Hitler's Movement Signature

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In 1933 a young Jewish historian accompanied her friend to the Nuremberg rally for Adolf Hitler. With curiosity and apprehension, she watched group after group parade by—idealistic youth, disciplined soldiers, worshipful women, loyal elderly citizens—all costumed and choreographed. Once they had marched into orderly sections within a vast field, Brown Shirts formed lines on the aisles and the S.S. cleared an area in the center.

Expectation of Hitler's arrival rose to a fever pitch as people scanned the space for a glimpse of his entrance. At the sound of a small plane, all eyes shot upward. As it landed in their midst and Hitler emerged, the crowd roared with one voice and the Jewish historian found her arm in the air and heard her own voice cheering with the others, "Heil Hitler."

Years later, a scholar of German history living in the United States, she was still appalled and stunned that she could have done it.¹

By the time Hitler became chancellor and was inaugurated in another pageant in 1933, he was at the peak of his form. He had had years of practice speaking at rallies, perfecting his oratorical style until it was among the most effective ever witnessed. In his Reichschancellor inaugural address, he displays his mastery of the dramatic buildup. He has the audience wait in silence a full minute while he stands looking out over them.² When he finally starts to speak, his voice is low and almost conversational, his manner modest and diffident, but for a hint of righteousness. At first he does not gesticulate.

But before long, he crescendoes into the resonating shouts and histrionics so often seen in Hitler documentaries, his face expressing rage, his arm slicing the air. The harangue builds from forte to fortissimo to fortississimo, then abruptly it is over. He turns away, folds his arms, and looks down at his notes. As the audience continues its tumultuous applause, Hitler smooths his hair in a steady, unhurried motion that is in striking contrast to the impassioned speech heard seconds before.

What is one to make of this decades later? To many in Germany in 1933, the speech was inspirational. Today, it is associated with the Holocaust. Few historical documents can challenge efforts to suspend value judgments more than the films of Hitler. But to the scholar, films of Hitler rallies and Nazi fictional films allow study of Nazi culture, organi-
zation, and beliefs—performance research of the most serious and important kind.\(^3\) Still, what is the value of continuing to study Hitler's oratorical style? Isn't it simply an extreme example of oratorical conventions common before television required politicians to appear more subdued?

Interviews by foreign correspondents and film shots of Hitler "behind the scenes" indicate he was rather ordinary in appearance and manner, unimpressive except for his powerful gaze (Kurth 1990). In contrast, his oratory displays his complexity and dynamism. Just minutes of a film of Hitler at the peak of one of his speeches tells volumes about him, if it is painstakingly examined. We hope to show that extremely close examination of Hitler's oratory behavior helps define not only elements of his remarkable performance skills, but clues to his character.

As the 1988 U.S. presidential campaign demonstrated so powerfully, the "marketing" of candidates forces citizens to try to evaluate the personalities of the contestants, to decipher who they "really" are and to identify their personal commitments and priorities amidst the formidable packaging. Such efforts to distinguish the candidates from their public performances have become a "civic semiotics," a task for the electorate fraught with difficulty (Davis and Dulicai in press).

On the one hand, efforts to "read" historical figures such as Hitler are inextricably influenced by the evidence of history. On the other hand, the accuracy of efforts to "read" current leaders awaits the test of time. Despite the limitations of post hoc analyses of historical figures, these may generate methods and data that will be valuable for study of modern leaders.

This paper is an introduction to a systematic method for deciphering public presentations using a source of data that has been largely ignored, the speaker's body movements. It is illustrated with an analysis of Hitler's oratorical behavior. While we cannot prove this analysis would have been the same in 1933 had we had the tools we have now, we hope to demonstrate that each of the observations is precisely documented and is based on persistent aspects of his movement style that can be explicitly identified. The method itself is applicable to any individual, and not only in contexts such as public speaking, but in less formal and staged conversations.

The proposed analysis concentrates on the individual speaker, but, of course, a public address is an interaction between speaker and audience that is coordinated, paced, and mutually developed. To focus exclusively on Hitler in such an event is distorting. Pageants such as the Hitler rallies, are great ceremonials that weld a people together in what Eliot Chapple and Carleton Coon (1978) have referred to as "Rites of Intensification" and they are found everywhere in some form. For Hitler, the triumph of the Nazi movement is being celebrated at his inaugural and it is a time to reemphasize the goals for which all of them had fought. As can be seen in the speech reprinted in Plates 1 and 2, he asserts this powerfully. These graphics also illustrate how intricately his movements and speech are related to the sounds and movements of the audience.

However, examination of details of Hitler's performance as a means of identifying salient details of his personal expressive style does not negate the profound cultural and interactional nature of the event. If a microanalysis of Hitler at his most demonstrative and complex helps us to isolate patterns that are also seen in his behavior in other contexts, it may contribute to research on the man and his leadership.
Plate 1. In German:

(applause)

Wir wollen nicht lügen und wir wollen nicht schwindeln.

(applause)

Ich habe es deshalb abgelehnt, jemals vor dieses Volk hinzutreten und billige Versprechungen zu geben.

Es kann niemand hier gegen mich aufstehen und zeigen, daß ich je gesagt habe, der Wiederaufstieg Deutschlands sei nur eine Frage von wenigen Tagen.

Immer und immer wieder predige ich: Der Wiederaufstieg der deutschen Nation ist die Frage der Wiedergewinnung der inneren Kraft und Gesundheit des deutschen Volkes.

(applause)

Methodology: Movement Signature Analysis

In this technique the projector or videorecorder becomes a microscope, the segment of film or videotape a slide. We shift from the wide vistas of the assemblage to zoom in on the speaker in full body shots. Then, with sound turned off, we concentrate on his movement to identify details by repeated viewing or slow motion. The method starts with the more obvious and conventional aspects of gesture and position and progresses to subtle structural and qualitative details identified by trained observers. Before summarizing the results of our microanalysis of Hitler’s movement style, a comment is needed about the methodology and its rationale.

Called Movement Signature Analysis, the method relies on very detailed examination of a few selected samples rather than an inventory of many movements according to dimensional scales or codes. It is most similar to Efron’s study of Jewish and Italian gesture styles in which he and his artist-colleague precisely recorded the paths and accent patterns of gesticulations from slow motion film analysis (Efron 1970). But because the objective here is to capture what is distinctive in an individual’s movement style, it has to be even more refined than Efron’s meticulous observations.

The rationale for this approach is that an effective way to identify what is unique in a person’s movement is to perform a microanalysis of very good “specimens” of body movement—such as the behaviors that accompany animated speech—to determine exactly how the many aspects of the movement are performed in sequence. Having done such an analysis, the researcher is then free to summarize the features inventory-fashion for comparison with other movements of the individual to determine how representative they are and to compare them with the patterns of other individuals.

Of course, no such analysis can be tailored solely to the individual in his or her own terms without using some predetermined concepts and common terminology. These may obscure and bias the search for what is unique in the individual’s movement behavior. But, relatively speak-
Nobody here can get up and prove that I have ever said that the revival of Germany is just a matter of a few days. Again and again I have preached that the renewal of the nation depends on the inner strength and health of the German people... (applause)

ing, such a microanalysis seems to allow us to come closer to a person’s movement signature than do methods involving dimensional comparisons between individuals. For a summary of the method, see Plate 3.

We chose two passages from Hitler’s Reichschancellor speech because they involve the most complex, intense segments of oratorical movement among the Hitler documentaries we have seen. These passages, which are near the speech’s culmination, are diagrammed in Plates 1 and 2. The text indicates that they are each “complete thoughts.” Both are preceded and followed by long applause, and, in one sense, may be regarded as two speaking “turns.” (Of course, a speech is a monolog, but the applause could be regarded as the audience’s “turn” to respond.)

In the first segment, Hitler repeatedly places his arms at his sides between gesticulations, an example of what we call “homebase” positions. Although he does not hold this position, there is a slight release into gravity or complete extension downward of the arms. This appears a movement equivalent of period punctuations making this segment a series of short movement “sentences.”

In the second segment, his right forearm never quite goes to his side as he keeps a high degree of active tension. Thus, what are almost homebase positions become the movement parallel of commas (or at least semicolons) within one long “sentence.” These arms-at-sides moments are shown in the lowest row of pictures in Plates 1 and 2 and represent the nonverbal punctuation or demarcation of smaller units within each segment.

Speakers at their most complex and animated may perform either brief movement phrases punctuated by fleeting returns to homebase, one immediately after the other as Hitler does in the first segment, or they may display long continuous phrases as in the second segment. The first example is less complex than the second because it has a series of shorter and/or more repetitive moves than the complex sequence of the second.

Such a structural analysis points out the close coordination of movement and speech units, although it should be noted that within these segments the arms-down punctuations are not always concurrent with vocal pitch changes indicating a stop or pause. Speakers can create a
Second Selected Segment of Hitler Reichschancellor Address, 1933

in us alone lies the future of the German people. When we ourselves lead the German people out of the abyss . . . our own determination . . .

through our own work, our own industry . . . our own stubbornness . . .

our own perseverance.

Plate 2. In German:
Nur in sich selbst allein liegt die Zukunft des deutschen Volkes. Nur wenn wir selbst dieses deutsche Volk emporführen durch eigene Arbeit, durch eigenen Fleiss, eigenen Trotz, eigene Beharrlichkeit, dann werden wir wieder emporsteigen, genau wie die Väter einst Deutschland nicht durch fremde Hilfe, sondern selbst gross gemacht haben.

(shouts and applause)

variety of speech and gesture unit combinations and Hitler is clearly matching vocal units with movement units in an interesting and very coherent way.

The exquisitely coordinated interaction between audience and speaker, the way in which applause and shouted approvals match changes in his energy level and timing are striking. For example, the applause erupts precisely after Hitler’s speech in what Chapple describes as a moment of perfect interactional synchrony (Chapple 1980).

It is worth noting that the second segment appears intact in at least two documentaries on Hitler. It is Hitler with all stops out, his most intense and complex. As such, it affords us the opportunity to study him when he is making the greatest effort to present himself and his mission to communicate with and inspire loyalty in those he needs (and who need him). Contrived and rehearsed as such a sequence may be, so much is going on that he cannot possibly control every nuance exactly to his specifications. “Between the lines” of the practiced gestures are signs of patterns that endure beyond them.

In the Movement Signature Analysis, the second segment was recorded according to 16 different aspects of nonverbal behavior varying over 31 seconds (see Davis 1991). Of all of the movement analyses we have done on important public figures, this example is perhaps the most complex, continuous movement phrase displayed. Within Hitler’s oratory, such complex movement phrases are brief, very packed narratives of their own. The following is a summary of some of Hitler’s bodily messages. The patterns are described sequentially, although, of course, they are intricately layered and coordinated in the actual motions. We will start with his lexicon of conventional types of gestures and the idiosyncratic ways he performs them.
The Steps of Movement Signature Analysis

1. Sample Selection
Available film or videotape of the person is reviewed to select at least three examples for microanalysis. Selection criteria are as follows:
a) For each sample the body is in view from at least hips to head through the entire action sequence (the sequence being demarcated by held positions).
b) The most complex movement sequence observed has priority (complexity is defined as the sequence with the greatest length, dynamic variation, spatial complexity, and body-part articulation for that person).
c) The second sample(s) either involve sequence(s) of middle-range complexity representing the individual's characteristic conventional gestures (batons, kinetographic gestures, etc.), or repetitious gestures, or problems and limitations (one sample may represent all three criteria).
d) The third sample represents the individual's shortest and simplest, gesticulations accompanying speaking, for a baseline.

2. Identifying Individual Ranges
There is a General Key specifying the definition and recording of details in each of 16 categories. Particular ranges or special variants of these codes are identified during the initial viewings and delineated in the "Individual Signature Key."

3. Detailed Recording
The sample is examined repeatedly in whatever way the observer finds most helpful (slow motion, freeze frame, fast forward, and regular speed) to record each of the 16 categories of observation. The recording is blocked out in seconds and what occurs when is recorded relative to the nearest second.

4. Pattern Analysis
Steps two and three involve such detailed study that the observer begins to get insights into repeated patterns, notable combinations of features, unusual variations. Particular attention is paid to how changes in direction are initiated and movements are completed for distinctive types of emphasis, transition, development.

5. Summary and Comparisons
After completion of each sample recording, a summary of the features observed is done. This "Summary Analysis" becomes an inventory with quantitative data useful for observer reliability studies, examination of individual consistency across contexts, and comparison with other subjects.

6. Interpretation
The initial movement analysis and interpretation should be done without sound and whenever possible without other information about the person. Guidelines for interpretation are based on past research and Laban Movement Analysis theory. Interpretations draw on aspects of the movement having a symbolic or metaphoric character but which are hypothesized here to literally and intrinsically relate to broader aspects of personality and coping style.
Then we will rise up again . . .

. . . just as our fathers built up Germany.

Not through outside help, but through our own efforts.

(signature)

(shouts and applause)

**Signature Analysis Summary**

**SCOLDING DUTCH UNCLE**

As Plates 1 and 2 indicate, there are two instances of finger-wagging in the first segment and one example in the second. For these, Hitler shoots out his arm as he points his forefinger, then he shakes or wags the hand. In certain conventions, of course, finger-wagging is regarded as the motion of scolding and certainly it has this appearance, combined as it is with Hitler’s severe gaze out over the audience, his other arm stiff at his side, his body held still. If he is not literally “scolding” the audience, he is showing them, “I mean business!”

In addition to its conventional significance, this movement appears to have a regulating function in the speech. When the finger-wagging builds in intensity, it appears as if he is revving himself up with it; after increasing its speed and vigor, he changes to an even more percussive action. When he performs finger-wagging without much intensity, for example, after he has covered his mouth in a cough, it can have a recouping/pacing function. Hitler’s finger-wag over the audience applause also signals that they should stop as he is resuming his speech.

**VARIATIONS OF VIOLENCE**

Efron (1970) has identified “batons” as gesticulations that primarily punctuate speaking and match its emphasis patterns. In oratory batons may predominate as the speaker builds up intensity, cutting or slicing the air or using both arms to hammer home a point. And in oratory at its peak, these gestures become quicker, stronger, more direct.

Hitler displays several baton gesticulations in these segments. One could imagine finding an orchestral piece that fits his “conducting,” the patterns of emphasis are so regular and precise. However, what is distinctive about his baton gestures is the way he mixes them with specific hand configurations and actions such that many are literally punches, slashes,
and stabs in the air. Efron might call these a mixture of baton and “kinetographic” gestures (depicting body actions) and we can see three primary types:

1. **Forward Stabs.** In the first segment Hitler can be seen bursting into a series of piercing, strong, direct stabs forward and slightly downward. In this gesticulation type Hitler is at his most aggressive in an outward direction. Other baton/kinetographs usually involve some pattern toward or close to the body. It is notable that the motions that possess an outward emphasis (and which do not have an inward rotation that counters the outward thrust) are usually forward or sagittal. They are also the motions that combine the fullest extension with the most power and directness. This would not be unusual except that they are so channeled into the sagittal.

   Speakers often use a forward/downward direction for batons of emphasis, but not in such a way as to bisect the space precisely in the center of the body. To do this Hitler has to “pull” the motion to the center from the slight to-the-side deflection that comes with articulating the arm at the shoulder. In another speech, he pulls the arm to the center and rotates it outward before he extends, an accommodation that allows him to extend the arm exactly forward and center from the chest. This is one of the ways Hitler makes his movement appear abstract, “unnatural,” machinelike.

2. **Crushing Fists.** Some of the baton/kinetographs involve powerful slashing motions across his chest that become very small, but strong and tense, shaking close to his body. Sometimes he actually beats his chest. The motions are crushing, wrenching, pounding. Although they appear violent, like the forward stabs, they are closely controlled. Hitler can stop precisely, repeat a hit and stop again without any deviation in the direction or evidence of reverberation from so much strength exerted.

   Each of the forms of violent gesticulation displays this control. For example, he may hit across his body in a crisp, percussive, highly bound and strong motion that stays very straight, strong, and bound through its entire path, then reverses direction with equal control and intensity. In these segments, there are virtually no motions involving some swing, some moment of release or looseness while building up or rebounding from the power of the action, common even in very agitated and vigorous gesticulation. To help visualize this pattern—maximum intensity and control from the beginning to the end of each direction—one might visualize a series of karate moves, as karate displays this concentration.

3. **Snapping-Punching.** Hitler’s shaking motions close to the body sometimes involve actually beating his chest. However, there is a group of powerful actions that are not repetitive, back-and-forth shakes, or pounding, but single hits and punches directed toward and close to the body. These are performed with the same karatelike sustained power and control.

   It is notable how often Hitler actually hits himself. In the middle of the second segment he takes both arms and punches his fists together. At several points he will end a motion with a powerful snap back to his chest then downward to the side. Whether or not he actually hits himself, these motions display a strong emphasis inward.
MELODRAMATIC ACTIONS

All of this punching and slashing and wrenching could be called melodramatic, but Hitler displays a set of gesticulations that particularly deserve this description. In the midst of the baton/kinetographs and finger-wagging, Hitler will mime some action or expression in an exaggerated way. For example, he raises hands to face level, fingers reaching upward, then shakes his hands as he circles his head and closes his eyes. It looks like a mock swooning motion, and it can be seen in other speeches. The apparent loss of focus lasts only a second and, although Hitler may have reached such a peak of intensity that he momentarily loses a sharp conscious awareness, it appears on because in a split second he bursts out of it with a forward point and finger-wag, his gaze straight forward.

"Mock swooning" appears the most extreme example of a number of reaching-upward motions that mimic "stirring and heartfelt effort." They are part of a repertoire of melodramatic actions. Another displayed in the second segment is "mock slapping" ("mock" because the gesture of slapping downward is performed with a very large motion that has no intensity).

The long wait before starting to talk and the diffident beginning of the speech can be considered melodramatic, but we will distinguish two levels of melodramatic action: (a) specific kinetographs in which Hitler appears to be miming an action in an exaggerated but "hollow" way—mock swooning, mock slapping—and (b) fine-grained signs of contrivance and acting for effect that pervade the performance. The former are closer to discrete communicative gestures with identifiable, "lexical" content (swoon = "the struggle is all-consuming"; mock slap = "I won't stand for it"). The latter are qualitative or structured details of the movement that may be observed in a variety of specific actions.

SLIPS OF THE BODY

There is no question that Hitler's performance is impressive and seasoned, but it is not perfect. There are fleeting motor signs that reveal he is not in total control. In the first segment, after his initial exclamations and forward stabs, Hitler covers his mouth as if he is either burping or coughing. (Reports of Hitler's stomach complaints prompt one to wonder about stomach reactions here, though it is more plausible that he is coughing after a shout.) This is a momentary glitch he recoups from by shooting his arm out and wagging his finger to shorten the applause and signal he is going on.

More dramatic is a moment later in this segment in which he crosses his arms, clamping the right hand tightly under his left elbow. If we look closely, we can see that the fingers of the right hand are chaotically twitching. It looks as if Hitler is trying to control or at least hide this sign of stress.

A third indication of "spillage" is the way he rises up on his feet slightly at the end of some of his most vigorous passages. In both segments—and in numerous other speeches and marches—Hitler keeps his trunk essentially immobile, separate and isolated from arm actions. It is physically difficult to jab the whole arm into the air with great force and speed and not have the motion spread or reverberate into the shoulder and upper trunk. It takes a great deal of active control to keep the trunk still while also maintaining one's balance and place. Hitler performs these large powerful actions with a sharp differentiation of the limb and trunk
through so many actions, one might infer that, consciously or unconsciously, this active control is “desired,” worked on, maintained at all cost. At the end of some particularly powerful gestures, Hitler can build to such a pitch that he appears unable to maintain the body hold and rises up on his feet. Spilling over in this way allows him to hold the trunk and stand in place.

AT WAR WITH HIMSELF/AT ONE WITH HIS AUDIENCE

Hitler actually hits himself a number of times, but, as with the other instances of punching and stabbing in the air, one would do well not to interpret these motions too literally. All of these gestures seem part of the lexicon of pretelevision oratory, and they can be seen in some form in other speakers, including outspoken pacifists. What is unique is the way Hitler performs such actions—not that he punches, but precisely how he does it. This needs to be identified by using a sharper focus on body coordinations and spatial and dynamic patterns.

At this subtle level, Hitler displays an uncanny pattern of contradiction in many different actions. He has a way of “inverting” the force in on himself with powerful inward rotation of the arms. For example, he may return to the “homebase” position of arm to side by rotating the arm inward with strength and great tension.

He almost never moves out to the side in a widening motion and, remarkably, when he does extend the arm to the side in these segments, he rotates the arm inward so he is contradicting the outward reach. This outward-inward contradiction can be seen in the moves when he hits his fists: the fists come together close to his chest while his elbows swing outward, then he reverses the motion by doing the opposite, fists outward, elbows wrenching inward.

In our experience, it is unusual for someone to do such extreme rotations with such a powerful, tense quality as Hitler manifests at the end of various extensions. Most of these wrenching motions involve inward rotation, but a dramatic, and apparently rare, instance of outward rotation adds to the picture of tortured contradiction and inversion in on himself. In a 1934 night rally Hitler can be seen making a forward extension in which he rotates the hand and arm outward. But it is a caricature of an extensive gesture because what he does is pull the arm to the center, rotate the forearm outward, and then extend the arm in a pure forward line from his chest. He is narrowing even as he extends into what at the end looks like an “offering” or presentation.

Hitler’s movement is very difficult to imitate. In seminars with people who are sophisticated about movement analysis and performance such as dancers and dance therapists, most cannot even approximate the ways in which he controls the action, contradicts directions, and sustains such a violent intensity throughout a series of batons. Those who come close want to stop. It is tortured, painful, relentless, and unyielding motion. To move this way is to be at war with one’s body and it is notable that, for all of the aggression that Hitler’s oratory displays, it is this war with himself that stands out.

The stress on inward aggression, the contradiction between inward-outward, and the extreme segregation of limbs from trunk suggests another level of interpretation. As noted earlier, he is a master at attuning to his audience and bringing the audience with him. But he does not seem related to them as “I am your leader, you are my people,” but rather as “you are an extension of me.” The machinelike precision, ab-
stract geometric forms, and angular fighting motions—create the impression that the audience is not separate from him; it is his vehicle or instrument. He hits it, pounds it, stabs it, scolds it, in the same way he does himself. If this is so, then how can he hold the audience? From the perspective of the movement analysis, one of Hitler's remarkable strengths is his ability to pace the interaction and move in synchrony with the audience despite the inverted, inward-turning tendency of his motions.8

Hitler performs most of the gesticulations with very little visible change or movement of his torso. It seems significant that the few times the trunk does become slightly mobile, it is during narrowing actions of the arms. For example, he pulls his arms to himself and his chest becomes slightly concave in the later part of the second segment. And, at the very end, the one distinctly postural motion involving the arms and whole body is a turn away from the audience in which he narrows and retreats, shifting his weight back and rounding slightly his blocklike trunk. The stress is inward or narrowing on any motions that activate and involve the torso and whole body.

In the first segment, Hitler raises his right arm sharply to the level of his right shoulder, draws a perfect arc across the audience, then ends with a powerful snap of the hand back to his left shoulder. It is as if he says "all of this is me/mine." There are no clear motions which are the reverse of this, no unequivocal, uncontradicted, posturally supported reaches outward from himself to the audience.10

**Signs of Cunning**

The Reichschancellor speech is theatre and many of its details must be under Hitler's conscious control: the long wait before speaking, the timing and buildup into fortississimo, the lexicon of specific gestures of punching and stabbing, the melodramatic actions of swooning, mock slapping and breast-beating. These are what an actor could do, even if he could not perform them exactly in the way Hitler does. (Later we will discuss how great actors portraying Hitler can be seen doing these actions.)

In themselves, the actions do not indicate cunning, they reflect performance competencies often expected or required of leaders. However, the fine-grained analysis identifies nuances of performance that are more difficult to consciously control, and in these there are signs of Hitler's capacity for dissimulation and cunning. After reaching the peak of intensity in the second segment, his movement and voice fairly ringing with power and agitation, he simply stops, turns to his notes, and folds his arms. There is no spillover, no sign of being excited, no reverberation.

We would submit that speakers who reach such peaks of intensity and vigor are likely to show at least a split second of spillover that reflects their excitement. For example, Martin Luther King, Jr. (who could also develop powerful crescendoes in his oratory, albeit in a vastly different way) finishes his "I Have a Dream" speech by immediately leaving the stage, his outstretched arm barely returning to the podium before he turns and disappears into a crowd of his supporters.11 It is as if he cannot simply stand there, arms reaching out accepting the applause or even arms down, hands holding the podium. The abruptness of his departure does not look at all controlled. He looks suddenly shy and overwhelmed.
Contrast this with Adolf Hitler who, one second after snapping his arm powerfully back and then down to his side, turns with a measured folding of his arms and looks at his notes. Then, still with no sign of excitement such as a momentary tremor or quickening of his movements, he raises both arms and smooths his hair. Preening amidst such tumult may be, by some stretch of ethological theory, a means of recouping composure, but, performed with such a perfectly measured and ostentatious motion, it appears utterly contemptuous of the cheering audience.

For a complete Movement Signature Analysis, it is important to trace the extent to which the specific patterns discovered through the micro-analysis of a few selected samples can be seen in other contexts. We have looked at brief segments of Hitler in several speeches, in parades where he is marching and saluting, and in rather staged social gatherings and meetings. While, of course, he never displays the intensity and animation in conversational contexts that he displays in speeches, there are signs of the blocklike trunk separated from arm actions and collected positions with inward rotation in the arms.

In the rallies and marches, Hitler salutes in two ways. He does the formal Nazi salute which is a rigid arm snapped up to shoulder level, arm rotated inward, palm facing down, performed with crisp control from start to hold and sometimes with great power. Hitler also uses a less formal salute that he performs by flexing the elbow and wrist toward his head, palm facing out. Sometimes this is done with such an extreme inward rotation, he almost hits himself in the right eye. One wonders how the salutes evolved. What little footage we have of the other Nazi leaders in oratory reveals that they move very differently from Hitler. At the very least, it is notable that the formal Nazi salute strikingly duplicates important details of the Fuhrer’s movement style.12

The features seen in the Reichschancellor speech persist through other speeches to a remarkable degree. Hitler may do different types of actions, but how he performs them stays consistent over several years. If anything, Hitler seems to exaggerate his style with time, losing some of his complexity and heightening the already extreme degree of control and aggression. There is some evidence, however, that in late public appearances he is considerably depleted. Hitler was reclusive in the last two years so we have seen little film documentation from that time.

**Implications**

**Clues to Character**

This picture of Hitler as violent, relentless, paranoid, cunning, tortured, and talented is not derived from noting that he makes strings of jabbing, punching motions with a severe facial expression. It is determined from the ways in which he performs these actions, and it is supported by the observation that in other contexts in which he makes nonaggressive actions, he still displays similar patterns of inward stress, trunk-arm separation, and extreme control.

What we hope we have illustrated is that study of certain very staged and practiced performances can reveal a great deal that rings true about the performer. One can “tell the dancer from the dance” if one looks far below the level of conventional forms of the performance genre—in this case the stock of pounding, slicing, jabbing motions that can be found in traditional oratory.
At the "micro" level there are thousands of subtle details that indicate how the dancer uniquely performs the particular dance. There are the various ways that movements are initiated, with various intensities and spatial characteristics; how the body is articulated and the limbs coordinated with the trunk; how patterns are sequenced; and gaze, orientation, and relationship to other(s) are interrelated. There are the myriad ways weight is shifted, planes and directions stressed, dynamics and fluency uniquely patterned.

We may develop fairly good impressions of someone's movement style, but many of the persistent and richly evocative details of movement style cannot be identified by casual observation. They need aids such as Labanotation, which so rigorously delineates movement path, weight shift, and body-part articulation, and Laban Movement Analysis which facilitates identification of the many subtleties of dynamics and qualitative features (Hutchinson 1970; Bartenieff with Lewis 1980). And, of course, to do a microanalysis of a selected movement, we need film or videotape for repeat viewing.

All these can be used to identify the movement signature of anyone, although the description of Hitler's distinctive patterns illustrates the technique with particular vividness. The value and purpose of completing a Movement Signature Analysis on an individual, of course, will vary with the subject. Applied to political leaders, it may be useful in the daunting effort to detect signs of their credibility and authenticity, as well as their personal strengths and liabilities. For movement analysts interested in performance research, Movement Signature Analysis could serve as a rigorous means of trying to distinguish "what is acted" in a broad range of performance contexts. While all that is recorded in Plates 1, 2, and 4 is performance, one can to some degree distinguish Hitler from Hitler's performance.

Body movement that appears to display an enormous array of "symptoms" of internal states and conditions as well as cues to personal and cultural identity may persist beyond the specific interaction. While it would be folly to assume that symptoms and cues to identity could be precisely distinguished from the transitory social details of the context, there are several criteria which may facilitate a partial assessment. One is that patterns that have negative connotations or implications are more likely to be state or identity cues. Another is that the instrumental or content aspects of movement behavior—what is done—are more directly related to social programs and image management than precisely how the actions are performed—with what qualities and patterning at a micro level.

This can become a means of analyzing "levels of authenticity," in other words, differentiating what is part of one's personality and cultural identity and may persist across private and public contexts from what is enacted in the moment with others. But, as with many topics in nonverbal communication research, one has to constantly resist simple dichotomies that turn a rich subject into a paragraph's worth of nonsense for a popular magazine. The issue isn't, for example, whether Hitler's chaotic finger-twitching is "true" and his very long pause before speaking is "contrived." His ability to have thousands wait in silent expectation for an entire minute is a formidable personal capacity as well as a sign of the power he had accumulated. What one might hypothesize is that the finger-twitching is a more private and inadvertent symptom of stress and its disorganization a symptom of psychological disturbance, while the
ability to hold the audience is a talent he would cultivate and value for such contexts.

Movement Signature Analysis is a method for discerning individual style "idiographically" through microanalysis of exactly how an individual moves relative to the sequences of his or her own movement. Theoretically, each individual is unique and the challenge is to identify this uniqueness without resorting to comparative terms such as "person X shows more sudden movements than person Y" or "person A displays the highest rate of postural shifting of any of the group under study."

However, once signature patterns of an individual are identified, they may be compared with those of other individuals depending on the research aims. The process of comparing movement styles illuminates them even further. Movement analysts concerned with description of style know that one of the most robust means of delineating a movement style is by comparing it with others.

Hitler and Hussein

The following comparison of Hitler and President Saddam Hussein draws on a separate study of Hussein’s nonverbal behavior (Davis, Dulici, and Hadiks, in process). Anthropologists may well argue that these men come from such different cultures, any comparisons of their communicative styles would be absurd. Yet they have been compared as dictators of enormous power and destructiveness—most notably by President George Bush—and we will pursue the question: What does the movement behavior displayed in public contexts reveal about the similarities and differences between these two men?

Cultural Differences

While one might hypothesize that all of these differences are cultural, the research of Lomax, Bartenieff, and Paulay (1968) identifies certain movement dimensions as particularly valuable for cultural comparison. For example, the predominance of straight paths, simple reversal, or angular transitions, and strong, quick dynamics in Hitler’s movement, according to their Choreometrics analysis, would be consonant with his Northern European origins while Hussein’s preference for arched, planal movements, less sharply defined spatial transitions, and little display of strong or quick motions affirms his Arabic background. In addition to how they move, there are the many differences in what they do in public, many of them obviously cultural conventions. For example, Hussein’s greetings of fellow Arab leaders—complete with embrace and near-kiss on each side—are surely alien to German protocol.

Contrasting Commands

Although neither Hitler nor Hussein were trained as military officers, many of their public appearances involve displays of their positions as Commander-in-Chief. But they express this role in quite different ways movementwise. Hitler marches and rides in open cars by cheering throngs with an upright, rigid bearing, snapping salutes without smiling. Hussein walks rather slowly, his upper trunk and weight settled back, smiling, acknowledging the clapping from assembled groups with a repetitious wave-salute that is often without intensity. Even the way in which
Hussein shot off a gun at a rally after the Gulf War was done casually: he stood in front of a cheering crowd, raised the gun into the air without vigor, speed, or involvement of the trunk, paused briefly, and then shot the gun with little movement. Is he serious? Is he enjoying preening and provocation? Hussein's calm, paterfamilias manner, laced with some fooling around and knowing grins to his aides, contrasts with Western images of him as a tyrant. While Hitler intimidates through his demeanor, one must infer Hussein's intimidation by looking at the behavior of those around him.

POWER DISPLAYS

Of course they both display many of the patterns common to men in positions of great power: they initiate changes in the action, signal and control the approach of others, display few, if any, signs of appreciation for others, while those around them are always showing signs of appeasement and deference to them. They are never sidelined, upstaged, or directed by anyone in public. But Hussein shows a very different relationship to his aides than Hitler, at least in public contexts. For example, in the CNN Baghdad interview given by Peter Arnett at the start of the Gulf War, Hussein continually smiles and looks in their direction. Hitler is rarely seen looking at or relating to his aides in public.

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

Hitler's speeches are part of an oratorical tradition used to rouse huge live audiences. Hussein is a leader in the age of television and uses a much cooler style of speaking. We could not find shots of him making impassioned speeches and we have seen no documentaries of Hussein in which he is very excited or agitated. Conversely, it is difficult to find footage of Hitler in the more conversational formats of extended interviews. There is ample evidence that Hitler worked and Hussein continues to work hard on public presentation. Even interviews done for print media are videotaped for Hussein and his aides to review (Arnett 1991). Their behavior in "photo opportunities" with children are particularly similar.

SIGNS OF STRESS

The two men are most similar in the ways they initiate actions, control interactions, project fatherly authority, and devote meticulous attention to image management. Along with the cultural differences described above they are strikingly different in the emotional intensity of their displays and the degree of friendliness vs. severity of their demeanors. But they are also dramatically different in how they indicate stress. Hitler displays barely controlled fragmented movements, powerful spatial contradictions, and cramping tension when excited. The signs of his stress appear more serious and pathological. Hussein displays stress in interviews with micromentary darts of his eyes toward the camera, periods of very high blinking rates, and an almost compulsive way of checking with his aides after making a point. There is a perceptible tendency for him to "segment" his gesticulations, performing a string of moves in which he traverses one direction, pauses, continues in one direction, pauses, doubles back, pauses, etc. He also fixes his jacket and strokes his
face with such light, controlled movements he appears fastidious. All of these patterns may appear in clusters, presumably reflecting fluctuations in stress. But the superficial picture is one of quiet, almost relaxed command as he sits still and open and makes large, arcing horizontal movements.

Is Hussein like Hitler movementwise? The analysis suggests that they are similar in the trappings of the powerful role and the personal aggrandize-ment of their positions, but not culturally or temperamentally, not in degree of threat and menace, not in degree of psychopathology, and not in complexity. They are, movementwise, extraordinarily different men.

Chaplin as Hitler

Comparison of the movement analysis of an actual person with the portrayal of that person on film has implications for research on the nature of acting and the effectiveness of a performance. It may shed light on what the actor tries to capture of the person and how one suppresses and transforms one’s movement patterns for a performance. And the process of comparing becomes another level of knowing more about the subject’s movement style.

Early in the 1940 film, The Great Dictator, Chaplin—playing Hitler—speaks to a large rally. The comparison of his speech with Hitler’s at the Reichs chancellor inaugural is intriguing. We assume Chaplin studied films of Hitler’s speeches in preparation for this film. Judging from certain details of his performance, he may well have studied the Reichs chancellor speech more carefully than we have. What does he appear to “pick up” from Hitler’s body movement and incorporate in his performance?

The speech is an outrageous parody, full of actions Hitler would never do, such as pouring cold water into his pants to cool himself down. Nonetheless, it is a fascinating example of how an actor may portray an actual person. We see Chaplin shaking and jabbing his arms into the air in versions of Hitler’s powerful and repetitious baton gestures. He parodies the coughing that results from Hitler’s shouting. He rises up on his feet in agitation. He directs the crowd’s cheers with a variation of Hitler’s bent-arm salute, throwing in an extra flip of the hand as he rotates the arm, palm facing out Hitler-style. He stresses straight paths, sharp transitions between changes in direction, rigid breaks at elbow and shoulder. While he assumes a variety of “homebase” positions that Hitler does not display (hands behind back, hands on hips, or forward leans while holding onto a railing), he does capture Hitler’s positions of hands folded down in front and hands straight down to his sides.

Much of what Chaplin does is broad satire—he throws straight-arm Nazi salutes into the gesticulating, juts his chin out, beats his chest, etc. But more fascinating than his ability to capture what actions Hitler does are Chaplin’s efforts to perform very subtle details of exactly how he does them. For example, Chaplin twice starts from a homebase position and raises and extends his right arm with an inward rotation, a fleeting duplication of Hitler’s tendency for inward-outward contradiction. Sometimes he forces the movement into purely forward jabs from the center of the body, much as Hitler does. He may snap back from a baton series with a sharp, angular move of forearm to chest then arm down, closely paralleling the way Hitler punctuates certain gestures.
However, many of these efforts are fleeting and infrequent relative to the overall performance. There is much that Chaplin does not capture of Hitler’s manner and not only because he is satirizing him. Chaplin looks like he is fighting his own movement style and ultimately cannot suppress it. He does not capture Hitler’s stress on inward aggression and barely suggests the contradictions in spatial direction so prominent in Hitler’s oratory behavior. He doesn’t pull the phrases back to himself in narrowing postures with arms slicing and punching across the body or jam his arms down to his sides with powerful inward rotations. While Hitler stresses down, in, and back directions, Chaplin stresses out and forward, and his struggle to keep the movement narrowly in front or above him without opening up his stance is visible.

Moreover, Chaplin does not capture Hitler’s high degree of tension and control and the way he rises on his feet to keep in place. Chaplin mimics Hitler’s pattern of rising on his feet at peaks of oratory by flexing his knees and bouncing up and down. Chaplin’s jabs and punches into the air are not as relentless as Hitler’s, he varies their rhythms and spatial design much more and performs them with a kind of buoyant fluency that contrasts with Hitler’s continuous cramping and tension. Perhaps most obvious is Chaplin’s “inability” to isolate the arm movements from the trunk as Hitler does. He cannot suppress his capacity to involve the entire body in integrated support of the head and arm movements and travel around the stage. And he cannot suppress his exceptional capacity for articulating his entire body and particularly his hands so precisely and delicately. Despite some extraordinary accuracies of the rendering, Chaplin’s Hitler becomes more likeable, benign, and dazzling than Chaplin could have wanted.

Guiness as Hitler

What does detailed movement analysis tell us about how a great actor portrays Hitler in serious drama? Alec Guiness played Hitler in Hitler: The Last Ten Days. This film is based on a secretary’s transcripts of dialog in the bunker between Hitler and his closest aides. We have seen no films of Hitler talking at length with his aides or close friends and only brief footage of him near the end of the war. (In his last public appearance he is seen talking with very young soldiers and appears listless and without energy). Extrapolating from public presentations how someone behaves in private contexts is risky, but Guiness can be seen performing movements very similar to those Hitler displayed on film, and we assume he was influenced by documentaries of Hitler. Although many actions of Hitler lend themselves to caricature, Guiness’ performance is as subtle as Chaplin’s is broad, and he performs specific mannerisms of Hitler sparingly. Only a few punctuate his temper tantrums or suggest his disintegration, grandiosity, and control of his staff.

When Hitler/Guiness rages at his military for not executing his orders, he jabs a finger with the crisp, concentrated power displayed in the filmed speeches. Guiness holds himself with arms at his sides Hitler-style, as he rants with jaw jutting out and face severe. Most striking are the moments in which he jabs his arm down to his side with an inward rotation, one of the signature patterns of Hitler, although Guiness does not hold the tension and force in the homebase position the way Hitler can.
During one tantrum he crosses hands over chest, raises one bent leg high, then stomps without clearly moving the trunk, reminiscent of the way Hitler could isolate limbs from trunk. In another scene he beats his chest in the melodramatic way Hitler does in speeches. What is particularly noteworthy in this is the way Guinness captures Hitler's way of beating the chest with concave, retracted trunk.

Guinness is portraying a Hitler who erratically alternates between rages and depressive states, so his movement has a heaviness and lethargy not seen in any public footage except his last public appearance. Even the rages are performed with more heaviness than high tension and power. At one point Guinness starts to cough and choke from yelling, then sits down exhausted. (Actors cannot seem to resist picking up this pattern.) Twice, as Guinness braces himself to sit down, his right hand shakes spasmodically. Although this tremor is very different in character from the finger-twitching seen in the Reichschancellor speech, both Hitler and Guinness can be seen trying to control the shaking with the other arm. This striking sign of Hitler's deterioration is performed by Guinness very unobtrusively. Guinness captures many details of Hitler's movement and performs them as vestiges of a once vigorous and complex style.

One indication of his talent as an actor is how difficult it is to discriminate with any confidence between the influences of Guinness' movement style on his portrayal of Hitler and the extent to which Guinness is incorporating signs of depression and collapse into Hitler's style. Careful study of other performances by Guinness might identify his movement signature and make this possible.

Although it is likely Chaplin and Guinness studied the same films that we did and may have consciously tried to duplicate certain mannerisms, we do not consider this process one of literally imitating Hitler. How they developed their characterizations is a study of its own, one that would be aided by detailed comparison of the actor's body movement style and the subject's behavior in public presentation. Development of a characterization must be a deeply intuitive process, much of which is difficult to articulate. But the fact that it may involve subliminal perceptions, unconscious connections and decisions that cannot be articulated does not mean that dialag between actors and movement analysts wouldn't be revelatory.

A great part of recent research on nonverbal communication deals with observer judgment and how people recognize and interpret bodily expression, particularly facial expression (Davis and Skupien 1982). But much of this research involves "naive" observers making relatively obvious judgments and is too simplistic for questions about how performers transform perceptions of actual behavior into characterizations. To do this justice, very sophisticated methods must be developed that integrate analyses by trained observers, dialog with the performers, and discussions with the directors and choreographers who work with them.

Hearing our description of Hitler's movement style, dance critic Marcia B. Siegel immediately recalled Kurt Jooss' antiwar ballet, The Green Table, choreographed in 1932 in Europe. She recalled that the figure Death in the ballet displays many violent collecting motions toward himself and powerful inward rotations of his arms (Siegel 1990). Did Jooss actually study Hitler's movements and explicitly try to incorporate details of Hitler's gestures into Death's solos? Or, never having seen a Hitler rally, did he intuitively set such details into Death's dances because, as with Hitler, they are subliminal signs of an extraordinary potential for destructiveness.
Notes

1. We wish to thank Eliot D. Chapple, James Dulicai, and Dori Lewis for their invaluable editorial advice on this article. We also are grateful to Sergio Rothstein for the consultation on the German phrasing and the English translation. Special thanks to Peter Arnett for information on the setting and filming of his 1991 CNN Baghdad interview of Saddam Hussein. For the description of the Nuremberg rally we are grateful to Jerold Atlas of Long Island University. In a personal communication, he described it as a recollection of his German History professor at New York University, Professor Minna Falk.

2. Two documentaries were relied on for the videotape segments, each having slightly different edits of this speech: The Fatal Attraction of Adolf Hitler, produced by BBC Lionheart and broadcast on the Arts and Entertainment Network Biography series in 1989 and Mein Kampf, Columbia Pictures, written and directed by Erwin Leiser.

3. See the analysis of a Nazi film by Gregory Bateson in Mead and Metraux (1953).

4. The documentaries we have seen do not contain the full speech, only continuous passages such as segments 1 and 2. Even with these limitations, it is clear that segments 1 and 2 occur in sequence and are near a climax, if not the climax of the speech. One documentary continues the speech, but Hitler can be seen only briefly in a long shot from behind with a voice-over of the remainder of his statement throughout shots of the audience.

5. These segments parallel communication units which Schefflen (1973) called “Points.”

6. This list includes public addresses of Mikhail Gorbachev, George Bush, Michael Dukakis, Martin Luther King, Jr., John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover, Huey Long, and Hermann Goering. The movement signatures of Bush and Dukakis are discussed in Davis (1991) and Davis and Dulicai (in press).

7. This segment can be seen in the documentary, Mein Kampf.

8. Of course, anthropologists might argue that Hitler’s nonverbal patterns strongly fit with the expectations of the German people who supported him—the vehemence, power, and severity, even the abstract, geometric style, are appropriate for projecting across huge audiences eager for a superhuman leader. Our interpretations, clearly influenced by our clinical experience and psychological orientation, focus more on the psychology of his movement. However, our interpretations do not necessarily contradict cultural analyses.

9. Hitler is saying “nobody here [. . .] can prove I [. . .]” and this motion is an indicator sweeping across the audience and back to himself, a lexical fit of motion and words. However, it is the quality with which he performs this indicating motion—a perfect arc and snapping back—done in such a way as to suggest this additional interpretation.

10. If one were to hear a dance/movement therapist describe a patient as we have done here, it would not be an unusual description of someone in a psychiatric hospital. Hitler does display certain movement patterns that may be seen in some paranoid psychiatric patients (Davis 1970). Of course, interpreting only these motor symptoms irrespective of the context and the rest of his expressive repertoire would produce a very distorted and incomplete assessment. Hitler’s complex and highly organized movement suggests that he is far more effective, disciplined, and capable of following through on actions than psychiatric patients who display similar forms of extreme control and body part isolation but much more limited repertoires.

11. This speech can be seen in The Speeches Collection: Martin Luther King, Jr., MPI Home Video, 1989.

12. One might well argue that Hitler evolved a militaristic style of movement to fit the role of Fuhrer and that the stress on belligerence, power, and machinelike control was derived quite explicitly from rather common Northern European images of military bearing and comportment. But the “fit” of powerful Fuhrer role and personal capacity for moving in this way appears so perfect by 1933 that which came first is almost moot.
Modern orators who display great animation, such as those from the traditions of Southern preaching, are curiously camera-censored on television. Martin Luther King, Jr., is lost in a sea of microphones and headshots during his greatest television appearance, the "I Have a Dream" address. Jesse Jackson's vigorous and dramatic movements are lost to the television audience who saw head shots throughout his 1988 Democratic convention address.

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See the “Movement Analysis Issue” vol. 32, no. 4 (T120), Winter 1988, which includes Davis and Eliot D. Chapple’s “Expressive Movement and Performance: Toward a Unifying Theory.”