the reader starts liking the protagonist (even agreeing with him as I did two paragraphs above!) then the realisation that you like Hitler – one of the most evil men in history – even for a passing moment, comes shuddering through. Vermes isn't doing it to trick readers though; rather he's showing how the people in the 1930s conceivably fell for Hitler themselves. In this way it proves his (and Hitler's) assertion that the Holocaust couldn't have happened without the help of the German Volk - if, knowing what we know today, Vermes makes Hitler even slightly likeable to modern readers, imagine how appealing he must have been to a society living in a post-Treaty of Versailles world. Of course millions would - and did - support him making them culpable of all the implications of that support.

I should clarify that Vermes isn't glorifying the Nazis – at no point does he make them seem remotely positive or portray Hitler or any Nazi as an admirable figure. All he's doing is humanising Hitler. He still says and believes revolting things – he says “The Jews are no laughing matter” which the people around him believe means that he (the “Hitler impersonator”) refuses to make jokes about the Jews but which the reader knows means something very different – but Vermes determines to also show him as a man and not only as a much (rightly) demonised figure. And no, it's not explained how Hitler survived and reawakened in Berlin 70 years after the war but that's not the point. It's a necessary conceit for the novel to exist so don't get too hung up on it.

All of which isn't to say I liked the novel very much. I can appreciate its overall effect but the reading experience was very dull. I didn't realise the premise I already knew going in – Hitler becomes a TV/internet star – was actually the entire novel! There's barely any plot, let alone plot development, it's just Hitler being Hitler and people thinking he's a riot over and over and over again. There were some racial slurs against the Turks which were apparently the jokes and seemed quite acceptable to German audiences (I guess it's a cultural thing – Germany comedy remains mystifying!) and Hitler has a goth girl assistant who, bizarrely like some Californian valley girl, ends all of her sentences with a questioning upwards inflection – I think she was meant to be a comedic character? Except she wasn't very funny? Her way of talking was just annoying?

And the novel goes on like this for 350-ish pages. Little changes in the plot let alone Hitler as a character who remains stiff and static. Vermes only has the one point to make throughout and it's hardly an original one. Hitler commenting on reality shows, the proliferation of Starbucks and the poor quality of Ikea furniture is so banal and not at all witty or amusing. There's no build-up to the finale because there isn't one – the book just ends after a flat-line nearly the whole way through.

I can see why it was a bestseller in Germany as it's very relevant to that particular audience in confronting their ancestors' true selves as well as attempting to bring their experience to modern readers - but not so much to anyone outside of that country. Look Who's Back isn't poorly written nor is it a complete waste because of its clever overall effect, but it is a very boring and very unfunny satire.

Zzz...eig....heil....zzzz...

Manny says

Katy Noyes says

4.5 stars.

I can guess what you're thinking: "That cover.... is that ?" And then, "But it says it's funny....?!"

I can see from some other reviews and comments around that this is appalling to some, that the concept of a comedic book about one of the most evil men who ever lived is abhorrent. I can understand that. But I also think that comedy, and satire in particular has a great deal of value in making us think about situations and people in ways we might not have before.

I imagine a few people (like me) will consider themselves irreverent and try this because of the 'shock' value. I know I saw the fantastically simple but instantly recognisable cover and was sold. Thing is, this isn't written for its shock value. At least, I don't think that's its major point. It's not disrespectful. It's certainly not cheap laughs and stereotypes. This is a well-thought-out, witty and very relevant satire on modern life, on the media, on our own sense of humour. At times it's frightening how like sheep people can be, were then, still are.

We have to take one giant leap for it to work - Adolf Hitler from 1945 suddenly wakes up in modern-day Germany. We never find out how, even he doesn't spend too long questioning. To immerse yourself in what happens after, you just have to accept it. Initially disorientated, he doesn't let his unfamiliar surroundings faze him for long. A kind-hearted newspaper seller takes him under his wing and is the first of many to see the Führer as a fully-in-character comedy impersonator. Soon TV producers come calling and a slot on a comedy show beckons. What was once a hypnotic despot is now a hypnotic comedy performer. Is this the point? That we can only laugh at the ravings of a madman now, now that our society would not take him seriously?

However much the Führer rants, raves and talks politics, his new contemporaries applaud his brave comedic insights into the current world climate and his 'witty' outlook of Germany's past. It's something you think you might find appalling. After all, this is Adolf Hitler. But even the 'Jewish question' is well handled. I was worried about that. Of course racist sentiments are spouted by our protagonist, and we never ever feel sympathy for him, but with the first-person perspective and everyone constantly reminding him that as a comedy topic "the Jews are no laughing matter" and Hitler agreeing that they are "absolutely right", the author gets away without making his lead overly repellent (as a fictional Führer), you do keep wanting to see what will happen.

The modern world finding Hitler a comedy genius is itself pretty funny, as we are meant to find it: in some ways it is frightening - can we not see Evil in front of our faces? It does say a lot about the world today that we would very likely find this kind of thing 'post-modern', ironic, and think ourselves very witty for declaring it so. How clever are we that can laugh at his comedic genius? In many ways this makes us no different to the many who followed blindly back in the 20s and 30s. Which of course makes it all the funnier in the book. Hitler's speeches are hilarious at times - his old, trademark style of speechmaking, his old speeches and phrases themselves used but to a vastly different audience. But maybe not such a different one in many respects. Gullible in a different way? I did think reading this: if a man appeared claiming to be Hitler, looked like him, dressed like him, orated like him - he would either end up in a mental hospital or on YouTube. I had a chill in one scene when Hitler gives a speech (though I'm not certain, I believe it's a direct copy of a real one he gave) in which he spouts about blood and sacrifice - truly horrific - but his TV crew interpret it as an elegy for a recently deceased colleague. While it's funny, it's also an indictment of our sensibilities. You want him locked away, yet you want to see what other honours this society will laud him with.

My favourite sections of the book were those that introduced the Führer to modern technology, the more traditional 'comedy' segments. His views on TV shopping channels and cookery shows had me in stitches, for example: "My jaw dropped. Providence had presented the German Volk with the wonderful, magnificent opportunity for propaganda, and it was being squandered on the production of leek rings." He discovers

'Vikipedia', discusses with us his views on the 20th-century history that he missed, and smugly compares his own YouTube viewing figures to that of Chaplin's 'The Great Dictator'. Again though, we are not allowed to forget who this is - every technological advance he sees only as a potential tool for creating a new Reich. Humour with real bite.

How people react to him is fascinating - most find the 'Heil Hitler' amusing, his refusal to get out of character admirable, his improvisation astounding. And all that is funny. Yet the author also touches on the tragic - the elderly Jewish woman who cannot CANNOT find this national sensation funny, remembering the atrocities he (or the person he is impersonating) committed, the Nazi-haters who don't see satire but die-hard National Socialism. The National Socialists for whom he is TOO extreme. It is the masses, as usual who are 'led' en masse to one opinion of him.

I loved this. The translation from the German is excellent, and the only reason I haven't given this 5 stars is because there are references to modern-day Germany that I didn't follow (references to contemporary political figures and situations), and I also found a few of the Führer's speeches and thoughts bordered on overlong. Only a few though. Most of this is perfectly-paced and wittily-written.

You'll never read another book like it. I'm Jewish myself and found it original, hilarious and far from shallow. Very scary too. It treads the path of satire carefully. With fewer and fewer people around who can remind us in person of what Adolf Hitler did to so many, it is vitally important that this is a topic that never dies. Satire is one way of keeping his revolting ideology in the public consciousness - we must never be deluded into adulation of such a creature. A new generation can enjoy and ponder on this book, and not let the past die.

Recommended.

Review of a Netgalley advance copy.

Ms. Smartarse says

This book has been translated into English, as Look Who's Back.

What would happen if Hitler woke up in present day Germany? How would he deal with the large number of foreign immigrants living in contemporary Germany, not to mention its political agenda?

If you're one to scoff at such a scenario, rest assured that the characters of this book did so as well ...with the exception of Hitler himself, of course. So, our most-hated-dictator ends up becoming a famous comedian. Let's face it: he couldn't REALLY be speaking seriously, right?

This book was yet another one, in my continuous quest to improve my German language skills, by means of something *other* than YA in genre. On the surface, it looked decent enough: contemporary, time travel and humor. The addition of Hitler didn't exactly make it sound too promising, but lack of sparkly vampires clinched the deal.

Though my reviews should *definitely* be taken as gospel (ha!), *do* keep in mind the following:

- I read the book in German, and my proficiency in the language is intermediate, at best

- I don't much care for politics in ANY language, and Germany's political views as well as its internal issues

are completely foreign (heh!) to me.

Impressions:

- There were quite a few funny episodes which made me laugh out loud, in spite of myself. I even laughed *with* Hitler's character once.

(view spoiler)

I know, I'm ashamed of myself too...

- I didn't understand most of the political mumbo-jumbo: in part due to my lacking language skills, but also due to my lack of background knowledge on issues in contemporary Germany

- Seeing dialect speech in writing confuses me.

- (view spoiler)

- There were plenty of humorous sequences, which made the book somewhat more bearable to read, though not enough to consider it enjoyable

- The ending was rather disappointing. (view spoiler) which significantly lessened my satisfaction level.

Score: 2/5 stars

I suppose people with better German skills, and more in depth knowledge of politics would be closer to the target audience of this book, than me.

Mark Hebwood says

Running into ideas

For the last few days I've been reading Timur's book, and yesterday I finished it. That is usually the time when I force my opinion on the world - it was time to leave a review on Goodreads.

As I was walking home after work, I thought about my upcoming review. What to say about this? What did I think? I wasn't sure. Actually, I had trouble deciding what this book was *about*...

Did it leave me with any lasting impressions? Not really. Any deeper insights? No. Anything lighter maybe? Yes maybe. This was amusing at times, but surely nothing more? For the most part, this felt fluffy, the narrative remained surreal, and kept me at a distance. Huh. So what to say about this? What is the *point* of this book?

I decided to leave my review until tomorrow and went out for a run along the Thames. London lay in the evening rays of spring, the sun gleaming off the water, diners and drinkers lining the embankment chatting and laughing, the work week a memory, the weekend days a promise. The mood was light, the city was buzzing, and the world was good. I set out and became part of the urban summer. Running hard for a stretch, walking the next, I tried to execute a technique the experts call "interval training".

I am in a walking phase of my workout, Timur's book firmly forgotten, when I became aware of a memorial plaque I had never before noticed. It said "In memory of the 40 dead and 60 injured when a direct hit

destroyed an air raid shelter close to this spot in 1941".

And then I got it. *That* is what Timur's book is about. That is what it *wants* to be. And that is also what it does not manage to be.

What this book wants to be

Timur's book wants to be satire. It wants to be scathing, and it wants to be malicious. It wants to be your friend. And then it wants to betray you, and slap you in the face. While you stare at it, unbelieving and hurt, it wants to stand tall and proud. It wants to point at you, in silent accusation, in moral rectitude. Unforgiving. Revealing. Warning.

How do I know it wants to do all this? Well, from hindsight, it is clear enough, really. Odd that it required a memorial plaque for me to see it. Timur has his fictional Hitler narrate his story as I-narrative, so we are always in Adolf's head. Timur imitates the historical Hitler's speech mannerisms chillingly well - the convoluted syntax is there as much as Hitler's rambling, often unstructured thoughts. Timur is even spot on when bringing the body language back to life Hitler so famously used in his public speeches.

And as we are supposed to see the world through Hitler's eyes, we are expected to discover that for the most part, these eyes are not those of an evil psychopath, but allow insights into the inner workings of a reasonably normal person, a person with strengths and weaknesses, a person who is uncertain at times, experiences pain and joy, and can be charming. A person like you and me.

No. Not like you and me. This is where the book wants to slap us in the face. And here is how. The following scene shows Adolf in conversation with his secretary, Fraulein Kromeier, who has just told him that she cannot work for him any more. We enter the scene as Kromeier shows Adolf a photo of her grandmother's family, taken in 1943. I read the book in the original, but translate the passage into English:

I have not gone to war for six long years that I could not guess what personal tragedies would be involved in this. What wounds untimely death tears into the souls of the innocent.

"Who died?", I asked. "Everybody. Six weeks later." I looked at the man on the photo, at the woman, at the two boys, in particular at the two boys, and had to clear my throat. ... This photo, it touched my heart. ...

"If you wish to take the day off...", I began, "I think [memories of the war] are difficult for you...". "Who says anything about the war?", Kromeier shouted, "these people did not die in a war. These people were gassed!"

I paused and looked at the photo again. The man, the woman, the boys did not look like criminals, like gypsies, not a bit like Jews. ... That was truly astounding, I myself would have failed to arrest these people, as German as they looked, I was so puzzled, at first I even thought I should take the opportunity and thank Himmler for his painstaking and impartial work in this matter. (from pp308-13)

Slap! *How dare you allow yourself to be lured in by this man?*, the book asks. I stand before the book, helpless, and I feel exposed. Something has been revealed to me. Something painful. Something grotesque. Is it possible that I would have let myself be drawn into the schemes of a twisted murderer? Is it possible that I would not have seen Hitler coming, would not have been able to look forward as clearly as I am able to look back? The book stands tall and proud. Imperious. It points at me. I cower before it, and I am ashamed.

What (I think) this book is

In my quote, Timur's book is all it could have been. But the passage is only five pages long. It stands alone with perhaps two or three other such instances in a book of 400 pages. And because of that, its impact dilutes

hopelessly. It is a drop of vitriol in the ocean.

And the rest of the book, I am afraid to say, feels rather innocuous. It is amusing at times, but when it isn't, and this is often, it comes over as strangely dull and pointless. It is also disjointed, many of the chapters do not serve any obvious purpose and do not advance the plot. In particular in its final quarter, the book feels more like "Adolf's adventures in modern day Berlin." What would happen if Hitler attended the "Wiesen" (the Oktoberfest)? What would happen if Hitler went out to buy razorblades? What would happen if Hitler walked into the party headquarters of the NPD (Germany's extreme right)? Sometimes this is hilarious, but even at its best, these episodes never rise above the status of a harmless anecdote.

In the end, Timur chose a protagonist who just remains too artificial. From page one it is clear that Timur's fictional Hitler is a literary *device*, and as such, Adolf remains an abstract notion throughout the majority of the book.

I think Timur would have been able to deliver his cathartic face-slapping to much better effect had he chosen to write a fictional biography of Adolf Hitler. Now *that* would have been evil! A Hitler who wakes up in 21st Century Berlin and rails at graffiti and day-time telly? Yea that makes me smile but in the end, so what? No chance to confuse Adolf with Hitler. A Hitler who relives NS Germany as I-narrative? Now that would be chilling. Adolf would still be the fictional Hitler, but no prizes for guessing that we would forget this over the course of 400 pages.

What this book is perceived to be

And yet, even though for the most part a harmlessly amusing book (I think so, anyway), Timur's intended satire still managed to polarise public opinion in Germany. Mostly, people were unsure whether Hitler represents an appropriate subject for political satire or not.

Leaving that aside, I found it illustrative to read through some of the reviews readers published on amazon and goodreads. It appears to me that many who liked the book liked it for the "right" reason - the idea that laughing along with Hitler is something that sticks in your throat, something that makes you think about whether the historical Hitler would again receive adulation in modern-day Germany (and, by extension, in the societies of the 30 odd countries into whose languages the book was translated). But still, many positive reviews stay quite close to the actual book, and ask themselves whether Hitler may have been a talk-show host, or would indeed be able to side with the Green party. I wonder whether these thoughts do not, in the end, essentially miss the point.

And I think I am finding the point when I look at some of the negative reviews. At least some readers are intensely emotional about the book, to the point that they are advocating not to read it, or even to suppress it. Views are expressed that freedom of speech needs to find a natural restriction when such freedom might insult the sentiments of others. This is a complex issue and I cannot do it justice here - but we need to remember that these views are directed against a specific example of free speech, and not offered as a theoretical view.

And this, finally, delivered the chilling punch I had been missing so much in the book. The lure of radical views is subtle. Dictators tend to suppress freedom of speech for reasons that they genuinely believe in. These reasons may feel twisted, misinformed, and cynical to those whose views *are* suppressed. But it feels too easy to dismiss the Hitlers, Stalins and Honeckers of this world as evil, crazed psychopaths who live in a world apart from that inhabited by intelligent, enlightened, and life-competent individuals. The part inhabited by *us*.

The truth may be much more subtle, and it is likely to be uncomfortable. In an attempt to make sure that "it

never happens again", we may be inclined to suppress freedom of speech in order to protect the innocent. But it is not by suppression of ideas seen as potentially harmful that freedom is protected. Freedom is protected if members of a society embed the chorus of their voices in democracies governed by the rule of law. Doing so will dilute the impact of any one view, and yet allow each one to be heard.

And looking at some of the views expressed in the wider debate about this book, I wonder whether a threat to the open society may not come from those wishing to protect it as much as from those sworn to destroy it. Had Timur been able to deliver this disturbing thought in a masterful satire, I would have given it 5 stars.

But he didn't, and so I didn't.

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Scarlet Cameo says

Sátira: Discurso o composición literaria en prosa o verso en que se critican agudamente las costumbres o vicios de alguien con intención moralizadora, lúdica o meramente burlesca.

No veo el sentido burlesco a la historia y mucho menos el moralizador ¿Será que yo no entiendo lo que el autor deseaba crear o que a él le faltó tacto para lograrlo? El detalle es que los discursos no caen en ninguno de estos aspectos, más que causar risa nos llevan a recordar situaciones actuales inspiradas en Hitler, pero que de cómico no tienen nada: los discursos dados por Amanecer dorado (Grecia), los mensajes de la English Defense League (Londres), la ideología del Hindu Sena (Neva Dheli), los alegatos de Forza Nuova (Italia), la filosofía del Partido Popular de la Reconstrucción (Argentina), lo predicado por la Organizacional Nacional del Yunque (México), y un largo, largo, larguísimo etcetera alrededor del mundo. Y no me malentiendan, la figura de Hitler se presta a ser satirizada, desde Chaplin con "El gran dictador" hasta Mel Brooks con "Los productores" bien enfocado esta figura historia, como cualquier otra, puede prestarse a una real saritización,vamos hasta en gif puede hacerse:

pero el autor no lo logró y una parte de mi se lo achaca al punto de vista seleccionado: la historia es narrada por Hitler, en primera persona, y por tanto esta cargada primero de la magnificación de su figura, haciendo que todo, ABSOLUTAMENTE TODO, le salga bien y por otra parte que sus discursos de la grandeza de Alemania, la insignificancia de otras razas y su "puedo manipular todo y a todos" terminé siendo cansado. Si bien una sátira puede ser igual de útil para enseñarnos a evitar situaciones, en este caso nuevamente el autor trata pero no lo logró (probablemente porque seguimos en el mismo bache moral que en los 40's cuando Hitler se convirtió en Führer), es difícil moralizar una situación que tiene tanto tiempo en auge y que parece imposible de erradicar, pero de esto hablaré al final de la reseña.

Además de eso sentí que la historia era aburrida, muy aburrida. Tardaba mucho en que algo sucediera y rápido te das cuenta de como irá avanzando la trama, los temas que pueden ser criticados son mencionados pero poco explorados perdiendose muchas oportunidades de crear una historia dinámica y completa.

No entiendo porque la gente cree que el final presentado es abierto, si trasladamos esta historia a la realidad, y siguiendo el curso de lo presentado durante el libro, es bastante probable que Hitler cumplirá sus objetivos, puede que más o menos violentamente, pero hay demasiados impatizantes a su discurso alrededor del mundo así que, a mi manera de verlo, de abierto tiene poco o nada.

Las dos estrellas las ganó porque el autor se documentó muy bien para la historia (probablemente porque es un libro creado para Alemania) y eso siempre se agradece, la personificación de Hitler creo que está bien escenificada y la portada es excelente para la historia, por lo demás yo lo dejaría pasar.

Comentario post reseña:

Pronto veré la película de esta historia dado que tiene un aspecto por demás interesante: los actores salieron a la calle personificados y preguntando ¿sí yo (el actor) fuera el verdadero Hitler, me seguirías?

Lilo says

I read an excerpt of this book and I talked at length with someone who has read half of it before tossing it with disgust.

This book may read "funny", but to make a somewhat likable comic figure of the most cruel mass murderer the 20th century has seen is not only tasteless but dangerous.

Shame on anyone who writes a positive review on this book. Shame on anyone who buys this book or asks for this book at the library. Shame on anyone who supports the author and the publisher of this book with a single dime.

I am asking anyone who has a single brain cell left: Are 70 million dead in WWII (6 million of them Jews who died in the Holocaust) reason to make fun of? (And I am not even talking about those who have lost loved ones, their health, and/or all they ever owned.) The murderer of all these people is not a comic figure.

Learning that this book has become a bestseller in Germany makes me ashamed of being German.

PLEASE NOTE: This review was also posted on Amazon, in October 2013. Amazon rejected it, stating that it did not meet Amazon's regulations and guidelines. When I asked which changes were required to make this review meet regulations and guidelines, Amazon replied after one week, apologizing and saying that the rejection had been a mistake. Amazon, then, published this review without changes. -- However, in spring 2014, when the English version of the book came on the market, Amazon removed my review without notifying me. -- I have, so far, refrained from writing and posting a "castrated" version of my review.

UPDATE, Dec. 19, 2014: I have just posted an entirely new 1-star review on Amazon. I will see tomorrow whether or not Amazon has accepted it.

UPDATE, Dec. 20, 2014: My review on Amazon went live today. It reads as follows:

1.0 out of 5 stars -- 70 million dead are soooooo funny!,

Come to think of it, my 1-star review of the book (which Amazon took down when the English version of the book came out) has, indeed, overlooked some of the book's merits. How obtuse must I have been to overlook how the younger generations of the stupid masses could benefit from this book! This book can teach them a lot. So, for instance:

(1) Hitler is not a scary fairy-tale figure. He has really existed. — This is important to know, particularly, since it has been doubted, even denied, that the Holocaust ever happened. From there, it would be only one

step to assume that Hitler hadn't existed either.

(2) Hitler was not an alien. He was human; that's what so many reviewers of the book have concluded after reading the book. (Besides, there is documented proof that Hitler was born to a — no, not a virgin, but to an earthly woman.)

(3) Hitler was not a monster; that's again what so many reviewers of the book have pointed out. And I can confirm that Hitler had two arms and two legs, and even some kind of a head; he didn't have horns, nor did he spit fire, and he didn't even have an equine club foot. (Thus, Hitler was lucky. Because had he been deformed in any way, he might have felt compelled to have himself euthanized.)

(4) Hitler was somewhat likable; at least, that's what so many reviewers took from this book. Well, I don't quite understand why anyone in his right mind might want to portray a mass murderer of unimaginable dimensions likable. Yet, it says in the bible to love thee neighbor. And since, after WWII, with about 70 mio people dead (let's forget about the questionable Holocaust, which many of the readers of the book might not believe in), most readers would find it somewhat difficult to outright love Hitler, the author might have wanted to compromise and portray Hitler as, at least, likable. Either that, or maybe, the author did not think of the bible at all but rather of the average intelligence of his potential readers and of his bank account. For commercial reasons, it is always advisable to have a likable protagonist, one that readers can relate to.

(5) Contemporary German politicians are stupid. Yet in order to learn this true fact, readers could have saved themselves the expense for this book. Some might have already known, and those who didn't, I could have told for free. (And not only GERMAN politicians are stupid, politicians of other countries ... well, never mind; this is off-topic.)

(6) Celebrities are not always what the public thinks they are. Good to know. Yet this knowledge could also easily be obtained otherwise.

(7) It is o.k. to turn each and every mass murderer into a comic figure. Having people shot, blown up, hanged, or gassed is soooooo funny. Besides, humor is the best weapon for stopping evil tyrants. This is how Hitler and Stalin were stopped from murdering many millions of people. Wait a moment! I got a little confused here. Allow me. At age 75, I am entitled to a little brain fog. So forget it. Hitler and Stalin WEREN'T stopped, but they might have been stopped had people been able to read Timur Vermes's book. Or maybe not. Never mind. Anyway, it is o.k. to write a humorous book about every evil murderer.

(8) It is possible to make a fortune writing funny books about evil mass murderers. While not every wannabe bestseller-author may be successful with such a book, it is, at least, worth a try. (Advice to fledgling authors: Don't start with a big mass murderer like Hitler or Stalin, start small with a serial killer or a school shooter, with no less than 12 and no more than 50 victims. If this works out, you can always advance to bigger book projects, such as making an avuncular, likable protagonist out of Saddam Hussain or Nero — Nero, I said, not Nehru, stupid!)

(9) People can return from beyond. Yet here, I have to admit that it was a disadvantage not to have read the whole book. I don't know how it explained how Hitler managed to perform this task. But I am sure that the smartest of the not-so-smart readers will have figured out a way how this could be done, even though (as I have heard) the author did not bother to elaborate.

(10) Some optimistic reviewers have suggested that this book might induce so far uneducated and ignorant readers to follow up with more advanced reading. And this may be true. "Mein Kampf" is available here on Amazon and has huge numbers of wonderful reviews, just as "Er ist wieder da".

However, for those with somewhat elevated brain function, I would recommend a few other books instead of

the above mentioned. For instance:

“Hitler: The Memoir of the Nazi Insider Who Turned Against the Fuehrer, by Ernst Hanfstaengl

“Berlin Diary”, by William Shirer

“Survival in Auschwitz”, by Primo Levi

“The Reawakening”, by Primo Levi

“Still Alive: A Holocaust Childhood Remembered”, by Ruth Klueger

And if something humorous is desired, by all means, look for a different topic.

(Note for those who are a bit slow on the uptake: If this review confuses you, please look up the words “satire”, “sarcasm”, and “irony”.)

Alexandra says

Wahnsinn, ein grenzgeniales Buch, das dem Autor Timur Vermes hier gelungen ist. Adolf Hitler erwacht im Jahr 2011, versucht sich mit unserer Welt anzufreunden bzw. durchzuschlagen und das auch noch mit Erfolg: Er wird sofort entdeckt und Medienstar.

In dieser Konstellation buhlt die Satire nicht mit einer Schenkelklopff-Mentalität um billige Lacher, was sehr einfach wäre. Im Gegenteil Herr Hitler analysiert zusätzlich zur Assimilationskomik brilliant wie ein ethnologischer Feldforscher unsere heutige Welt. Ein bisschen hat mich der Stil an "Das Fest des Huhnes" (Film: Walter Wippersberg) oder "Briefe in die chinesische Vergangenheit" (Herbert Rosendorfer) erinnert. Diese permanente Bewertung unserer Gesellschaft auf Basis von Hitlers Persönlichkeit und seiner verqueren Naziideologie entlarvt sowohl unsere Zeit als auch die Vergangenheit und ist so konsequent, detailgetreu und genial durchgezogen, dass es eine helle Freude ist.

Am Anfang hatte ich noch ständig diese "Äch bin wieder da" Nazistimme von Walter Moers in meinem Ohr, wenn der Herr Hitler über unsere Welt philosophierte und dann plötzlich, das ist das eigentlich total perfide in diesem Buch, musste ich ihm in einigen Argumenten auch noch Recht geben. Da wird das Grinsen, das einem befällt, von Schüttelfrost begleitet. Klar ist nicht alles gut in unserer Welt, da kann auch der Herr Adolf mal einen Treffer landen, aber wenn er an den Grundfesten unserer Demokratie rüttelt, dort noch einen Finger in die Wunde legen kann, und auch noch irgendwie recht hat, dann beginnt mich wirklich zu gruseln. Beispiel gefällig? Der eigentliche Fehler unserer demokratischen Entscheidungen ist, dass keiner mehr die Verantwortung übernimmt. Bei ihm hätte es sowas nicht gegeben: "Wenn Sie morgen in die Resttschehei einmarschieren, wissen Sie, das war der Führer."

Der Schluss des Buches lässt vermuten, dass der Weg für eine Fortsetzung offenbleibt und diese "Drohung" wird durch einen genialen letzten Satz untermauert.

Fazit: Unbedingt lesen!!!!

Nachtrag: Selten hat mir eine Einbandgestaltung derart gut gefallen. Sehr gut gemacht.

Nandakishore Varma says

I have finally managed to read this controversial book, and now I understand why it has become so controversial. This is cutting satire which pulls no punches, in the tradition of Jonathan Swift - many a time you will flinch while reading it. This is the way I believe that satire should work: while making one laugh, it should also make one uncomfortable, and make one question the very basis of one's fondly held beliefs. It did this for me. I laughed out loud in very few places - but all the while, my inner demon was seething with evil laughter.

The premise of the novel is simple to the point of silliness. Hitler is deposited into the middle of modern-day Germany (without any explanation whatsoever). People take him for a flawless impersonator, while he is very sincere in his motives - to set Germany "right". While the country sees him as a comedian par excellence on TV, Adolf is using it as a means of propaganda to re-establish his philosophy in the minds of the Volk. As the show and the showman become a runaway hit, he is wooed by different parties and gets a book contract - and at the end of the novel we realise with a shudder that Hitler is slowly re-emerging.

The juxtaposition of a historical figure with modern society is a common trope used in many satirical plays in India: it is a useful tool to satirise modern society in the light of age-old values. However, here we find modern society evaluated in the light of Nazi values (celebrity culture and the ethics of journalism, for example), and we sometimes find ourselves agreeing with Hitler! This is deeply disturbing, and forces us to question the values which we have become accustomed to - which is good, IMO, but which I suspect may get a lot of people pissed off. A mirror is sometimes very difficult to look into.

Another disturbing fact Hitler's popularity. In the guise of "humour" (only for the audience-the Fuhrer is in dead earnest), so much of hatred for the "other" is tolerated, nay, even encouraged. It made me question the limits of satire itself - for example, in a joke aimed at a particular community, are we laughing at the issue or the target community? (For example, do we see a magazine such as "Charlie Hebdo" satirising society or insulting religion?) So while applauding Hitler as a comedian, is society tacitly putting the seal of approval on his dangerously eccentric ideas - due to its own ingrained racism? Continuing in the same vein: is this what happened originally, when a little man with a ridiculous moustache was able to take centre stage in German politics, after spending a long time on the fringes (frightening thought, that).

The novel is brilliantly written, in Hitler's unreadable prose (I could recall my experience of reading *Mein Kampf*) which shows him up for what he was - a pompous ass with murderous ideas. (I think this is the root of the criticism that the novel makes Hitler likeable. It doesn't. It makes him silly.) Such a man could not come to power, and commit murder on such a grand scale, without the active collusion of the majority - at least sins of omission if not those of commission. In fact, Hitler only cleverly exploited European anti-Semitism to come to power, IMO. By the time the world realised the depths of the depravity of this madman, it was too late. The novel warns us that it is all the more possible in modern society, with the vastly improved means of propaganda at its disposal.

Finally: does this novel trivialise the holocaust and put Hitler in a favourable light? IMO, it doesn't. What it does is that it diminishes Hitler. It says: "Look, guys, this kooky idiot rode to power on your shoulders and once there, tightened his grip like a vice. Such monkeys will come in future also. Please don't lift them to your shoulders and allow them to put a chokehold on you."

Which is not a bad message, when one comes to think about it.

9/11/16

I think the last paragraph of my review may have proved prophetic...

Michelle says

I love books that push boundaries. The darker the taboo, the better. And I just happened to be searching for a new book to read and then I saw this - perfect.

It has to be one of the funniest, cleverest books I've ever read. I love satire, and this works brilliantly. I can understand why some people might find it offensive (although it really isn't), but I felt part of the point of the book was to show just how stupid a character Hitler was, and how abhorrent his ideas and 'policies' were. Also, without apportioning blame or pointing fingers, I felt that the book was also saying both 'This must not happen again' but also subtly and cleverly highlighting exactly how it could easily happen again.

The book also has a lot to say and suggest about modern life and today's saturated media culture, and for me this was where the book was at its best. Hitler's observations of modern life and technology were hilarious. For example...

Daytime TV: "Who would choose to watch rubbish like this? Untermenschen, perhaps, who can barely read and write, but besides them?"

[Having been exposed to a lot of daytime TV recently and seen things like, 'Cake Boss', 'Bakery Boss', 'Extreme Couponing', etc, etc, I must confess to having the same thought.]

The Swedes and Ikea: "In that rotten state of the Swede is permanently on the lookout for firewood, so it is no wonder that from time to time this might result in the odd table or chair."

Mobile phone ringtones: "I then heard a noise which sounded like a drunken clown playing the xylophone. Over and over again."

Brilliant.

Ps. And, also, one of the best book covers of all time.

Manny says

Most people have praised this witty satire, though a few elderly Germans and Holocaust survivors seem, for some unaccountable reason, to find it offensive. I do not properly understand their objections, and have decided to follow the majority opinion. My own contribution to this new and exciting genre is a screenplay based on the life of the late Jimmy Savile, the celebrated English entertainer and serial pedophile. Although in form a lighthearted sex comedy, the work, needless to say, in no way condones pedophilia. My aim, rather, is to draw attention to the cult of celebrity and the increasing sexualization of young children, both of which I deplore.

At risk of sounding immodest, I am rather proud of my little piece. It contains references to an eclectic mixture of highbrow and lowbrow sources; both *Lolita* and *Come Play With Me*. I am particularly pleased with the sequence where Savile rapes an eight year old Rwandan refugee, which cleverly parodies an episode from *Black Emmanuelle Meets the Wife-Swappers*. Honestly, if this doesn't alert you to the appalling danger posed by celebrity pedophiles then nothing will.

I have shown my draft to a number of people and met varying reactions. Subjects under the age of five are generally positive, though a few of the older ones complain that the sex is too tame. Adults, however, seem very reserved. Some have even gone so far as to say that they find my screenplay tasteless and insensitive to

the plight of Savile's many victims.

I have no idea what they are talking about. Can someone help me?

Hey! Jonathan Maitland has stolen my idea!

Andreas Schwartzmann says

Ich gebe dem Buch nur 3 Sterne. Warum? Die Idee an sich ist interessant und amüsant. Gesellschaftskritik aus der Sicht des im 21. Jahrhundert angekommenen Diktators. Was mich stört, ist die Verharmlosung Hitlers, die damit einher geht. Bei diesem Menschen handelte es sich schließlich nicht um einen aus der Zeit gefallenen, onkelhaften Besserwisser, als der er in dem Buch oft dargestellt wird, sondern um einen psychopathischen, machtbesessenen Egomane. Davon scheint in Vermes Erzählung nichts durch. Hitlers Ambitionen beschränken sich darauf, es der BILD-Zeitung heimzuzahlen und sich über Youtube-Klicks zu freuen. Seine langfristigen Pläne scheinen dann wohl eher einer geplanten Fortsetzung vorbehalten zu sein.

Hitlers mediale Erfolge in unserer Zeit beruhen zudem, das Buch lässt daran keinen Zweifel, allein darauf, dass ihn niemand ernst nimmt und alle nur den Comedian in ihm sehen. Der Autor mag dies durchaus mahnend gemeint haben: Und schon wieder nimmt man ihn nicht ernst. Wieso man aber einen Mann, der seit 1945 tot ist, als real betrachten sollte und diesen Hitler ernst nehmen sollte, wird nicht deutlich.

Hitlers Kritik an der heutigen Gesellschaft wird nicht deshalb falsch, weil sie von Hitler kommt. MediaMarkt betreibt selbstverständlich Volksverdummung, das weiß man auch ohne dieses Buch. Deshalb habe ich mich auch an keiner Stelle erschrocken gefragt: Darf ich dieser oder jener Aussage denn zustimmen? Sie stammt doch von Hitler. Das stammt sie eben nicht. Sondern von Timur Vermes, der sie einer fiktiven Hitler-Figur 2011 in den Mund gelegt hat. Aber dieser fiktive Hitler ist von dem echten Diktator so weit entfernt, wie Schalke 04 von der Meisterschale.

Mein Gesamteindruck kann daher nur lauten: Amüsant und unterhaltend, aber letztlich belanglos. Drei Sterne gibt es für die hervorragende Beherrschung des hitlerschen Sprachduktus. Aber Hitler war mehr als seine Sprache.

Arwen56 says

Adrian says

Well if I could I would give it 3.5 stars, but in my opinion it is not a "4" so 3 stars it is. I quite enjoyed it, in fact my enjoyment level fluctuated quite a lot. I liked the first third of the book then got a bit fed up after that as it got a bit repetitive. That is until the last third when I felt it picked up again, and finally it just ended so quickly, leaving me feeling bit like "and.....". So thats why its only 3 stars.

As you can see it's taken me 2 months to read, and whilst that is not all this books fault, some of the blame

must lay with the middle third of the book.
