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Can Bodylore Be Brought to Its Senses?

This article rests on the proposition that embodied experience, and movement in particular, provide our most fundamental grounds of knowing and conceptualizing the world. The author elaborates a specific methodology that relies on the researcher's own body and bodily intelligence as a point of access for the study of cultural practice as corporeal knowledge. Two descriptive examples drawn from the author's research into the bodily basis of religious experience illustrate the method.

AT 11:30 ON THE FIRST night of Purim, 1991, the Bobover Hasidim of Boro Park in Brooklyn, New York, were just warming up for several hours of prayer. Until five in the morning the Hasidim would be fulfilling the Purim injunction to be joyful.[1] At least one thousand men and boys had come together in the *bes medresh,* a cavernous prayer hall where the Bobover *rebe* presided over his male court. Row upon row of men and boys were davening, or praying, on tiers of rickety movable bleachers. These closely surrounded several rows oflong tables laid out in parallel lines where, at the head of the center table, the rebe sat in the place of honor. He was the still point at the center of a pulsating ocean. With the men fervently swaying and bobbing, the hall appeared to be a rocking sea of black caftans topped by furry brown turbans. There were so many points of body contact among the tightly packed crowd that the smallest ecstatic shrug initiated a new syncopated wave that tumbled through the hall. It was as if each man's skin, even through his clothing, were made of minute snail antennae, immedi ately detecting and responding to each subtle shift of balance and touch. Every undulation was both a response to an incoming surge and the beginning of a new, outgoing one.

Although there was the same prevalence of body contact in the separated women's section, the architecture there had clearly been designed with decorum in mind. On a wooden U-shaped balcony that surrounded the main hall on three sides, about 30 feet above it, the women's section had a single row of benches facing a wooden wall that ran the length of the inner edge of the balcony. The wall was about four feet high and topped with a partition of tinted and lined Plexiglas that enabled the women to see, but prevented them from being seen by, the men below. Apparently, the women are segregated so that there is no

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chance that they will distract the men from their prayers. Displays of feminine emotion, like displays of too much female body, are considered immodest. God may feast his senses on the women, but men, who are more vulnerable, may not.

Although the balcony was about 40 feet wide, most of the space was empty, for we were all jockeying for places at the viewing window.[2] At the place where the wooden support wall met the acrylic barrier, there was a ledge built into the wall for holding prayer books. The women ignored the implicit instruction to sit on the benches with their prayer books before them; instead, some young girls, in order to peer over the top of the window, stood on this ledge. The rest of us piled up, leaned on, and spilled over each other as close to the window as we could get, seeking a small cranny between heads or knees, over shoulders, or under elbows, through which to catch a glimpse of the action below. It did not matter if we could not see the *Purimspiel,* for, from the Hasidic perspective, it is much better to see the rebe than the play. Since his charismatic leadership is inspiration for his followers, the essential performance in any Hasidic celebra tion is the rebe's joy. Apparently, the women do not even need to see the rebe to feel his influence. All they need see to partake of his joy is the reflection of the rebe's responses in the faces of the men who surround him (Kirshenblatt Gimblett 1990:114). Judging from the laughter and exuberance of the women in the balcony, this is enough.

When I viewed this event, I had recently returned from 18 months of fieldwork research in southern New Mexico among the producer-participants of the annual Tortugas fiesta in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Perhaps because I had become accustomed to the restrained body practices of the Southwest or because I was simply habituated to the unspoken rules of bodily containment that New Yorkers follow in public spaces, I was intensely uncom fortable with the physical situation in the balcony. The usual urban rules of noncontact were in abeyance. When I was in the front row next to the Plexiglas, other women simply lay over my back or used my shoulders as a prop; when I was behind, I was required to do the same. Our bodies were touching all over, chest against back, thigh against thigh, arm around waist, and chin on shoulder. We were dressed in winter clothes in a heated space, pressed against each other three and four deep. The heat, contact, and smell of bodies prevented me from being able to appreciate the stirring momentum of the men's voices, or from trying to understand the women's acceptance of their segregated status. I knew that touch is an essential aspect of Jewish solidarity; I had grown up with it and felt as claustrophobic under its demands now as I had felt as a child in our more politically oriented agnostic Jewish community. I wanted to be gone from the bes medresh, outside, where I could breathe and be alone.

Struggling to overcome my irritation, I instead sought a means to get "inside" the event happening around me in a way that would bring me closer to the evident pleasure the Hasidic women took in it. Joining in the smiling and joking did nothing to change my discomfort. Impatient and unsympathetic, caught in

a physical performance in which I felt more smothered than delighted, rapport was not available.

In Tortugas, I had been able to put my own cultural baggage aside by focusing on the concrete and corporeal aspects of the unfamiliar local religious practices. In particular, I literally imitated people's movement and did as they did. While I also sought, through words, to understand the abstract reasons why people believed and expressed those beliefs as they did, my point of entry into the *experience* of belief was corporeal. Based on the hypothesis that movement embodies cultural knowledge, I had discovered that to "move with" people whose experience I was trying to understand was a way to also "feel with" them, providing an opening into the kind of cultural knowledge that is not available through words or observation alone. What follows is a metadiscourse on the researcher's own body as a point of access to corporeal knowledge in cultural practice. While it is not an ethnographic study of any particular cultural practice, I will briefly indicate, through examples, the kinds of insights possible with a body-centered approach.

Considering Theory

Movement is a corporeal way of knowing. It is as loaded with significance, with who people take themselves to be, as verbal media. If a person has been brought up worshiping in church, for example, sitting at a respectful distance from her neighbors with spine straight and knees neatly together, she has a very different understanding of religion than another accustomed to expressing her spiritual beliefs in the balcony of a synagogue, spilling over her neighbors, or another who dances outdoors in a Pueblo plaza, side by side with her neighbors in neat synchrony. One knows oneself and is known by others as much through the accumulated habits of the body as through the verbalizations that people exchange (Bourdieu 1977).

Simply to move is to be presented with proprioceptive information as the body changes: sitting up straight feels very different than slouching. More important, different ways of moving generate different kinds of feeling experi ences that are not only somatic, but affective. The connection between motion and e-motion is not just linguistic play, as experiments by Paul Ekman have shown (Ekman et al. 1983).

Working with actors from the American Conservatory Theatre in San Fran cisco, Ekman compared two techniques used by actors internationally to elicit emotion: mechanical manipulation of gestures (in this case facial gestures) and mental recall of past emotional experiences. His results showed that both methods work to produce emotion-specific activity in the autonomic nervous system for six emotions-surprise, disgust, sadness, anger, fear, and happiness. In other words, when the actors either manipulated their faces into an expression of fear, for example, or recalled past situations in which they felt fear, their central nervous systems responded with signs of the emotion of fear. Ekman

found, however, that the "mechanical" approach was more effective than the "emotional recall" approach.

> What is truly surprising about Ekman's (1983:1210) experiment is not that affective memory or emotional recall work but that "producing the emotion-prototype patterns of facial muscle action resulted in autonomic changes oflarge magnitude that were more clear-cut than those produced by reliving emotions." That is, mechanical acting worked better in getting the actor to feel. [Schechner 1986:347)

While specific emotionally charged memories may include internal words, words are not necessary. Movement alone can create emotion, without reference to verbal concepts.

The point is that, in considering the body, it is essential to begin with the body and with its own, somatic, ways of knowing. Daniel Stern, in the field of child psychology, reports on experiments that demonstrate the ability of infants to transfer perceptual information from one sensory modality to another. Infants can recognize by sight something that they had previously known only by touch (Stern 1985:47-8). They can translate and extrapolate between sensory modali ties, making global abstractions based on somatic experience-the sight of a ball, for example, to the feel of its shape to a sense of abstract "ballness." Taking this idea of sensory cognition further, Mark Johnson argues that all conceptualiza tion, indeed all meaning-making, is grounded in preconceptual orderings of bodily experience. Sensorial orderings give meaning to perceptual experiences by organizing them into patterns that Johnson calls "embodied schema." "Ball ness," or "sphericity," would be an embodied schema, and so would concepts like "up and down" or "balance" or "freedom." Thus, the bodily works its way up into the conceptual via imagination. As Johnson conceives it, imagination is the capacity to mediate metaphorically among sense impressions, and between sense impressions and conceptualization Oohnson 1987). Reframing this idea, aisthesis is the foundation of gnosis; or, as Maxine Sheets-Johnstone writes about movement and touch in particular, they are "gnostic systems in the most fundamental (i.e. etymological) sense of the word" (1990:16).

I do not emphasize corporeality and the bodily basis of meaning here to separate out, once again, body and mind. Indeed, to acknowledge the impor tance of sensory orderings of experience is to refuse to split off thinking minds from passive bodies or corporeal from mental knowledge. My emphasis is intended to draw attention to an approach that has been too often trivialized or ignored in academic discourse, one that takes seriously the ontological status of immediate bodily experience in the production of knowledge and epistemolo g1es.

Acknowledging a baseline in bodily ways of knowing, we can move on, or back, to the interpenetration of embodiment and abstract symbols. Movement embodies socially constructed cultural knowledge in which corporeality, emo tion, and abstraction are intertwined. When a person kneels in church, for example, he is not just doing and feeling something in his body. He is worshiping

the divinity Jesus Christ in the context of a social ritual. I need to know something about that divinity and about the cosmology and social ethos in which Jesus Christ has a place to understand the person's experience of kneeling. It would be useful to know, for example, that Christianity works hierarchically, with human beings in a lower position than Jesus Christ, the master. Kneeling before Christ and his priests, therefore, refracts in physical space the hierarchy of persons in socioreligious space. To get at the symbolic ideas embedded in movement, one has to move into words. The abstract symbols embodied in movement are not necessarily evident in the movement itself.

It is through the interplay of corporeality and abstraction that cultural knowl edge gathers conviction and force. As Roy Rappaport writes about the relation ship between actions and words in religious performance, the performer "gives substance to the symbol as that symbol gives him form"(l 979:200). Here he is discussing liturgical symbols such as the Sberna, "Hear,0 Israel, the Lord Our God, the Lord is One." Such symbols allude to cosmological orders and constitute them as ultimately meaningful. Because they refer to what is imma terial, however, and can neither be verified nor falsified, Rappaport argues, they can only be established through presence. Davening in the synagogue, a man's body becomes a declaration of acceptance of the Sberna, just as kneeling in church, his body becomes a declaration of the acceptance of the credo. When corporeal participation is accompanied by emotional, even numinous, experi ence, the symbolic words are not only accepted but are *felt* to be true. Abstract symbol and immediate, substantial experience are then bound. The symbols of the liturgy give definition and propositional meaning to the worshiper's actions and feelings, while his participation gives materiality, witness, and immediacy to the symbols.

People express allegiances with their bodies. To comply with the corporeal conventions of the synagogue or the Catholic church is to embody, if not believe in, its doctrines. Those doctrines answer the large questions oflife: Who am I? What is my place in the universe? How do human beings behave? With whom do I associate? Where do I come from, and where do I go after I die?[3] Embedded in corporeality as much as in words are, to use Clifford Geertz's words, "people's picture of the way things, in sheer actuality, are, their concept of nature, of self, of society" (1957:421-2).[4] The correct straight spine and uncrossed legs of the Catholic churchgoer encode assumptions about the way human beings are supposed to behave. If I slouch, cross my legs, sling my arm over my neighbors' shoulder, and chatter with her during the liturgy, I may be an outsider too ignorant of conventions to behave properly, or I may be a rebellious renegade rejecting those conventions. In either case, my oppositional body makes the social rules and roles of church evident by my failure to obey them. The corporeal aspects of social life provide the glue that holds together world views and cosmologies, values and social structures. They also provide the substance, the media, and the organizing schema around which social life coalesces.

While one must deploy words to understand the widest cultural meanings of movement, talking cannot replace the deep somatic experience of movement.

The medium of embodied knowledge is not words but sensations in which are stored intertwined corporeal, emotional, and conceptual memories. This is not to say that we cannot fabricate, through words and other media, sensory worlds and disembodied selves that come to have independent ontological status. Rather, it is to say that those fabrications depend on their creators' and audience's corporeal experience and the schematic organization of that experi ence. It is a matter of emphasis. Rather than underline the fact that thinking can be abstracted and separated from corporeality, I am underlining the fact that thinking depends upon it.[5]

Wilhelm Dilthey has suggested that to understand other people's experience "*erlebnis,* or what has been 'lived through'" (Dilthey 1976, as cited in Bruner 1986:3)-one must interpret their cultural expressions, which are the ways that people communicate their experiences. For Dilthey, expressions would com prise performances, representations, and objectifications, including texts and, I would add, bodily attitudes, movements, and gestures. Movement, more than any other medium of expression, however, presents the researcher with a unique opportunity because somatic experience and social conventions converge there. Movement exists at the point where the body as source of personal and immediate knowledge meets the body as medium of cultural expression. In other words, while other forms of expression can be examined, heard, tasted, and so on apart from the body that produced them, movement as expression is never *not* also movement as immediate experience. More than for any other, the medium of movement is the message.

This implies that, while movement can be interpreted symbolically as if it were a text, it is also immediately available to be experienced vicariously in mimesis. If, for example, I go beyond the visual observation of someone slouching to then reproduce their slouch in my own body, I do more than objectify a cultural expression; I transpose the expression into an experience. Moving from dis tanced visual observation to close corporeal imitation can provide clues to experiences that are usually considered to be inaccessible. It can open avenues toward understanding the way cultural knowledge is corporeally constituted.

Embodying Method

It is easy to disembody. With a flick of the mind we can alter our perception of the material world or create sensory worlds in abstraction. This capacity for "making belief' can also be applied to the attempt to vicariously understand other people's experiences. We are accustomed to living vicariously through books, film, and television, which depend primarily on visual and auditory perception. Our capacity for vicarious kinesthetic experience, and even for self-reflexivity about our own lived-through movement and touch experience, is relatively undeveloped. To develop this capacity, I propose a methodology for working with corporeal expressions that relies on qualitative movement analysis in conjunction with a technique I would call *kinesthetic empathy.*

Qualitative movement analysis entails, first of all, attention to movement in the midst of every kind of interaction and event. It demands tuning perception not just to the "what" of action but to the "how," since the qualities of movement, more than its quantification, give pointed clues to proprioceptive experience.[6] A punch that is performed fast and hard is a very different experience and expression than one that is performed slowly and without muscular tension. It is the quality of the movement that makes the difference.

To perceive movement qualitatively, one trains oneself to separate out and analyze factors like the time, space, and shape of movement. For example, one might say in relation to time that a person's gestures explode in fast choppy fragments, or about the space and shape of movement, that she shot those gestures out around her with an erratic and indiscriminate reach. One attends to the amount of muscular tension, flow (whether movement is continuous or interrupted), focus of attention, and how movement relates people and things to each other. The same kind of qualitative questions can be asked about a person's way of walking, a dance genre, or an everyday group activity like cooking or talking.

This kind of kinesthetic analysis involves more than "objective" observation. Paradoxically, one has to close one's eyes to look at movement, extrapolating beyond its visual presentation and concentrating instead on projecting oneself "as if' into the other's engaged and moving body. It is from this standing place that one works with the qualitative factors outlined above to explore the concrete particulars of embodied knowledge. The process provides a different kind of information than does either visual perception alone or symbolic analysis; it gives a sampling of the proprioceptive, or "felt" dimension of events. It is this emphasis on experience-near perception within qualitative movement analysis that I mean by the term *kinesthetic empathy.*

Empathy here does not imply the first definition given by *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary,* "an imaginative projection of a subjective state into an object so that the object appears to be infused with it," but it does imply the second, "the capacity for participation in another's feelings or ideas." The word derives from the Greek *paschein* (to experience or suffer) and is related to *pathetikos* (capable offeeling). *Webster's* defines *kinesthesia,* from the Greek *kinein* (to move) plus *aisthesis* (perception), as "a sense mediated by end organs located in muscles, tendons, and joints and stimulated by bodily movement and tensions. Also sensory experience derived from this sense." Thus, the sensory experience that derives from movement is identical to the effect of movement as feeling oneself move. Putting the two terms together, *kinesthetic empathy* would mean the capacity to participate with another's movement or another's sensory experience of movement.

There is nothing mysterious here. Kinesthetic empathy is a skill involving bodily memory and bodily intelligence.[7] It is a matter of re-cognizing kines thetically what is perceived visually, aurally, or tactilely. As Stern has shown, it is a translation capacity that we all inherently possess. That we may not all be equally adept at doing (or imagining ourselves doing) certain movements, at

hearing and feeling rhythms, at recognizing weight shifts, or at discriminating between tensions is a matter of education, cultural preferences, and practice. These skills can be developed through training and experience in qualitative movement analysis.

Nonetheless, I believe that kinesthetic empathy is what we do, albeit uncon sciously and without method, when as fieldworkers we attempt to "establish rapport." The problem of establishing rapport has recently been of concern in anthropology.James Clifford, for example, discussing the dialectic of participant observation in terms of a tacking between the "inside" and the "outside" of events, has noted the difficulty of trying to pin down techniques for arriving at the "inside" and "grasping the sense of specific occurrences and gestures empathetically" (1988:34). He acknowledges the "rather meager stock of re sources for understanding rigorously how one feels one's way into an unfamiliar ethnographic situation" (1988:37). Clifford hints, however, at a kinesthetic approach when he writes that "participant observation obliges its practitioners to experience, at a bodily as well as an intellectual level, the vicissitudes of translation" (1988:23). What has been missing, my argument suggests, is the recognition that empathy is a corporeal/ conceptual skill that calls for the development of specific bodily techniques that will further our ability to both perceive and think sensorially.[8]

I developed the concept of kinesthetic empathy while doing fieldwork in Tortugas. As an aspect of qualitative movement analysis, and combined with more traditional methods of data gathering and interpretation, it led to insights about the nonpropositional meaning, or in Mark Johnson's terminology, the embodied schema, of "devotion" in Tortugas. The following exemplifies my process. Studying the Danzante, a matachine dance performed by 18 men, I would learn their movements, practicing at home with a videotape of the dance. I imitated not just the formal elements of the basic three-steps-stamp-and-kick pattern, but the particular way that the men performed it. They bounced stiffly through the first three steps and then let themselves plunge more deeply into the stamp. The weightiness of that stamp created a climactic pause and then rebounded them back up into the flicking, syncopated kick on the last half-beat of music. In my own body I recognized the dynamic of the step to be a chugging buildup of energy with a final liberating intensification and release. Repeated over and over, it gave the feeling of a contained but elastic driving power that was at the same time forceful and mesmerizing.

The sense of containment was also related to a quality of softness and vulnerability that contradicted the driving, gendered energy of the step. I eventually traced it to the men's inward focus of attention. This attention, I knew, was a meditative concentration on Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose portrait is always before the men when they dance, as well as in their mind's eye. The portrait rests on an altar that also carries a statue of the man to whom this *morenita* ("dark Virgin") originally and miraculously appeared. The man, while not an object of worship himself, is important as the progenitor as well as the symbolic prototype of devotional practice. Qualitative and empathic kines-

thetic analysis of the man's body attitude provided further insight that I can only summarize here.[9] His body attitude expressed contrasting qualities of eager readiness for action and self-surrendering, even self-effacing, humility. This dialectical gestalt of propel-forward/retire-inward mirrored the combination of driving momentum and soft, inward meditational center that characterized the Danzante. Kinesthetic empathy and movement analysis has led to the hypothesis that devotion here is characterized by a contained and sustained eagerness to serve that is both fed and quieted by focus on the Virgin.

Later, when I unwittingly became a participant in the Danzantes' devotions, I experienced a *peira* (sampling) of this corporeal conceptualization of devotion. At the opening of the fiesta, the Danzantes, and many others who want to have a private moment with the Virgin, line up outside her small chapel, the Capilla. As I was peering in through the doors, one of the men pushed me to enter. I did and found myself, without thinking, following the others and kneeling down before her image.

After a year of fieldwork, I was familiar with the conceptual and contextual subtext of the image, the originating narrative of the Virgin of Guadalupe, plus the implicit cosmology, hierarchy, and ethos of the local Catholicism with which it was intertwined. While I could not possibly create in my mind the lifetime of associations to the Virgin that the dancers had accumulated, I could allow my mind to fill with everything I had learned and experienced of the Virgin's qualities. She is a close, familial, and utterly receptive mother who can as easily adjust a child's scarf, understand her sorrow, or speak up in her behalf. She is also perpetually young and radiant, suggesting sensual pleasure as well as spiritual availability. While I had choreographed my mind, so to speak, with her image, story, personal qualities, and effects, I had also struggled to find personal connections to Our Lady of Guadalupe in my individualized versions of the feminine archetypes.

Drawing on all these connections, the physical act of getting down onto the ground before a feminine embodiment of compassion, wisdom, and availability was profoundly agreeable. At the same time, I was shocked by the sense offeeling her presence. It seemed as if I were melting into a deep connection with the being depicted in the image, meeting Our Lady of Guadalupe face to face. The other people in the Capilla dropped away, and for a brief moment, I felt as if she and I were conversing, but without the lengthy process of forming words. It seemed appropriate to be on my knees-a corporeal attitude toward a divinity that was entirely alien to me; humility replaced academic distance.

There is no doubt that the chords struck in me were not the same as those struck in a lifelong member of the fiesta community. In addition to having different personal sensory memories, we could not have the same interpretations of such an event. Unlike them, I did not believe in the historical reality of Our Lady of Guadalupe nor in Catholicism as a world-ordering cosmology. Our differences were clear. Nonetheless, the combination of descending to my knees and feeling an enlivened connection to the figure depicted in the image gave me a taste of the experience whose expression I had been studying. Further, it

provided an epistemological reference point from which to understand later conversations. When, for example, the community's religious leader instructed me in local Catholicism by describing a biblical scene as ifhe were there seeing and feeling it, I could follow his process. This kind of rapport at the level of epistemological process would not have been possible through traditional verbocentric methodology alone. Complementing a hermeneutic approach with corporeally based methods offered a means of understanding how knowledge is generated as a process that is both somatic and abstract.

The insights gained from a corporeal approach derive from an emphasis on depth rather than breadth, a stripping down rather than a piling up of associa tions. Religious belief and knowledge are not *explained* in terms of more and more symbolic associations but are *exposed* as a deep yet immediate interplay of sensory, affective, and symbolic experience. For Tortugas, two primary insights emerged from a corporeal approach. First, the experience of belief was con structed primarily through visual and kinesthetic media. Second, religious experience was epitomized in the corporeal/conceptual schema of "devotion" which, referring back to the Danzante, can be understood quite specifically as a dialectical balance between eagerness and humility, between action and submission. Combining kinesthetic empathy with qualitative movement analysis was my first step toward discovering how, in Tortugas, the bodily works its way up into the conceptual. Talking served as a check against the dangers of projection, of assuming that when I imitated someone's movement expression, I was duplicating their entire experience. Research moves back and forth between corporeal and verbal modes, making adjustments between enactments and symbolic representations, combining qualitative and empathic techniques with more traditional verbocentric methods.

Return to the Senses

When it came to the Bobover Purimspiel, however, my model of kinesthetic empathy did not work. Imitating movement seemed redundant. I was in the same corporeal brew as everyone else. Something new was needed. Backing out of my body, in imagination, I viewed the situation from a distance. There were the women, three and four deep, all along the edge of the balcony. All looked equally hot and sweaty, draped and pressed and precariously balanced against each other, peering over and through each other's body parts, shifting positions, adjusting, turning, laughing, and talking. Among them was one scowling creature whose body was more tense and unyielding than the others, though she too was dependent on support from the rest. She looked wrong, out of place. Everyone else was yielding to the leaning and the contact and the heat, and she was not.

From this distanced visual perspective, I saw that there was a choice. In my imagination, I saw myself both as I had been and also changed, with a body "attitude" that matched that of the other women. It was less resistant, looser in the limbs, softer in shape, and above all, more finely tuned to the shifts and

adjustments moving through the group. Once I made the change in imagination and watched myself synchronizing with the other women's performance, I could step back inside it and experience with pleasure the heat, the contact, and the waves of movement and joking passing through the group. But first it took creating distance, or dissociating from my body, to create the possibility of empathy. It had been necessary to disembody, or "get a new perspective," as the old folk wisdom has it, to enable a different kind of embodied experience. What I had missed before from up close, and what I could only see from a distance, was that the women were not communicating visually, but tactilely. They were not "mirroring" each other but yielding, pressuring, shaping themselves to each other via touch. Kinesthetic empathy could not work until I recognized the central place that touch had in their communication. This was not like Tortugas. Whereas the primary mode of communicating kinesthetic information in Tortugas had been visual, here it was tactile, as well as auditory. Now the waves of movement that passed without beginnings or endings through the tightly packed crowd of men below made corporeal sense; it was through touch that they were able to detect and respond to the most minute changes of direction, speed, and intensity of movement.

Once I "saw" the centrality of tactility, an entirely different quality of experience and report was possible, one that was more in synchrony with the sensitivity to touch that was happening all around me. In effect, the shift enabled connection or, in ethnographic terms, rapport. If, as Mark Johnson has sug gested, all abstract thinking depends upon embodied schema that are built up into abstract conceptualizations via the imagination, then a proprioceptive understanding of cultural expressions can be the first step toward crossing lines of difference. The ability to recognize sensory priorities, establish corporeal rapport, and analyze bodily communications in their own terms can be the key to the sensory and felt dimensions of cultural knowledge.

One could go further and generate from the central sensory insight a series of hypotheses cum questions that would provide the basis for long-term research among the Bobover Hasidim. Does the striking permeability of bodily bounda ries, for instance, find echoes in the way religious experience is conceptualized? Specifically, is the tactile emphasis "on the ground" related to the abstract concept of *devekut (cleaving* to God)? Is it also related to historical survival, or in other words, did literally "staying close" protect people in the shtetls of Eastern Europe? In another direction, what is the sensory and epistemological basis for the taboos in all ofJudaism surrounding sight, as in the taboos against worshiping visual images or idols or the interdiction forbidding men from looking at women while in worship? The Torah itself is kept from sight and, when it appears, it is touched, kissed: is there a tension between sight and touch? As in Tortugas, having hypothesized a basis in corporeality, the next step would be to tack between embodied and verbal investigations in order to uncover more specifi cally a corporeal hermeneutics of Hasidic religious experience.

As Victor Turner has written about aesthetic expression, so too for all symbolic activity: it "has its genesis in sensible human experience and does not proceed

from any ideal domain, a Platonic realm of archetypes superior to vulgar human activities it is supposed to evaluate and organize" (1986:39). I have attempted here a metanarrative that invites the reader to brush up against bodily based theory, method, and description. Again, my intention has not been to isolate corporeality from abstraction but to bring consciousness back into relation with somatic experience. Nor am I suggesting that more traditional theories and methods of ethnographic analysis are unnecessary but, rather, that we have not begun to tap the possibilities of interpretation grounded in bodily ways of knowing.

The unique and revolutionary possibilities of bodylore as a discourse unfold when that discourse is embedded in the palpable experiences of charged and charging bodies. To ground discourse in corporeal experience means, as Dorothy Smith has written, "to begin from direct experience and to return to it as a constraint or 'test' of the adequacy of a systematic knowledge" (1974:11). In an academic climate heated by textual analysis, even to the extent of treating bodies as texts, to study folklore in terms of corporeal experience becomes a radical critique. Bodylore would not only treat the body as a subject but would approach bodily ways of knowing as formative of discourse itself. From this standing place, bodylore is not so much a specialized category within folklore as an alternative theoretical framework and methodology for approaching knowledge.

Notes

I would like to thank Katharine Young for helpful suggestions in the revision process, and Jay Peters for his continuing insights and support of many kinds. As part of my ongoing exploration of corporeal ways of knowing, this is a work in progress. Other versions of the argument have been presented as "Evoking the Body: An Experiment in Kinesthetic Cognition" on the Body lore panel at the 1991 American Folk.lore Society meeting in Jacksonville, Florida, and as the keynote address, "Invigorating Dance Ethnology" at the 12th annual UCLA Forum of Graduate Dance Ethnologists, 1991. (See Sklar 1991b.)

[1]For accounts of Purim celebrations see Blum-Dobkin 1979, Epstein 1979, Kirshenblatt-Gim
blett 1990, and Kugelmass 1988. Both Jill Gellerman and Robin Goldberg are preparing full-length studies on Hasidic performance.

[2]Jnconspicuous among a thousand celebrants, a group of us from New York University's
department of performance studies, including women and men, Jews and Gentiles, were here at the invitation of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, whose research on Purim plays in Eastern Europe had led her to the Bobover Purimspiel (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1980). The women among us were required, of course, to participate from the women's section.

[3]These questions are borrowed and paraphrased from Alfonso Ortiz (1969:27).

[4]Geertz's use of the word "picture," however, needs to be revised, for within any given cultural epistemology, people may prefer to "hear" and "play" the world in sound, or to "feel" its rhythms and "dance" it in movement rather than to "see" and "picture" it in images.

[5]This point has been developed in response to an insightful comment made by the issue editor, Katharine Young, who wondered if my argument for a concrete approach to bodylore was too reductivist, too literal a construction of corporeality. She argued that "we constitute realms of being by turning attention to them. A self may be conjured up or fabricated but not one we necessarily inhabit bodily, though one in which we have a body nonetheless (dreams, stories, fictions)" (personal comm., 5 June 1991). I have attempted here to clarify my position on that issue.

[6]For my understanding of qualitative movement analysis I draw on the system first conceptualized by Rudolf Laban in Germany and then developed and taught as "Effort/Shape" by Irmgard Bartenieff in this country. Dance critic Marcia Siegel has distilled Bartenieffs technical categories into a system for teaching descriptive movement writing, and it was from her, in 1984-85, that I learned the kind of qualitative movement analysis I use. For an introduction to the principles of "Effort/Shape" see Bartenieff 1974; Dell 1977; Laban 1971; and Lomax et al. 1968 (chapters 10-12) and 1974. For Marcia Siegel's dance descriptions see Siegel 1977 and 1979.

[7]My insistence that kinesthetic empathy is a learnable skill counters possible criticisms of "subjectivism" in relation to use of the term *empathy.* (See for example Best 1975.)

[8]I am not alone in this advocacy. There have been several recent calls for a "corporeal turn" in anthropological method, including those from Paul Stoller (1989), Michael Jackson (1989), Thomas Csordas (1990), and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1990). Several ethnographic studies have also relied on the researcher's skills in sensory and qualitative cognition, most notably those by Steven Feld (1982) and Marina Roseman (1991) in ethnomusicology and by Cynthia Novack (1990) and Sally Ann Ness (1992) in dance ethnology. It is interesting that each of these ethnographers is also experienced as a performing artist.

[9]For the full movement analysis of the altar, especially in relation to the originating narrative of Our Lady of Guadalupe, see Sklar 1991a. **A** book version of this work, entitled *Dancing with the Virgin. The Enactment of Religious Beli (in Tortugas, New Mexico,* is under contract with the University of California Press.

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