



The Young Hitler I Knew

August Kubizek, Geoffrey Brooks (Translator), Ian Kershaw (Introduction)

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August Kubizek met Adolf Hitler in 1904 and over the next four years they became close friends, eventually sharing a flat together in Vienna. This book tells the story of their extraordinary friendship, and gives fascinating insight into Hitler's character during these formative years.

The Young Hitler I Knew Details

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From Reader Review The Young Hitler I Knew for online ebook

Lawrence says

August Kubizek met Adolf Hitler in 1904 while they were both competing for standing room at the opera. Their mutual passion for music created a strong bond, and over the next four years they became close friends. Kubizek describes a reticent young man, painfully shy, yet capable of bursting into hysterical fits of anger if anyone disagreed with him. The two boys would often talk for hours on end; Hitler found Kubizek to be a very good listener, a worthy confidant to his hopes and dreams.

In 1908 Kubizek moved to Vienna and shared a room with Hitler at 29 Stumpergasse. During this time, Hitler tried to get into art school, but he was unsuccessful. With his money fast running out, he found himself sinking to the lower depths of the city: an unkind world of isolation and 'constant unappeasable hunger'. Hitler moved out of the flat in November, without leaving a forwarding address; Kubizek did not meet his friend again until 1938.

The Young Hitler I Knew tells the story of an extraordinary friendship, and gives fascinating insight into Hitler's character during these formative years. This is the first edition to be published in English since 1955 and it corrects many changes made for reasons of political correctness. It also includes important sections which were excised from the original English translation.

Joshua says

This is an immensely gratifying read. For one, it gives one an intimate insight into the thought-patterns and inner life of a totalitarian maniac. Of course, Kubizek offers us a humanized portrait and to me, the most tragic element is Hitler's profound and deep interest in creative self-expression being funneled and co-opted by an insidious German Idealism. Hitler's political-romantic obsession with Wagner shows that he was already thinking in world historical terms as a teenager. And we also see how Kubizek, a much more grounded and ultimately "bourgeois" dude has an appreciation of Wagner that, while sentimental, is grounded in appreciation of his technical achievements as part of a more cosmopolitan appreciation of Opera and music in general. Hitler loved Wagner because it was pure, unfettered GERMAN expression, perhaps the originary point for Hitler's obsession with "Germania." This world-historical and political obsession was a bit alienating to Kuzibek, but he was more than willing to go along with it because of his self-described passive character.

So the interesting part to me isn't the voyeuristic look into the most intimate aspects of Hitler's persona (which IS of course pretty neat), but what the relationship between Hitler and Kuzibek reveals to us about the relation of Hitler to the people of the third reich. Hitler's friendship with Kuzibek feels like a microcosm of his attitude toward the German people--paternalistic, passionate, grounded in essentialism and exclusivity. Although Kuzibek explicitly addresses Hitler's sexuality as decidedly heterosexual, I do believe there is a strong erotic and psycho-sexual undercurrent between Kuzibek and Hitler, and I think that this psycho-sexual element played out between Hitler and the German people.

Of course, not every German fell under the sway of the totalitarian maniac dictator--and even here, Kuzibek's relationship with Hitler provides insight into how these more "grounded" Germans conceded authority to Hitler. We see Kuzibek's self-defensive ignorance of all things "political," his tendency to go along with Hitler on everything (except for music), even if he knew in his heart that Hitler was being demented and extremist.

When one views the highly personal and idiosyncratic relationship between Kuzibek and Hitler through the lens of the political, one has fertile ground for insight into how totalitarian regimes are initiated through the abilities of a charismatic, magnetic figure harnessing malignant historical forces and unleashing them upon a group of people. And although the story between Hitler and Kuzibek is filled with personal pathos, tragedy, and sentimentality (even a decent amount of sympathy for the future psycho), the real takeaway is the tragic political ramifications of an extremist with a singular political vision and a charismatic, seductive spirit.

Greg Paulson says

A truly amazing book. I should note that I have a 1955 printing that HASN'T been edited to be "political correct." I couldn't put it down... No wonder Miguel Serrano said it should be read again and again...studied. It is clear the author is neither uncritical nor overly so, but simply gives an honest recollection of his experience and his opinions. I think it's safe to say one can know little about Adolf Hitler without having read this book. It has truly touched me on a personal level...What inspirational book!

Pía López says

If you happen to be a history fan as I am, this truly becomes a must-read for those who seek more than what "winners" books provide. An insight into Hitler's psyche, one that leaves you to wonder how different history may have been if not for the many struggles and frustrations he had to face during his teenage years. Certainly, one book that serves the purpose to demystify the "demon Hitler" we are used to read in most common modern European history books.

Les Wolf says

Let's suppose that you've been invited to visit Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory in the basement of his exalted castle. You descend the steps as the acrid smell of putrid chemicals and rotting flesh grows in your nostrils accompanied by Egor who holds a tiny torch and speaks in animated and lofty tones. He is busy describing the myriad accomplishments of Master as you round the final twist in the stairway and the spectacle of madness comes fully into view.

You feel shivers as you enter the stony vault and behold a forest of boiling, smoking test tubes and a network of endless coils of wire that terminate in the flesh of a monster lying on a thick stony slab.

The monster shares the middle of the room with a bony, emaciated figure in a lab coat with too much hair and a wild look in his eyes. He seems to be in a race against time, working feverishly with the placing of electrodes and the recording of calculations above the massive lifeless figure.

Such is the feeling when reading this book. There are a number of things that I admire about its author: he is industrious, considerate, devoted, talented and intelligent. But August Kubizek's slavish devotion to Adolf Hitler lies a little beyond the scope of my comprehension.

August started his work life as his father's apprentice in the upholstery business but his passion is for music. He manages to excel in his music studies in Vienna where he lives with young Adolf in spite of the fact that Hitler is easily irritated, demanding, prone to sudden outbursts, uncompromising in his views and prepossessing. Nevertheless, August continues to call Adolf "friend".

To be sure, there are a few examples of Adolf's compassion and commitment that are extolled here. One surely is his involvement with, and care toward, his dying mother and Hitler throws himself whole-heartedly into this task. Another admirable moment involves Adolf's vigorous argument for August's musical career. But in both instances, one could argue that there was a selfish motive behind the altruism. Frau Klara helped to provide for the boy and the house in Urfahr was his touchstone residence and young August would provide the needed sounding board and co-contributor to the cost of rent in Vienna.

In Vienna, August studies hard and excels in his music studies. He plays the viola and piano with great skill and even tutors a considerable number of peers. Adolf walks and muses and gives long-winded speeches and seeks affirmation for his ideas through books. He is busy constructing a systematic ideology from buried ideas and antiquated structures. He attends the opera and concerts and has a particular affinity for Richard Wagner. He becomes less interested in architecture and more interested in politics. It is interesting to note that he only manages to join one organization: the Anti-Semitic League.

There is a moment of darkness and uncertainty. It seems to last for an eternity. The light returns in a great shower of sparks and bursting test tubes. With one great growl, the monster is animated and tears free from his shackles and wires. This brings a single declaration from the deranged but dedicated father of this aberration: "It's alive!" he screams.

And his words seem to echo beyond the stones of the great vault, beyond the villainous archways, beyond even the long dead hanging branches of the great trees that claw at the castle walls. His declaration reverberates across the country and around the world on the radio, in newspapers, in news film clips as the monster climbs upon his podium and pounds his fists and shrieks in great guttural, menacing tones.

Manny says

This book, published in 1953 by Adolf Hitler's childhood friend August Kubizek, is frequently referred to in the sixth volume of Knausgård's *Min kamp*; Knausgård quotes long passages and also compares with Hitler's various biographers, in particular Ian Kershaw.

Kubizek was Hitler's best friend for about four years, and they shared lodgings in Vienna for several months. Knausgård's opinion is that Kubizek was the only real friend Hitler ever had, and the person who knew him best. He also thinks that the memoir is essentially honest. It was begun in the 40s, under the orders of the Third Reich, and completed after the war; during the first period, Kubizek was being pressed to write a hagiography of Hitler, and during the second he was expected to demonize him, but he did neither of these things.

The most surprising aspect of Kubizek's account, at least as presented by Knausgård, is that Hitler doesn't come across as an evil person; the worst that can be said about him is that he is egoistic and somewhat out of touch with reality. This is actually much more frightening than a portrait of an inhuman monster. It is easy to see how people you know yourself could turn into the creature Hitler later became, and Knausgård's book explores this theme in great detail. He strongly disagrees with Kershaw's reading of Kubizek's text, and suggests that Kershaw is overinterpreting the facts in the light of Hitler's future career.

I am curious to read Kubizek's memoir and decide for myself.

Christian Schwalbach says

While written in a very matter of fact, documentarian manner , this slim volume is a fascinating look (via his childhood friend) of part of the adolescence of the Young Adolf Hitler. As a reader, when encountering works in this vein , it is imperative that one separate themselves from the later mis-deeds of people like Hitler , which could easily cloud the interpretation. As difficult as this is to do, it allows oneself to understand the complexity of character of people history has rightly labeled "evil." reading this volume gave me a glimpse of some of the events and personality traits that shaped Hitler into the megalomaniacal dictator he would later become. That being said, one can still glimpse soft traits in the teen age Hitler of this narrative, who sounds like, to me, many other young men who consign themselves to the whims of dreams and lofty ambition. This book is extremely compelling, also , since I think we can all find traits of ourselves in the Hitler that is portrayed here, and it is because of this that one must attempt to read books like this as objectively as possible, despite the difficulty of doing so. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in psychology of Youth, or specifically, gaining a further understanding of the formative years of Adolf Hitler, especially from such an intimate perspective.

5/5 stars for interest value

Gary Stocker says

Very readable. Written by one of Hitler's (probably only) teenage friends.

peg says

I approached this book with the expectation of learning what exactly went wrong in Adolph Hitler's early childhood that could have been responsible for creating the monster he became. The fact that Hitler was a product of incest and a narcissistic, tyrannical, stubborn, and delusional young man with a "grim and sour" sense of humor and a lack of tolerance for those who disagreed with him, did not surprise me. What shocks me is that the author, who was Hitler's closest and only friend during his adolescence and young adulthood, also describes Hitler as being a sensitive person with a passion for music and the arts with exceptional empathy for the down trodden. If what Kubizek says is true, and I have no reason to disbelieve this credible account, Adolph Hitler cared for his dying mother in a very compassionate and selfless manner, provided for his younger sister after the death of their parents, was hopelessly in search of romance and the love of a beautiful woman, and was a caring and faithful friend to Kubizek, himself. Like many famous people, Adolph Hitler did not have an idyllic childhood. His father was described as a bit of a tyrant who gave young Adolph "a good hiding" when necessary and completely disregarded his son's artistic and architectural aptitudes. Both of Hitler's parents feared that Adolph would never find a substantive career for himself. By his own admission, Adolph had been a poor student in school and as a result, he was self-taught in most disciplines. Later in life Hitler's designs for transportation systems and city planning were brilliant. He had a keen eye for urban development and would probably have been remembered for his genius had he not also orchestrated the most heinous atrocities ever to befall the western world. While reading this book I did not discover the negative influences in Hitler's life that could have created the flawed individual we remember. Perhaps that story lies in the early undocumented relationship that he had with his father. Despite the horror Kubizek felt for Hitler's actions as a political leader, Kubizek remembers Adolf Hitler with affection for the young man who befriended him.

Sharon Zink says

A well-written memoir of friendship with Hitler 1905-1912. Interesting, but good to go to sleep on.

Narendr?ditya Nalwa says

★★★★★

"You are a friend of Adolf Hitler's?"

"Yes."

"Since when?"

"Since 1904."

"What do you mean by that? At that time he was nobody."

"Nevertheless, I was his friend."

"How could you be his friend when he was still a nobody?"

An American officer of the Central Intelligence Corps asked: "So you are a friend of Adolf Hitler's. What did you get out of it?"

"Nothing."

"But you admit that you were his friend. Did he give you money?"

"No."

"Or food?"

"Neither."

"A car, a house?"

"Not that either."

"Did he introduce you to beautiful women?"

"Nor that."

"Did he receive you again, later on?"

"Yes."

"Did you see him often?"

"Occasionally."

"How did you manage to see him?" "I just went to him."

"So you were with him. Really? Quite close?" "Yes, quite close."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"Without any guard?"

"Without any guard."

"So you could have killed him?" "Yes, I could have."

"And why didn't you kill him?"

"Because he was my friend."

Sue says

I can't remember how I first heard of this book. When it was reprinted (the original title was *Young Hitler*, I bought a copy.

Just finished reading this work and seeing another side of Hitler was very interesting. It was obvious that the teenaged Hitler had sociopathic characteristics and controlled his friend, the author. However, Hitler was human, and he did have big plans and dreams. So many of his behaviors (long rants on topics, belittling others, etc.) were evident as a youth.

It was interesting to see what Hitler was like when young, even with poetic license the author inadvertently used at times. The understanding one gains by the end of the book - that Hitler's life was the result of his character and self-determination, more than anything else - is disturbing but yet, in some way, satisfying. Hitler was a monster, but even monsters have a human side. No villain in a novel can be two-dimensional and still be a good villain, and it's important for history to remember that Hitler was a son and a friend.

And no, Hitler's friendship with Kubizek doesn't redeem or excuse what the Reich Chancellor did - so many of the Reich's victims would have had much more fulfilling stories - but it does help history chronicle him as human being, sociopathic and self-absorbed, but human nonetheless.

Brillitt Arellan says

Lo leí en una semana y me gustó. Uno aprende con Kubizek cómo se desarrolló el pensamiento antisemita y político de Hitler. Fue un ser lejano a la sociedad pero le interesaba ayudar a su pueblo, y con este libro, uno ausculta la psicología de este personaje tan controvertido. Nadie mejor que Kubizek para ser el mejor amigo de Hitler, pareciese que hubiese estado escrito, porque la personalidad un tanto sumisa de Kubizek permitía a Hitler explayarse en sus disertaciones sin que alguien le contradijera, ya que August solo escuchaba. Le daría cinco, pero el autor a veces se dejaba llevar por la admiración a Adolf e inquiría en excesos al describirlo, por lo demás, recomendado.

Roger says

Interesting read. It seems that Hitler was a homophobic homosexual whose fantasy about a woman named Stephanie was his mask for his love of his friend. Unable to accept this within himself he made homosexuals and Jews his object of his hate. Being obsessive, paranoid, grandiose, and antisocial made him the monster he grew to be. He was a man with no soul.

My Pseudonym says

This book provides the reader, with probably, the most intimate account available on Hitler's youth and upbringing. August Kubizek and Hitler were best friends from around the age of 15-19 years old. This book will probably come as a shock to the layman, as it seems to depict an apologist's view on the tyrant everybody understands as Adolf Hitler.

However, I don't believe that is the case. Kubizek appears to write with genuine rose tainted reminiscence regarding - what he calls - his dear old friend, Hitler. He writes with great passion on their youthful adventures together. They would frequently go and visit operas together and go on adventures. Hitler, from a young age displayed captivating oratory skills, and showed a love for art and architecture.

Kubizek actually thanks Hitler for encouraging him to pursue music and study in Vienna away from home. Kubizek claims if it wasn't for Hitler, he may've not had the will to pursue his passion, and would've likely stuck with the family business. Their relationship is an unusual one; however, Hitler does appear to show glimpses of compassion and caring for the world around him and for his friend's well-being.

Very revealing insight into Hitler's psyche from a young age, and should be a compulsory read for any serious scholar studying the life of Hitler or anyone trying to understand how such a mysterious, yet well-known figure, rose to tyrannical power.
