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Commentaire / Review Article

Along the Empirical Road: An Extended Review of Michael Jackson's *Paths Toward a Clearing*

Wayne Fife *

Normally, a book is reviewed within a few years of its appearance. In this case, I plan to offer an extended review of a book that has been around since 1989: *Paths Toward a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry*, a study of the cattle-keeping Kuranko of Northeastern Sierra Leone. I am doing this because I believe this book has not received the attention that it deserves and that it would be useful to offer a serious consideration of where it might fit into contemporary issues in anthropological theory. Can it, for example, help lead us out of the impasse posed in the current debate over "objectivist" versus "subjectivist" forms of anthropology and help to develop a new kind of empiricism that does justice to both the particular and universal aspects of human life? This seems to be a question worth pondering.

I did not begin to think seriously about Jackson's book by accident. A longstanding interest in the pragmatism of William James and John Dewey had already led me to a point where I considered it axiomatic that ethnographic truth always remains an artifact of the methodology of research construction (e.g. see James, 1940; Dewey, 1982). Like Jackson, somewhere along the line I began to see the possibility of a form of empiricism that could be both non-positivistic and nonessentialistic (or at least, less essentialistic, see Carrier, 1992 regarding this latter point). Another way to state that would be to say that we can use Jackson's book to begin a consideration of how we can mitigate against the "ocular" bias of positivistic social science within anthropology in a fruitful fashion (on the ocular bias, see Jackson, 1989: 6; Stoller, 1992: 213).

When I was reading Jackson's book I began to flag passages of agreement, as well as those that seemed to take us down less useful paths, to steal a metaphor from the author. While finishing the concluding chapter, "On Ethnographic Truth," I realized that in some ways my reading had recapitulated the understandings that Jackson, following the work of Michel Foucault, calls similitude, difference, and history. I would therefore like to present some of the fruits of my rumination regarding Jackson's projections through a narrative that parallels the above forms of knowledge. In other words, I will begin by presenting areas of agreement, move on to areas of disagreement, and conclude with some considerations of where this book fits into the more recent history of anthropological theory.

SIMILITUDE

I will start with some of the content of Jackson's writings with which I am in most sympathy and that I believe contain the most useful lessons for anthropology today. The first and probably the foremost among these is Jackson's insistence on, as he puts it in the title of Chapter Nine, "Thinking Through the Body." Throughout this work, Jackson projects himself into the text through descriptions of his physical, emotional and intellectual encounters with individual Kuranko. I agree with him when he says that "our task is to find common ground with others and explore our differences from there" (1989: 17). Doing ethnography in this manner will allow us to remain committed to the laudable task of under-

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standing and sorting what may be universal in human experiences from what remains particular and in all likelihood only partially translatable. In a moving section of Chapter Five, Jackson explains how the experience of his wife's death eventually led him to a fuller understanding of both the living and the dead.

In the weeks after my wife's death, so strongly did I feel her presence that I lived my life among phantoms and feared for my sanity. Gradually I learned that this reaction to loss was not unusual. I also began to see how my own experience might be compared to the experience of Kuranko people, who speak of the dead not as remote abstractions but as living experiences (1989: 67).

This is an excellent example of how a shared and in some sense universal human experience (and perhaps more than human, see Zeller, 1991 on how primates deal with grief) can lead us to insight regarding such "exotic" traditions as divination, reinterment of the dead, the collection of skeletal relics, or any of the other activities surrounding death that researchers experience among the various peoples with whom we work.

Not all forms of "lived experience," to use Jackson's favorite expression concerning this method of research, has to be this dramatic to be useful. Experiences do not even need to be immediate or singular events. A good example of this is found in Chapter Seven, entitled "The Man Who Could Turn into an Elephant." He reports that "from the very first months of my fieldwork among the Kuranko I was enthralled by anecdotes and reports of human beings who were able to transform themselves into animals" (Jackson, 1989: 102). Going on to explain that for years his image of shape-shifting was conditioned primarily by his own experiences of nights alone in the "dark forests of New Zealand," where unexplained noises or semi-perceived movements would bring to mind fearful childhood "tales of hobgoblins and genies." He partially "explained" shape-shifting to himself through the use of similar images regarding the descending darkness, suddenly moving figures, and "tricks of the light" in the forests and grasslands of Sierra Leone.

Then, in a fashion that reminds me of William James and his *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1958), Jackson shifts the ground of our understanding so that we may embrace it in a radically different manner: "Rather than pursue the prob-

lem of how these beliefs may be justified from our point of view, I want to examine the grounds on which Kuranko accept them as true" (Jackson, 1989: 103). Having established at least the possibility of a common ground, a belief in the saliency of the transformation experience however differently we might define it, he is then able to explore the particularity of this cultural theme among the Kuranko.

This is accomplished by moving back and forth between the personal story of Mohammed, a Kuranko man who claims to be a shape-shifter, and the cultural conventions that make such a claim plausible. This, Jackson tells us, does not necessarily derive from experiential reality alone.

So far we have seen how the belief in shape-shifting is grounded in Kuranko ontology and world view and does not derive its plausibility solely or directly from firsthand experience or hearsay accounts. Kuranko children grow up with folktales in which shape-shifting is common and accept as true clan myths in which metamorphosis occurs. Such a grounding influences perception, makes hearsay reports of shape-shifting seem reasonable, and disposes a person to interpret certain altered states of consciousness in terms of shapeshifting (1989: 108).

This does not mean that all Kuranko experience or understand shape-shifting in the same way and Jackson does a masterful job of showing how Mohammed's personal history, social position, and vested political interests affect the presentation of his ability to shape-shift. History, both personal and social, is added to this inquiry when he describes the changes wrought in Mohammed's self-presentation between 1979 and 1985.

Rather than eventually reducing shape-shifting among the Kuranko people into psychological, social, or cultural "explanations" from academic traditions, Jackson continually plays these off against Kuranko traditions within the text itself. He steadfastly refuses to privilege any one over the others, creating a *collage* of understandings that combine to form a pleasing picture. There is resonance here, to my ears at least, with Claude Levi-Strauss' notion of *bricolage* (1966) and Clifford Geertz's "thick description" (1973). Interestingly so, since Jackson takes such exception to Geertz's style of anthropology at a later point in his book. More will be said about this issue, but for now I want to remain within the common ground of similitude.

A second idea that I find extremely fruitful in the work of Jackson is the forceful presentation of symbols as unprivileged objectifications of events. This of course strongly differentiates him from Levi-Strauss, despite the stylistic similarity alluded to above. As Dan Sperber (1975) suggested in another context (his interest lying in the projection of a more cognitive anthropology), the meaning of symbols is to be found "up front" and not "behind" them. Jackson (1989: 136) objects to any interpretive scheme that "...ranks the idea over the event or object, while privileging the expert who deciphers the idea even though he or she may be quite unable to use the object or participate in the "symbolic" event. In short, I object to the notion that one aspect of a symbol is prior to or foundational to the other." I will give only one example below of how he utilizes this way of reading symbols within an ethnographic inquiry.

In a brilliant chapter entitled "How to Do Things with Stones," Jackson equates "reading" river pebbles or other objects in Kuranko divination with certain forms of "inductive" and positivistic social science. Although I disagree with him that inductive methods of research necessarily lead to positivistic results, I came away from this chapter with a new and better understanding of both divination and inductive science.

Jackson notes, as he did regarding shape-shifting, that divination is partly idiosyncratic and partly dependent upon a corpus of knowledge that involves such diverse sources as the Quran and personal dreams. He tells us that a common saying among Kuranko people regarding divinatory ability is the remark: "it is in himself how he does it" (1989: 53). A remark that would seem to be equally as applicable, if not as acceptable, in the more positivistic forms of inductive science. Too often we seem to want to think that the interpretation is "out there" or inherently "in the symbol" or "in the evidence" itself and find it difficult to recognize the creative or more artistic side of the (social) science of induction.

Another parallel can perhaps be drawn regarding the difficulty of challenging the "system of meaning" of both divination and positivism. As Jackson (1989: 54) states: "It is characteristic of Kuranko diviners that any incorrect prognosis is not regarded as a challenge to the veracity of the system; the fault is found with the diviner himself." Ironically, although we slowly and only

grudgingly accept individual "creativity" as a part of knowledge in anthropology, we remain quick to condemn the "poor technique" or "unimaginative interpretation" of individual practitioners. Maybe it is time to simply accept that *all* research methods have built-in limitations in relation to the kinds of information that we can "make" them produce and proceed from that point forward.

Perhaps the increased concern among anthropologists about the authority of the author in anthropological products (Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Clifford, 1988; Geertz, 1988, for example) will lead toward a humbler but more pragmatic position regarding the role of individuals in the production of knowledge. As Jackson (1989: 55) puts it in relation to Kuranko diviners: "The Kuranko diviner clearly comes to regard himself as a humble transmitter of messages from the divinity to people." In effect, diviners do not so much choose their divinities as they are chosen by them. This is interesting to me as I know many anthropologists (however "scientific" some of their methods) who are willing to admit, at least in secret, that our "subjects" seem to choose us at least as much as we choose them. I would add my own endorsement to this, citing an ongoing preoccupation with formal education as a partial reflection of an earlier and problematic experience within this social institution (see Fife, 1992a; 1992b). In a similar manner, Jackson suggests that part of his preoccupation with divination had to do with his own "aleatory" concerns. "My own consultations with Kuranko diviners were prompted by anxieties about my work, about troubling dreams, about my wife's health during her pregnancy" (Jackson, 1989: 63). This led him to a new and translatable understanding that makes sense both in our context and in the Kuranko one.

On every occasion, despite the fact that I did not accept intellectually the assumptions underlying Kuranko divination, the consultations helped alleviate anxiety and I diligently made the sacrifices I was told were necessary. It is on the strength of such first-hand experiences of Kuranko divination that I argue that the psychological and existential changes effected by consulting a diviner are so immediate and positive that *the ultimate outcome of any prognostication of sacrifice does not necessarily inspire retrospective interest in the truth or falsity of the diviner's original proposition* (1989: 63, emphasis in original).

The important point here is not that we get to “bare our souls” or engage in “unfinished business” (as a Gestaltian psychologist might put it), but rather that moving back and forth from common ground to particular experience produces *better ethnography* than the alternatives of a more positivistic social science. It allows us, for example, to understand both Kuranko divination and inductive social science to a far greater extent than we did before Jackson made his fortuitous comparison between these two forms of knowledge.

The final similitude that I wish to discuss, though certainly not the last area of agreement that I have with Jackson’s text, concerns the necessity of recognizing the importance of moral responsibility as a normal part of research products. Perhaps we should refer to this as the morality of the storyteller as some of the words Jackson offers us regarding storytelling among the Kuranko seems equally relevant to our ethnographic context. He suggests that the narratives as told by skilled Kuranko performers normally pose a moral dilemma, which anyone who happens to be in the audience at the time participates in trying to solve.

What impressed me about Kurando storytelling was the way in which old and young alike participated actively in a search for moral meaning... each individual must arrive at his or her own solution to the quandary and refer to his or her own experience in doing so. Although the unanimity reached by the end of the evening belies the variability of opinions brought forward, the most important point is that consensus is reached through participation rather than imposed by convention (1989: 168).

I am reminded here of the most successful anthropology seminars in which I have participated as a student or a teacher. The most interesting ethnographic texts so often seem to be the ones that most directly challenge our sense of a correct moral order. They may seem exotic, as in Michelle Rosaldo’s book *Knowledge and Passion* (1980), or familiar, as in Barbara Myerhoff’s *Number Our Days* (1978). The first challenges us to accept “headhunting” as a “rational” social practice among the Ilongot of the Philippines; the second forces us to examine why we allow older people to become invisible in North America through the specific example of elderly Jews in Venice, California. Both seriously question the moral orders we create for ourselves and strongly suggest that human life contains possibilities for expe-

rience that we may not want to face or even acknowledge. In other words, they challenge our very sense of what it means to be human. The best ethnographies are about the issues of enlargement and diminishment; about how much growth some humans can achieve through their actions and how very small most of us remain because of our fears, prejudices, and self-imposed constraints.

DIFFERENCE

Jackson challenges us with a chapter he entitles “The Witch as a Category and as a Person.” I found this piece to be very unsettling. I oscillated between agreement and confusion regarding my own sense of morality and Jackson’s answer to the dilemma within the story he provides regarding the killing of a witch among the Kuranko. This resonates with what seems to be Jackson’s own confusion regarding the event. He begins by telling us how upset he was upon finding out after an absence that, in the turmoil of an epidemic involving insect-born encephalitis, a male witch-hunting cult had been called into a village. Having diagnosed one man’s illness as witchcraft, community members reacted to the distressed “confession” to his sister that she had practiced witchcraft upon him by binding her hands and feet, dragging her to the outskirts of the village and burying her alive in a shallow grave. “When Maare had finished his account I found it impossible not to accuse him of being accessory to a murder. My outrage astonished him, and he tried to help me understand” (Jackson 1989: 89).

This understanding hinges on the (Kuranko) acceptance that “A witch deserves no respect. A witch is not a person” (1989: 89). Jackson struggles to come to terms with this understanding, at the same time offering the analogy that “...the pathology of conventional Kuranko thought, which denies personhood to a woman who in extreme distress confesses herself a “witch,” is uncannily like the pathology of much anthropological discourse which buries the experience of individual subject in the categories of totalizing explanation” (ibid.). He goes on to explain some of the contexts that give meaning to Kuranko assertions regarding witches, with an emphasis on why a woman might “confess” to being a witch. Then he concludes by stating that while on the surface it might seem that Kuranko women are so conditioned to bear responsibility for misfortune they even assent to

serve as men's scapegoats when pressures become unbearable, we have to move beyond this to:

...recognize that witchcraft confession is also a desperate stratagem for reclaiming autonomy in a hopeless situation.... Confession to witchcraft exemplifies what Victor Frankl calls "the last freedom" – that which remains to us when external circumstances rob us of the power to act: the choice of how we will continue our plight, the freedom to live it as though it were our own will....[The witch] dies deciding her own identity, sealing her own fate (1989: 101).

This is where Jackson and I part company, where similitude becomes difference for me. I find this to be just too close to blaming the victim to accept as a moral parameter for anthropology. At the same time, I do not feel comfortable in equating a real woman's death with a type of anthropological discourse. What works beautifully in the chapter on divination seems somewhat out of place, even a little obscene to me here. We must always remember that this particular woman did not die a metaphorical death, but a real and terrible one.

Perhaps another way to look at this question is to ask whether or not we as researchers (pragmatic or otherwise) are willing to accept this kind of an understanding regarding groups of people rather than individuals being killed. Would we be willing to "understand" genocide through reference to similar words that Jackson speaks about the death of the Kuranko witch: "...she [does not] blindly recapitulate the stereotypes men promulgate; rather she actively uses them to give voice to long-suppressed grievances and to cope with her suffering by declaring herself the author of it" (1989: 101). It is probably true that there may be a small element of suicidal impulses in all of us, and it may be true that many of us would embrace almost any possibility for asserting identity in the face of a totalizing situation, but it is not true that this alone is enough to "understand" the relationship between victim(s) and her, his, or their oppressor(s). I do not believe that most anthropologists would ever accept this kind of an explanation for situations of genocide, so why accept it for individual scapegoating?

Jackson should be applauded for having the courage to confront this fieldwork experience so that he might offer it to the rest of us as a moral dilemma for our consideration. He obviously

struggled long and hard with this problem and it is incumbent upon his readers/audience to struggle just as hard in their attempts at coming up with alternative moral solutions. My own alternative would suggest that we need to pay more attention to the critical aspects of the writings of such later "pragmatists" as Michel Foucault when considering inequitable power relations, as well as incorporating the work of more critical anthropologists such as Jean and John Comaroff and Michael Taussig (e.g. Foucault 1965, 1979; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1992; Taussig 1992,1993). This would allow us to move beyond simply understanding the context that makes sense of witch hunts or other totalizing events and develop a more "critical pragmatism" than the pragmatism Jackson seems to offer us.

One of the weaknesses of an empiricism based on a pragmatic or phenomenological perspective has always been that extreme relativism does not seem to offer us any firm basis for moral or critical understandings. If we reject the assertion that particular cultural traditions such as Christianity, Islam, Marxism, Democracy, and so forth can be privileged as a moral grounding, then we are left with the problem of exactly what grounding we *can* give ourselves. I would like to suggest the following solution to the moral dilemma of the death of the Kuranko witch. After thinking about the story for some time, I realized that I did not disagree with Jackson so much as I was dissatisfied with what I saw as the non-resolution of the case. We know from his opening words that he was very upset with the situation, but he does not express these feelings as forcefully at the end of the essay. This suggests that we might add to what he said by insisting that however we learn to understand the situation, in the final analysis it remains as the enforced enactment of oppressors over victim. Or, as Michel Foucault might have suggested, who are those who become the victims of the particular institutional arrangements that the Kuranko set up and enforce among themselves and what does this tell us about power among these people (e.g. Foucault, 1980). In this kind of an analysis, the "confessed witch" remains a victim of these relations, whatever else we might come to understand about her and other Kuranko lives through this dilemma. I have a feeling that Jackson may believe something similar to this himself, but in the struggle to write this piece his desire to understand his Kuranko friends may have gotten in the way of a final repudiation of their actions.

Another difference that I have with Jackson's text hinges on the question of the proper relationship between anthropology and philosophy. He suggests that:

We are nowadays more confident about speaking of anthropology as a kind of philosophizing or writing and no longer need the trappings of the natural sciences to bestow legitimacy on what we do....We no longer assume that our texts have some kind of intrinsic epistemological superiority over *theirs*. All are, in the final consideration, metaphors, more or less masked, for an existential quest for meaning, and anthropology, like philosophy, is, in Nietzsche's famous phrase, "a species of involuntary and unconscious autobiography" [emphasis his] (Jackson, 1989: 167, 168).

I am in sympathy with Jackson as far as he goes, but again this seems somewhat incomplete. It is true that many ethnographers are presently trying to write less privileged texts (good examples include Borofsky, 1987; Taussig, 1987; Kondo, 1990; Lindstrom, 1990; Gewertz and Errington, 1991; Denning, 1992). In addition, as I noted above, I agree that there are always elements of autobiography within our anthropological products. However, I cannot accept reducing anthropology to only these goals, nor can I accept that our goals are somehow "like those of philosophy." For me, there has always been a fundamental difference between anthropological and philosophical writings. The first are primarily focused upon the experiences of humans in existential situations, while the main referents of the second are to be found in the writings of other philosophers. Philosophy normally lacks our touchstone, the messy lives of actual human beings; and in turn we often lack the sophisticated understanding of philosophers regarding epistemological questions.

Jackson's concern to protect anthropology from the ravages of scientism has, I think, led him to neglect the laudable goals of a more rigorous empiricism. The latter remains crucial, however differently we might choose to define this from, or bring it together with, the natural sciences. Perhaps in his desire to help establish a more pragmatic anthropology he has over-determined the danger of scientism and functionalism, leading him to link these to "inductivism" and suggesting that all inductive research is somehow anti-pragmatic. Speaking positively of the work of Gregory Bateson, as a model for linking both the natural sci-

ences and interpretive anthropology, Jackson states: "Though his knowledge of natural science is greater than most anthropologists', there is no pretense of a 'strict' inductive method whereby generalizations and patterns emerge directly from the data" (1989: 185). These words resonate with others from his opening chapter, when he draws upon the work of John Dewey and Richard Rorty to declare that a "...pragmatist regards open-ended, ongoing conversation *with* others as more 'edifying' than the task of completing a systematic explanation of others....In ethnography, this means abandoning induction and *actively* debating and exchanging points of view with our informants" (1989: 14).

While in general agreement, I do not see that it follows from this that we have to abandon inductive research in order to pursue these excellent goals. It may be that Jackson and I have very different notions of what it means to do inductive research. I have always considered my work to be primarily inductive, yet have also often included myself, as observer and participant, as a normal and visible component of the research (e.g. Fife, 1992a; forthcoming). Pursuing inductive research to me simply implies a shared assumption that the beginning point for interpretation and analysis is the information collected during the research experience, rather than an abstract and externally generated theory. Theories may of course profitably be brought into the project later, as they prove to *fit* within it, rather than being used to generate external "hypothesis" or "propositions" for internal "testing." For me, the latter also remains a valid way for some anthropologists to conduct research. The problem only comes if and when it is falsely claimed to be the only valid way to produce rigorous and useful results.

One of the reasons for our differences may be related to whom each of us regards as the historical precursors of pragmatically informed anthropology. As the last (historical) form of knowledge I will apply to Jackson's work, I will make an effort to use this form to help combine our differences and similitudes toward a more effectively empirical anthropology.

HISTORY

From the very beginning Jackson explicitly situates himself within certain philosophical and anthropological traditions. "My ancestors, the

Kuranko would say, have 'gone ahead': Adorno, Devereux, Dewey, Foucault, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Turner" (1989: 1). To this we should add the living presence in his work of Rorty, Herzfeld, Karp, Vonnegut, Levi-Strauss, and perhaps the prime ancestor, Gregory Bateson.

This is a fine list, although I think that we must extend it to build a firmer foundation for a more adequate anthropology. Notably absent, for example, are names associated with Marxist influenced trends of thought within our discipline over the last two decades. I am thinking here of such diverse researchers as Eric Wolf, Sidney Mintz, Jean and John Comaroff, and Michael Taussig (The Comaroffs and Taussig are cited above, also see Wolf, 1982; Mintz, 1985). Although very different in their approaches, all of these authors share a concern with the wider political economy that frames human experiences. An appreciation of the contribution that their work has for a newer form of empirical anthropology might help us to understand, for example, that while opposing the "ocular" bias of positivistic social science with "thinking through the body" may lead to better ethnography, it does not follow that the latter is any less artificial than the former. As Janice Boddy (1995: 134) warned in a recent review, we have to be careful with the recent trend toward "embodiment" of our subject matter not because we cannot see its benefits, but rather because we feel so at home with it. A perspective informed by political economy, for example, might suggest that we have turned to the body not because there is anything more "natural" about it as a location for ethnographic inquiry, but rather because we find ourselves as researchers caught up in a moment of late capitalism in which the pressures for extreme atomism have never been so great. In such a situation, the human body may seem to be the last irreducible *social* location for our research. This seems to be particularly true for younger academics, many who have experienced long periods of unemployment, underemployment, and pressures to leave their spouses, children, or other family and friends in order to become a "gypsy scholar" at the service of short term academic employment contracts. It would not be surprising if many of these same people (and I include myself here) feel more "naturally" at home with the body as a location of research than with the more institutionally stable ocular gaze of the past (for a similar influence on the politics of "conservative" writing among graduate students, see Fife and Black, 1988).

Marxist inspired researchers are not the only notable names missing from Jackson's list of important influences. I will concentrate here on only one, a name that in many ways can be used to summate a tradition of anthropological writings that I feel must be included for a properly rounded empiricism to proceed. I am referring here to the work of Clifford Geertz, a scholar who Jackson does not completely ignore but rather prefers to dismiss. "Replacing 'reason' with the notion of 'meaning,' anthropologists such as Geertz invoke hermeneutics and rhetoric to blur the distinctions between science and art, a move which, in anthropology, risks encouraging the production of bad science and bad art" (1989: 177).

Perhaps Jackson's reluctance to call upon the work of Geertz and others of the "textual" tradition stems from a desire to fight against the way "the word" (an adjunct of the gaze) has often been privileged in anthropological research. As he so clearly elucidates in his chapters "Knowledge of the Body," and "Thinking Through the Body," it is time to move toward an anthropology that includes all bodily experiences, rather than one that relies too heavily upon the ocular language of the text-analog. Here too, however, we have something to learn from Geertz and others of his tradition. I will offer one small sample below.

In one of his more famous passages, Clifford Geertz (1973: 414-416) describes what happens to him and his wife in 1958 when the police arrive at an illegal cockfight in the Balinese village in which they are attempting to begin research.

Amid great screeching cries of "pulisi! pulisi!" from the crowd, the policemen jumped out, and, springing into the centre of the ring, began to swing their guns around like gangsters in a motion picture, though not going so far as to actually fire them. The superorganism came instantly apart and its components scattered in all directions....On the established anthropological principle, "When in Rome," my wife and I decided, only slightly less instantaneously than everyone else, that the thing to do was to run too....The next morning the village was a completely different place for us....above all, everyone was extremely pleased and even more surprised that we had not simply "pulled out our papers"...and simply asserted our Distinguished Visitor status, but had instead demonstrated our solidarity with what were now our covillagers.

This seems to me to be an excellent example of "thinking through the body" rather than an exercise in decontextualized hermeneutics/semi-ology. It is also the place where the works of thinkers such as C. S. Peirce, Kenneth Burke, Clifford Geertz, Michel Foucault, Michael Taussig, and others who focus on the semiotic/ literary/ textual/ philosophical/ discourse side of research can be brought together with those of us (and there are many, see Martin, 1992) who are agitating for an anthropology firmly (re)grounded in bodily experiences.

When we are able to incorporate the above critical and textual traditions we will make far more progress in moving toward the kind of empirical research agenda that Jackson is calling for, without losing the rich and fruitful history of so many previous anthropological traditions. We will encompass these traditions, rather than displace or ignore them. If this should come about, then surely Jackson will eventually take his place as one of the ancestors who helped to make it possible.

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