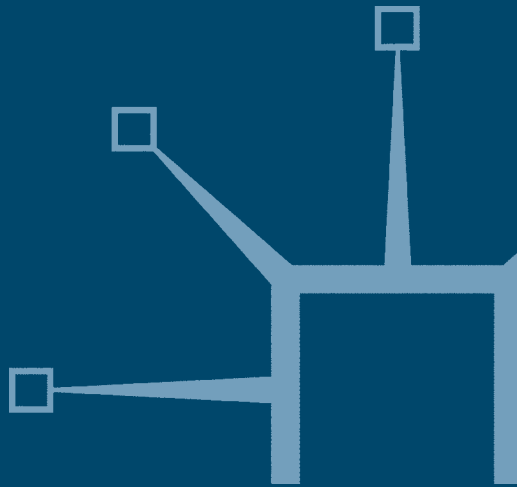


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Transversal Enterprises in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

Fugitive Explorations

Bryan Reynolds



Transversal Enterprises in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

Also by Bryan Reynolds

PERFORMING TRANSVERSALLY: Reimagining Shakespeare and the Critical Future

BECOMING CRIMINAL: Transversal Performance and Cultural Dissidence in Early Modern England

REMATERIALIZING SHAKESPEARE: Authority and Representation on the Early Modern English Stage (*co-editor with William N. West*)

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*For my daughter Sky,
Who sunshines my every day,
Who wide eyes my future,
And gazes back with me smiling.*

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1

Transversal Poetics and Fugitive Explorations: Theaterspace, Paused Consciousness, Subjunctivity, and *Macbeth*

Bryan Reynolds

Transversal relations

The 2003–2004 war on Iraq, launched in the wake of the 2001 attacks on the United States and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan, emphasized for me the need for activism, critical inquiry, and pedagogy that is rigorous, theoretical, and socially and politically engaged. Societies worldwide are rapidly becoming more interconnected through mass media, transportation, and commerce, and the means by which people compete and negotiate for resources and power are becoming progressively multifaceted, industrious, insightful, and desperate. Capitalist governments and corporations demonstrate repeatedly that a combination of ingenuity and deception – for example, the Bush and Blair administrations’ ability to equivocate about such things as evidence for weapons of mass destruction – is requisite for the successful manipulation and dominance of discourses, societies, markets, and nations.

Developments in technology, culture, and science give the impression that societies are moving faster and getting “better,” and previously uncharted terrains – ideational and/or material – are being explored, graphed, occupied, or subsumed. Exponentially, super-powered nations (the United States, Great Britain, China) and super-empowered iconic concepts and institutions (Christianity, Capitalism, Islamic Jihad) generate via “sociopolitical conductors” influential products, including texts, artworks, systems, and students. “Transversal poetics” is the evolving critical approach, theory, and aesthetics that I have developed in collaboration with others to foster agency, creativity, and the production of more conscientious and socially purposeful scholarship and pedagogy.¹ Sociopolitical conductors are vital to transversal poetics because

they are the familial, religious, juridical, media, and educational structures – the replicators, transmitters, and orchestrators of thoughts, meanings, and desires – that interconnect a society’s ideological and cultural framework.² The interrelations among the conductors and their products generate conceptually dynamic assemblages, or “articulatory spaces,” which are discursive environments that surround, enmesh, embody, and laminate charged topics, objects, and events. These emergent formations enhance and further the conductors’ interactions with and disseminations of “open power,” “state power,” and/or “transversal power.”³

Open power is any power that does not fall under the categories of state power or transversal power. State power is any force that works in the interest of coherence and organization among any variables; for instance, state power is at work as you read this and impose order and meaning to facilitate comprehension. Transversal power is any force – physical or ideational, friendly or antagonistic – that inspires emotional, conceptual, and/or material deviations from the established norms for any variables, whether individuated or forming a group. In agreement with their investment in social, cultural, economic, and political determinations, sociopolitical conductors work across space-time, consciously and/or not, either to convert open and/or transversal powers into state power or, less typically, to unleash transversal and/or state power. In both cases, sociopolitical conductors discursively influence the articulatory spaces fueled by and fueling the respective powers, which escalate and radiate both diachronically and synchronically within and through articulatory spaces. Thus, social and cultural economies negotiate and function, *vis-à-vis* sociopolitical conductors, in conjunction with the articulatory spaces through which they develop. Through this engagement people come to see and believe certain things, consequently undergoing “becomings” and “comings-to-be” as the result of exposures and performances.

Becomings are desiring processes by which people transform into something different – physically, conceptually, and/or emotionally – from what they were, and if they were identified and normalized by a dominant force, such as state law, religious credo, cultural aesthetic, or official language, then any change in them is becomings-other. Alternatively, comings-to-be occur when people lose control during the process of becomings-other and become more of/or something else than anticipated or preferred. In other words, becomings are active processes, often self-inaugurated and pursued intentionally, whereas comings-to-be, however induced by becomings, are generated by the

energies, ideas, people, societies, and so on to which the subject aspires, is drawn, or encounters by happenstance. For instance, if someone wants to become a member of a surfer subculture in California, she would need to actively and self-consciously become like other members in that community by adopting the dress, speech, and behavioral codes used by the community's members to distinguish themselves from others and readily identify each other. Such assimilation normally requires observation, imitation and emulation, and therefore the infusion of certain units of information, cultural substances, or, perhaps, what zoologist Richard Dawkins, in *The Selfish Gene*, calls "memes" (192).⁴

Dawkins's neologism is an amalgam of the words "memory," "imitation," and "gene," and he gives as examples of memes, "tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or building arches" (192). According to Dawkins, "Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation" (192). He explains that "imitation" refers to copy as in genetic "replication," but as a result of cultural rather than natural selection: "If a scientist hears, or reads about, a good idea, he passes it onto his colleagues and students. ... If the idea catches on, it can be said to propagate itself, spreading from brain to brain" (192). As a concrete example, Dawkins asks his readers to consider "the idea of God":

How does it replicate itself? By the spoken and written word, aided by great music and great art. Why does it have such high survival value? Remember that "survival value" here does not mean value for a gene in a gene pool, but value for a meme in a meme pool. The question really means: What is it about the idea of a god that gives it its stability and penetrance in the cultural environment? The survival value of the god meme in the meme pool results from its great psychological appeal. It provides a superficially plausible answer to deep and troubling questions about existence. ... God exists, if only in the form of a meme with high survival value, or infective power, in the environment provided by human culture. (192-3)

Like genes within a given population's evolutionary process, memes thrive or perish insofar as their qualities are advantageous and superior to other competing memes within a particular culture. With far-reaching implications across a number of fields, Dawkins's theory of

memes as replicators residing in people's brains that are able to replicate themselves as a consequence of socialization during information transmission through any media between individuals offers an explanation for cultural evolution, or rather, the gene-meme co-evolutionary process. It could also elucidate how subjective and official territories become and come-to-be, how state power, manifesting in ideas and their steady articulation, achieves predominance in given fields, and how transversal power may emerge in the fields as the result of a memetic intervention.

The field of "memetics" has proliferated since Dawkins launched his theory in 1976, and has become divided, as Robert Aunger describes it, into the "meme-as-germ" and the "meme-as-gene" camps (21). In the first camp are the memeticists, like Aaron Lynch and Richard Brodie, who take an epidemiological approach and see memes as cultural microbes that disseminate information as "mind viruses" (Dawkins' term) or "idea viruses" that get "sneezed" by people through various media into the brains of other people.⁵ They exist parasitically on human hosts, making them act in ways conducive to getting copies of their information into the brains of others. Memeticists belonging to the second camp, like Daniel Dennett and Susan Blackmore, argue that memes, as gene-like replicators, account for a process of cultural evolution – how humans use language and media to circulate information that networks and substantiates societies ever more rapidly and complexly – that exceeds our understanding of what genes are capable of doing.⁶ Building on the two camps, Aunger, echoing Dawkins's original position (Dawkins 323), offers a third, "electric" view on how replication of information may be both neurological and social. Aunger posits a model of what might be the physical properties of the as yet unobservable memes, which may give his theory more provable potential than the others' theories.

Generally in accord with the two major camps, I too believe that cultural traits are passed on from one individual and/or group to another through various media so that values, beliefs, and affinities are adopted both consciously and unconsciously; and that the more popular traits become, the more affective they also become, and thus the more likely they are to outlast the less popular. I am also intrigued by the shared premise of both camps that memes have agency that endeavors in the interest of their own survival, that ideas, which can replicate and distribute via interactions between humans, have the power to influence humans against their wills.⁷ However, I reject Blackmore's claim that because humans are reducible to the memes and genes that

program them, "There is no need to call on the creative 'power of consciousness,' for consciousness has no power" (236). Blackmore defines "consciousness" as "subjectivity – what's it like being me now" (238), and also maintains that, "Free will, like the self who 'has' it, is an illusion" (236).⁸ In my view, even if subjectivity can only manifest in culture to the extent that people are made into subjects within a society, a topic discussed in Chapter 2, one must be aware (conscious) in order to, first of all, eat voluntarily; and it is from food that we have the energy to do more, or at the very least to stay conscious. Consciousness's power thus lies in its potential. It is awareness of potential in the potential consciousnesses of all people that enables transversal poetics, perhaps as a "meme machine" (as Blackmore would put it), to inspire people to become and come-to-be more aware and different from what they were. As for "the self," according to transversal poetics, it is always in-progress and processual, undergoing becomings and comings-to-be, and it only ever exercises freedom as the process manifests in relation to the environments through which it consciously moves.

To explain further, let me return to the wannabe surfer. Should she come to take on or exhibit attributes of the community that she did not mean to acquire or perform, especially in circumstances in which she would prefer to do otherwise, then powerful comings-to-be have occurred, and the initiate has lost some control of her performance and subjective constitution. Memeticists would say that the surfer memes are significantly colonizing her brain; the memeplex they together comprise is systematically working to marginalize other memes and break down networks that might guide her into occupations that carry greater value for social structures created by other meme machines that do not privilege surfer codes in the same ways. Imagine our hypothetical wannabe surfer inadvertently blurting out the phrase "right on dude" to express enthusiasm during an interview for a corporate or academic job. Psychoanalysis might attribute this to a failure on the part of the superego or conscience, which regulates desires and thoughts such that only those appropriate to the social circumstances are outwardly expressed. In transversal terms, both becomings and comings-to-be are always at work, and in the case of the would-be surfer's verbal slippage, how the event was framed by the interviewee is the strongest indicator of which process dominated her consciousness during the event. If she did not really want the job, but only went to the interview to please her parents, then becomings-surfer won out. If she really wanted the job, perhaps to please her

parents, then comings-to-be surfer took control. Of course, there are many other becomings and comings-to-be operating within this scenario, but in all cases some are privileged more than others, and the structures of some are stronger than those of others. The ratios, however, are usually commensurate with duration and profundity of engagement with alternative, captivating forces, like sociopolitical conductors and memplexes, that have the capacity to achieve what I call “emulative authority” for certain individuals, people, or groups.

The spread of ideas and memes, and therefore the occurrence of comings-to-be, are usually more powerful and less controllable the higher the level of the activity involved, whether through performance or cognition. In other words, awareness of how to do something – knowledge of technique and instructions – is more deeply assimilated and more capable of programming behavior than simply copying the action. Blackmore refers to this phenomenon as the difference between the “copy-the-product” and the more effective “copy-the-instructions” modes of transmission and replication (61–2). Learning how to act in the process of becoming a theater actor, for example, would likely instigate comings-to-be of a nature perhaps altogether different from how the lifestyle of an actor is commonly perceived, insofar as the kinds of somatic knowledge required of actors could be beneficial to people in other fields, such as surfing or physics. Watching a theatrical performance, construction work, or pornography may stimulate similar neuron firings and descriptively comparable conceptual, emotional, and/or physical responses, but it has yet to be determined whether knowledge of someone else’s experience, including a character’s, without having had a like experience with which to relate the knowledge can qualitatively and effectively yield the same sorts of becomings and comings-to-be that are achieved through firsthand experience.

Whatever the specific results of performing, experiencing, thinking, reading, and/or writing about any culturally dominant iconic subject – whether sports, popular music, film, or literature – and its myriad permutations, such interfacing with emulative authority engenders more profound becomings, comings-to-be, and transportation through spacetime thresholds than the quotidian activities of everyday life. When encountering or embodying any media conceptually and/or materially imbued or manifested by an icon’s “affective presence,” which is the combined material, symbolic, and imaginary existence of a concept/object/subject/event and its multiplicities, we become situated as participants within articulatory spaces and their overlappings and fusions, in much the same way that subsets and their elements

function in mathematical set theory.⁹ For instance, Shakespeare's affective presence as, among other things, marvelous poet, cultural icon, and/or ideological symbol engages us with the phenomena of what Donald Hedrick and I refer to as "Shakespace," a term that encompasses the plurality of Shakespeare-related articulatory spaces and the time, speed, and force at which they transmit and replicate, like memes, through places, cultures, and eras.¹⁰ Other articulatory spaces explicitly engaged by my collaborators and I in the chapters of this book include Mary/Mollspace, Marlowespace, Hamletspace, R&Jspace, and theaterspace. We are especially interested in how and why the affective presences of their primary components have been inherited, varied, and selected across histories and cultures.

Fugitive explorations

In addition to clarifying further our relationships to the articulatory spaces through which we evolve, I want to demonstrate some of the ways by which the literary, cultural, and critical articulatory spaces that have significantly influenced our understandings of subjectivity in early modern England and today can provide opportunities for enhanced individual and group agency, artistic inspiration, and political and societal transformation. With these goals in mind, the "investigative-expansive mode" of analysis that guides the praxis of transversal poetics has led me to propose a corollary methodology that I call "fugitive explorations."¹¹

Engaging the framework of boundless potential proposed by transversal theory, fugitive explorations call for readings of a given text – with "text" understood as anything analyzable – that defy the authorities that reduce and contain meanings, both of the readings and of the text itself. Dominating authorities can be found in all readings and reading environments, both of a text's inception and point of reception; they are the past, present, and future authoritative, interpretive communities that channel and situate a text and its interpretations across spacetime, arbitrarily producing its history and value. Hence, fugitive explorers venture wherever they are drawn (as in my journey into the field of memetics), reconstituting parameters accordingly, as they strive to uncover "fugitive elements" – human, narrative, thematic, semiotic, and so on – of the subject matter being examined and the environments in which it has been contextualized, particularly those that pressurize the authorities and, by extension, the communities necessary for the substantiation of the authorities' power. Fugitive

explorers often endow agency where agency had been wanting, evacuated, or forbidden. Thus, in response to the fact that transversal poetics makes no overarching or definitive claims with regard to its specific political investments, but rather remains as fluid and case-specific in its determinations as the ideas, opportunities, and methodology it promulgates, I offer fugitive explorations as a derivative, transversal approach with a pronounced agenda: to understand and empower fugitive elements insofar as doing so generates positive experiences.

Politically invested, fugitive explorations might, for instance, involve an attempt to transversally link, within histories, cultures, and metaphysics, the ectoplasmic traces of the ghost-characters of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet* to theatrical and literary-cultural productions of the plays. The purposes of this undertaking might be to give voice to commonly marginalized or elusive perspectives on or of the ghost-characters, to highlight opinions about the phenomena of ghosts across histories, cultures, and disciplines, and to converse with scientific theories that might illuminate in unexpected and productive ways the ghostly subject matters under investigation. To give some examples of fugitive inquiry from this book, Amy Cook and I follow ideas expressed in *Macbeth*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *The Devil is an Ass* concerning the transversal power of comedy and relate them to recent research on humor in cognitive neuroscience; Donald Hedrick and I connect anxieties expressed in *The Changeling* about the diminishing importance of the concept of place to an emerging definition of space during the European and English Renaissances that privileges space at the expense of place; Janna Segal and I track recent trends in literary criticism on *Romeo and Juliet* and trace the financial subterfuge operating in the text to consider how the play simultaneously celebrates the production of romance and laments the title characters' investments in the business of love; and Glenn Odom and I situate *Titus Andronicus* in terms of its literary, scientific, and social history to give an expansive account of the meanings of the words "black" and "Moor" in relation to notions about ethnic, religious, and national difference within and beyond the play during the early modern period. Each of these chapters attempts to make emergent a previously overlooked aspect of the critical history on the plays and concepts discussed.

To elucidate some of the characteristics and advantages of fugitive inquiry within and beyond transversal poetics, I want to now offer a brief comparison – elaborated upon in Chapter 2 – with the philosophy and methodology of deconstruction as formulated by Jacques

Derrida. Like deconstruction, fugitive explorations pursue slippages, loose threads, and latent signifiers in a chosen text as a means by which to undermine and unravel the text's apparent meanings for a given interpretive community or communities. Unlike deconstruction, however, it does this deliberately as a gateway to other possible readings and, by extension, to other conceptual, emotional, and physical localities. Therefore, fugitive explorations do more than merely expose the instability of texts and the semiotic systems in which they function. It would not be enough to show how the witches in *Macbeth*, for instance, undermine through prevarication or "powers of suggestion" the patriarchal system within the play. The fugitive explorer might also relate Shakespeare's representation of witches to dissident or exploitative occasions precipitated by the circulation of seductive or misleading concepts outside of the play text – in, for example, contemporary advertising campaigns or religious institutions – as a means by which to illuminate types of becomings, comings-to-be, and subject performances that make possible, encourage, or inspire, at least conceptually, such currently hotly-debated cognitive interventions as "leading the witness" and "faith healing."¹² Along these lines, in Chapter 3, Anthony Kubiak and I tease out of the deceitful operations and multi-layered performances in *Hamlet* a theory of mind that we attempt to explain in relation to pioneering research in the rapidly-growing subfield of primatology known as "Machiavellian Intelligence."¹³

Finding potentialities in instabilities, as in the cases of *Macbeth's* witches and *Hamlet's* artifice, fugitive explorations emphasize the text's possible meanings beyond its intended, immediate, or future audiences. A goal of transversal poetics in and through fugitive explorations is to discourage hermeneutical reductionism, such as of the kind that forces an investigation to bow down willy-nilly to overdetermined concepts like historicism, presentism, or futurism. Whereas deconstruction also opposes such reductionism insofar as it rejects ultimately all interpretations, transversal poetics asks that we consider artifacts positively and extensively, rather than define negatively, defer continuously, or dismiss alternative interpretations and applications by relying only on dialectical argumentation. Yet, like deconstruction, it also asks that we remain aware that there is no inherent, absolute, or unmediated meaning or subject position; that truth and perception are processual and contingent; and that any text or social identity (like Derrida's own writings and affective presence) can be made to deconstruct itself endlessly by systematically replacing one supplemental, always already indeterminate meaning after another, each standing in

for the never-to-be-found conclusion or transcendental signified. This is done as a result of what Derrida calls “*différance*,” a coinage simultaneously meaning to differ and to defer that accounts for the fact that all meaning in a relational system of language where words do not have intrinsic meanings always both differs from and defers to other meanings, and is therefore contingent and provisional. While such deconstruction can be valuable, especially when implemented to undermine oppressive rhetoric and systems, it often leaves unanswered questions significant to people – like our students – who want to relate the literary text in question to issues pertinent to their lives.

When studying *Macbeth*, for instance, students often contemplate who is ultimately responsible for Macbeth’s actions. They are usually unsatisfied when I suggest that the play is merely words, “a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / signifying nothing” (5.5.27–8), and that no one is responsible because there is nothing there but indeterminacy, for which anyone could be provisionally responsible. Instead, my students have defined a range of culpable agents: Duncan, the inept and careless ruler; Macbeth, the naïve, ambitious, and weak would-be king; Lady Macbeth, the power-mongering emasculator; the prophetic and interfering witches; Shakespeare, the authorial agent; the early modern English society that produced Shakespeare; and we, the immediate interpreters of the play. My point is that who or what is responsible for Macbeth’s actions matters only inasmuch as we, as scholars and teachers, can productively associate the question, examination, and possible answers with issues important to people today, and – positively – to people “tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow” (*Macbeth* 5.5.19).

Hence, fugitive inquiry, working to reveal portholes, expand passages, and promote travel into disparate territories, does not pursue or resolve comfortably with the nihilism of deconstruction or with the notion of infinity that it invokes (the fugitive explorer is never a caged gerbil forever spinning on a treadmill). Nor does fugitive inquiry privilege or reduce itself to any axioms, including the influential psychoanalytic and post-Marxist axioms, discussed in Chapters 2 and 9, that define desire and subjectivity as predicated on lack. Fugitive inquiry is not a victim or victim-making approach. For transversal theory, subjectivity is processual and develops positively through becomings and comings-to-be; this often occurs through the recognition of differences, but not typically or desirably as a consequence of negation. Accordingly, compensation or totalization is not the objective of fugit-

ive explorations, although sustaining an understanding may be a welcomed outcome. Informed by transversal theory, fugitive explorations recognize limits within circumstances and agents, even while remaining steadfastly committed to both the concept that anything is possible and the fact that there is a real where things are, happen, and can be done, however difficult to access or influence, and however subject to mediation and matters of perception. This is where fugitive inquiry most departs from deconstructionism, as well as from the poststructuralism of theorists as different and antithetical as Jean Baudrillard¹⁴ and Judith Butler, who is discussed in Chapter 3.

Fugitive explorations can also willfully or inadvertently expose hidden elements that are disempowered because they can no longer operate covertly. For instance, once unknown enemies are identified and locatable, their deconstructionist mission, subversive potential, or state power can be weakened or diverted insofar as they can be quashed or co-opted. Consider, for example, Caliban's recognition and subsequent manipulation of Trinculo and Stephano as power-hungry, lustful humans (*The Tempest* 3.2). Either way, through the exploratory process, the investigative-expansive thinker becomes fugitive as a means by which to move transversally outside of one's own "subjective territory," the combined conceptual, emotional, and physical range from which a given subject perceives and experiences.

Although I believe that we exist simultaneously in spacetime, I use spatial metaphors to discuss subjective and other conceptual-emotional-physical territories rather than temporal or spatiotemporal ones for three reasons. First of all, and least consequentially, Western culture privileges spatial metaphors when thinking about subjectivity and social hierarchy. This can be seen in the colloquialism, "I don't want to go there," meaning a conceptual-emotional space instead of a physical place or module of time. Spatial metaphors are thus easier for people to relate to given their everyday experiences in a spatially-biased world. Another example of this bias can be seen in the fact that we often forget – become unaware of – what time it is, but rarely do we forget the space we currently inhabit. Secondly, and most importantly, I imagine territories occupying at least four dimensions – length, breadth, thickness, and time as a coordinating dimension – and having buoyancy and emergent properties such that the always malleable and developing whole can never be ossified, reduced to a sum of its parts, or disconnected from the environments it interfaces, that constitute it, and through which it moves. Thirdly, it is the complex

dimensionalities of subjective territories that allow for differences and commonalities among them, and thus for the layering of their characteristics that produces and reinforces definable “official territories” that together create the infrastructures for societies, as well as for opportunities to move transversally beyond their established parameters.

Fugitive explorations can work to get people outside of their subjective territories through “transversal movements”: feelings, thoughts, and actions alternative to those that work to circumscribe and maintain one’s particular subjective territory, and, by extension, the greater official territory that the subjective territories of a society’s members together comprise inasmuch as they share common components. Most people engage in transversal movements to some degree and in some form everyday. People most often move transversally when they empathize or imagine they are empathizing with others. As actors and therapists are often trained to do, people identify with those to whom they are empathetic, whose thoughts and feelings they may only be able to presume; one thinks and feels atypically in the attempt to empathize “as if” they are someone else, which pushes them transversally. By inhabiting, if only imaginatively, the subjective territory of another, one’s own subjective territory expands and reconfigures, and the higher-order, stabilizing official territory may be jeopardized if the emotional-conceptual motion is incongruous with or fugitive to its biologically and ideologically informed network of organizing principles.

The transversal inclination is always fugitive to the subjectified, but not all transversal movement is fugitive on every level. Someone occupying conceptual, emotional, and/or physical spacetimes alternative to those prescribed by an official culture has moved out of her subjective territory, is expanding her experiential range, possibly disidentifying with her established social role, and is acting fugitively in a self-referential way. If someone’s transversal movement works in the interest of dominant sociopolitical conductors – and thereby promotes the overarching “state machinery” that the conductors together comprise¹⁵ – to institute a subjective territory that reinforces official culture, the dissident potential of the fugitive action can diminish. This might happen if a member of a criminal group violates the group’s codes, thereby becoming fugitive to the group, and inadvertently supports the mainstream culture in relation to which the group defines itself. Whatever the outcome, the person’s transversal movement may nonetheless serve as a model that inspires others to wander.

Theaterspace, paused consciousness

Theater happens when a performance is presented to an intended audience that is aware of an interpretive frame specific to that performance. As an event, in effect, of performance, theater is often an exemplary model of the kind of apparatus that induces transversal wanderings through processes of becoming-other and comings-to-be-other, such as of other social identities, species categories, or spiritual beings. Theater spurs these adventures through such phenomena as empathy, projection, hypothesis, and transference. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, this was especially the case for early modern England's public theater.¹⁶ The metatheatrics and impersonations that characterized the public theater, unlike allegorical presentations in pageants and morality plays, challenged established beliefs about the singularity and cogency of reality and, by extension, the sexual, gender, moral, and class differentiations that depended on those beliefs. The public theater posited all social categories, such as "man" and "woman," as constructs that must be performed in order *to be*. It suggested that the body matters only to the extent that it is a point of departure for identity becoming, and that through performance one could potentially become anything, even the unthinkable.¹⁷

The public theater's transversal influence in early modern England – and the theaterspace engendered there – is especially evident in the vehement antitheatrical discourse and actions taken against the theater. To a lesser extent, it can also be seen, as Ayanna Thompson and I argue in Chapter 7, in Marlowe's creation of a new theatrical form we term "post-theater." Yet, the transversal influence of the theater was most manifest in the workings of criminals and social deviants, such as individuals who disguised themselves as gypsies in order to extort money, sell herbal remedies, and read palms; con-men who pretended to be different people in order to perpetrate crimes; and people who practiced transvestism, whether male-to-female on the stage or female-to-male on London's streets, the latter having become a popular fashion contemporaneous with the public theater's popularity. The transversal power of the public theater transgressed the Church's ideology and corresponding official culture, undermining the properties of the society's interiority that functioned to organize and monitor via sociopolitical conductors the subjective territories of its members. Thus, as result of the curious situations, unexpected events, and surprises staged in and effected by the public theater that made spectators

more susceptible to transversal power than they might have otherwise been, audience members had experiences alternative enough to their subjective and official territories that they assimilated unfamiliar information and codes – maybe otherwise unwanted memes – and became and came-to-be things different from what they were before they entered the theater. Most importantly, they acquired the radical information that change of all kinds, physical as well as social, is possible.

Surprise, meaning an unanticipated experience outside of the parameters within which one normally experiences life, can effect transversal movements with tremendous intensity and impact. Moreover, if one considers that the more improbable an event for any synthetic or ecological system, the greater that event's potential consequences for the system, surprise can vary in degree; it can even be exponential (think of the 2004 tsunami in Asia, and what it was like as new information about casualties and damage was revealed). This is especially the case when surprise is combined with loss of control. If surprise, as typically defined, means to be taken unawares, and since consciousness, as typically defined, requires awareness, surprise suggests at least a temporary loss, disruption, fracturing, or what I call "paused consciousness." With this in mind, I would like to discuss briefly why humans wish to experience theater.

Although there are many reasons why people attend and participate in theater, I want to concentrate on a few that I believe are primary and particularly significant. People often measure the quality of their theatrical experience by the extent and depth of movement experienced. In other words, should one attend a production framed as comedy, one expects to smile and laugh, and, hopefully, in the best of circumstances, shed tears from excessive laughter. Successful jokes require breaks from established discourses and frames through deviations that take the listener elsewhere, to the unexpected. Limits for jokes are usually previously determined and longstanding for a given social group, and so a joke that goes "too far" is one that violates the frame of the joke itself. Such violations take the listener to a more precarious, alternative space from which it is more difficult to return to the conceptual-emotional place of the social situation from which the joke initially departed. The violation suggests that what has been expressed is not a joke after all, but instead, say, an insult, truth, or a divisive idea possibly motivated by ill or revolutionary intentions. Nevertheless, because the joke violated social code, it is a threat to the organizing structures of subjective and official territories.

On the other hand, when one attends a theatrical production framed as tragedy, one expects to feel sad, perhaps even to cry. Joy and sadness, then, are experienced in theater even though the actions presented are usually not those of the audience: representation stimulates real responses often considered appropriate to corollary, offstage, everyday events. One reason for this, as, among others, Maksim Stamenov and Vittorio Gallese have demonstrated, is that the same neuron firing among brain cells called “mirror neurons” occurs when we imagine or watch an action we are not actually performing (11).¹⁸ The intensity of firing, and therefore experience, may differ depending on already established pathways for neuron firing specific to each individual as a result of previous knowledge and experience with the action;¹⁹ generally, as in Blackmore’s “copy-the instructions” model, the more familiar the individual is with the action, the greater the rate and potency of firing. Evidence suggests that we can experience confusion, anxiety, or pleasure when neurons fire in drastically atypical or random ways, that is, when common thought patterns yaw or rupture. Thus, despite the specific genre frame – comedy, tragedy, tragicomedy, history, romance, and so on – theater is most enjoyed or disliked when it exceeds our expectations, when it is more of something – “worse,” “better,” or “weirder” – than anticipated, which is when comings-to-be are most likely to transpire. Of course, a production’s frame contributes directly to the construction of our expectations and the conditions for their failings or successes.

At the subjective crux of such occurrences, however rare, ominous or delightful, are the secrets that we – and I am using “we” proverbially, not presumptuously – consciously and/or unconsciously carry within us. These secrets become, if only provisionally, exposed through our reactions: they are our ready gateways to alternative thinking and becoming, our fugitive inconsistencies – in sensibility, identity, and cognition – always susceptible to the power of the transversal to unearth, liberate, and transform. In the reflections of what we experience, we become vulnerable to our own scrutiny, and perhaps to the often more threatening scrutiny of others. This happens through imagination, empathy, projection, and transference – by getting outside of one’s subjective territory – rather than through self-affirming identification, defensive reactions, or alienation, although defamiliarization, a foreign perspective on something familiar, can be effective, as epic theater has shown. But it also happens, in conjunction, through excess.

When we laugh so hard that it hurts, the comedy is considered successful. When we cry so hard or feel so sad that it hurts, the tragedy is

deemed successful. Clearly, we want to hurt: to lose control and feel wildly, profoundly. We respond involuntarily, free from responsibility. Since we generally do not inflict pain directly on ourselves, as this would be seen as irrational, we go somewhere to have it done to us. Among other places – the movies, sports events, the homes of relatives – we go to theater. When we leave the theater with our bodies aching and our brains reeling, unable to contain our thoughts and feelings, we feel that we have got our money's worth. Time, a precious resource, was well spent if the duration of experience persists beyond the immediate, actual spacetime of the spectacle. If our philosophical or ethical meditations on the performance just seen permeate our lives for hours or days afterwards, despite our efforts to focus on other things, we have been possessed and are no longer in control of their influence.

This lasting impact is especially felt when theater scares us, tells us of the possibility of, say, fatal attractions or serial killers, or that everything in our lives – our family, friends, ourselves – may be, like theater, simply artifice, ready to betray us unexpectedly, and perhaps devastatingly. If theater causes us to lose control through laughter, squirming, terror, and tears, through bodily contortions and incontinence, then it has done its job; it has moved us transversally. In fact, if we forget where we have been – in space as well as time – during a theatrical performance, and sort of snap out of a dream when it is over, then we have experienced paused consciousness. The event is more memorable, more effectual, even if or because the details are fuzzy. This is because we have been possessed, prodded, made to consider alternatives, even the otherwise inconceivable, as we try, often with urgency and desperation, to fill in the gaps, to impose order and sense onto mystery (state power at work). Nothing in theater, as in everyday life, pushes us more than transversal power manifested as, through, and by surprise, deceit, irony, and the “subjunctivities” that question, challenge, and transform our subjective territory.

Empathy, surprise, lying, and imagination are the most common means by which people venture into what I call “subjunctive space,” the hypothetical worlds of both “as ifs” and “what ifs” that interface subjective territories and what I have termed “transversal territory,” a multidimensional spacetime encompassing, among other known and unknown qualities, the nonsubjectified regions of individuals’ conceptual-emotional range. Subjunctive space, because of its openness and uncertainty, is like transversal territory, whose indeterminate mappings can occupy, transgress, and expand – to borrow Raymond Williams’ terminology – the “residual,” “dominant,” and “emergent”

aspects of a culture.²⁰ In this respect, subjunctive space is a subset of transversal territory or, more precisely, it is an emergent space operative in between and among subjective and transversal territories in which the subject necessarily retains agency and self-consciously hypothesizes scenarios and experiences, self-activating his or her own transversal movements. Resistance to subjunctivity, whether achieved consciously or not, can be likened to complacency, the acceptance of a prescribed subjectivity.

Consider the power of words, as in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, when Aaron tells Titus that if he cuts off his own hand, the lives of his sons will be spared. Without daring to move subjunctively, Titus believes the lie because of the Roman code to which he adheres. His subscription to the code supports the official territory within which Titus obediently operates. As Glenn Odom and I discuss in Chapter 8, it is only when Titus is surprised by the truth of his sons' murders that he derails transversally. Similarly, Iago says things that inculcate Othello into Iago's "cuckold ideology" and lead Othello to murder Desdemona without due process, as Venetian law demands.²¹ To move away from Shakespearean examples and into everyday life, consider the things people do merely because someone has told them, "I love you." In all cases, the greater the investment in the words by the audience, given the significance of the speaker(s) to the spectator(s), the greater the liability. Saying, "I promise to take out the trash," is not equivalent to saying, "I promise to feed the baby," just as performing or not performing the action can yield very different results. When codes and frames are broken, we respond accordingly. We value some actions more than others, and so the consequences are greater. Subjunctive space allows us to consider events and their consequences differently, even fugitively, in effect creating opportunities for thought and expression where there were none.

Fugitive subjunctivity

Whether through theater or critical inquiry, fugitive explorations can be precarious undertakings because they challenge, defy, and promote the defiance of authorities, which can lead to real consequences, including social metamorphosis, combat, punishment, and liberation. Transversal movements, moreover, are often corollary to fugitivity, and can take one deep into transversal territory, which could likewise cause the wayward traveler to experience a cognitive disjunction that is often pathological, taking the form of a dream-like state of altered

consciousness in which themes are lost and reappear, possibly endlessly (the waking nightmare or living dream of the deconstructionist). Such persistent occupation of transversal territory can be counterproductive if the goal of the fugitive explorer is to emancipate readings of the text, herself, and/or others in order to achieve agency. Certainly Macbeth's irresistible transversality, influenced by his quest for what he cannot know, pushes his subject performance into what zoos terms a "progressive quagmire":

Progressive quagmires are research states, indeed states of being (if you will), that are manifest when the analytical tools which were believed to fuel progress prove unable to resist the analysis' momentum and thus are incapable of generating new directionality and expansion because the analysis is pushed along a rigid course. And yet the researcher, having experienced past "successes" with them, and being urged on by social, cultural, political, and paradigmatic conventions, is reluctant to part with these investigative tools and, by extension, the (de)limiting assumptions underlying them. (13)

To avoid progressive quagmires by becoming fugitive analytically, and therefore be able to ferret out fugitive components of a system, narrative, psyche, and so on, one frequently has to journey into the hypothetical dimensions of subjunctive space. Because the fugitive is mysterious, perhaps already on the run, elusive, and/or burrowing in the nooks and crannies of discourse, the transversalist engages subjunctively in atypical possibilities for meaning and articulation: the "what ifs" and "as ifs" that the text (or experience) may or may not inspire. Taking you with me into subjunctive space, I would like to turn to a brief example, a fugitive dabble of sorts, into the early modern English discourse on equivocation.

Early modern England's dominant religious ideology maintained that God orders and Satan confuses, a determination that reverberates, for instance, in Macduff's response to the revelation of King Duncan's murder: "Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!" (*Macbeth* 2.3.65). This God-Satan dynamic resounds throughout *Macbeth* as equivocation (in language and action) and is associated with witchcraft and the Jesuit conspirators who attempted to blow up King James and Parliament in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. In particular, Shakespeare's use of the word "equivocation" by the Porter (2.3.8-9; 2.3.30-2) references *A Treatise of Equivocation*, written by early modern England's clandestine Jesuit leader, Father Henry Garnet, which describes the