

Performing Transversally: Reimagining Shakespeare and the Critical Future

Bryan Reynolds

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Bryan Reynolds : Performing Transversally: Reimagining Shakespeare and the Critical Future before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Performing Transversally: Reimagining Shakespeare and the Critical Future:

2 of 6 people found the following review helpful. One of the BrilliantBy J.G. When the University of Alabama's

Hudson Strode Program in Renaissance Studies, helmed by luminary Gary Taylor, chose hotshot University of California Professor Bryan Reynolds as one of the "the six most brilliant Renaissance scholars in the world under 40," I begrudgingly decided to read *Performing Transversally*. I had already heard too much buzz about his book on criminal society, and was confident that his kind of flashy scholarship -- a la his Harvard teacher-thaumaturgists Marjorie Garber and Stephen Greenblatt -- would be of little interest to an old-historicist like me. But now I must confess that I've read both books and found them to be more than impressive. Reynolds is driven by a desire to mine the subterranean, which leads him to reveal such things as the bogus history of gypsies in Tudor-Stuart England, Shakespeare's anticipation of Stalinism, and the uncanny relationship between Shakespeare and American celebrity killer Charlie Manson. Along the way, Reynolds wrestles with almost every major critical tradition, and explains what he sees as their shortcomings and benefits for future research. His "transversal" approach is enhanced by his wit and chutzpah. In this, he reminds me of Leslie Fielder, or Susan Sontag (God bless them). Reading the work of Reynolds and his collaborators is like revisiting the 60s and 70s when literary theory aspired to ethical ideals and was fun to explore and do.

5 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Move Over New Historicism
By A Customer
This book has not only emerged brilliantly out of the new historicism's wake, utilizing everything productive the new historicism had to offer, but it creates a wake in which new historicists -- especially the more myopic ones -- continue to flounder. Reynolds and his fellow transversal movers and shakers launch cogent critique after critique, both implicitly and explicitly, of new historicist criticism (while improving upon the Althusserian and Foucaultian theory behind it), supplanting its often fly-by-night and defeatist rhetoric with optimism, rigor, and relevance to concerns of today the likes of which most new historicists never imagined or cared to imagine possible. Reynolds' performance-oriented and expansive method enables analyses of Shakespeare's plays and adaptations of them -- of the "Shakespace" (one of his many playful coinages) through which they move -- that are far-reaching in value and application across history, cultures, and academic fields. I would even go so far as to say that Reynolds is a visionary with the scope of Raymond Williams, and, like Williams, Reynolds envisions and wants to inspire -- with his "transversal poetics" -- a better future. For Reynolds, although clearly a lover of Shakespeare, Shakespeare is just one of many points of departure for transversal adventures to elsewhere of learning, empowerment, agency, and evolution. There is no book on Shakespeare that I would want my students to read more than this one.

5 of 9 people found the following review helpful. The New Hot Thing
By A Customer
This is a great book. I bought it because everyone was talking about it at the Group for Early Modern Cultural Studies Conference last fall, and as I did it could not believe that I was spending \$65 on a book, something I have never done before. But since I am a Shakespeare scholar -- I suppose I can call myself that now even though it is only my third year in grad school -- I figured that I need to have the new hot thing. What I did not know is that all the hype was more than justified. Reynolds et al. are unrelentingly captivating in every respect: funny, smart, rigorous, engaging... Most important to me, however, is that this book is about change, responsibility, and empowerment. Shakespeare is just Reynolds' vehicle, that he uses to take his readers into "Shakespace," a conceptual and emotional space of expansion and learning, an other world where we can all move transversally. Thanks Reynolds et al. for getting my brain reeling, and getting me excited about my work!

Performing Transversally expands on Bryan Reynolds' controversial transversal theory in exciting ways while offering groundbreaking analyses of Shakespeare's plays - Hamlet , Othello , Macbeth , Taming of the Shrew , Titus Andronicus , Henry V , The Tempest , and Coriolanus - and textual, filmic, and theatrical adaptations of them. With his collaborators, Reynolds challenges traditional readings of Shakespeare, re-evaluating the critical methodologies that characterize them, in regard to issues of cultural difference, authorship, representation, agency, and iconography. Reynolds demonstrates the value of his 'investigative-expansive mode,' outlining a 'transversal poetics' that points toward a critical future that is more aware of its subjective interconnectedness with the topics and audiences it seeks to engage than is reflected in most Shakespeare criticism and literary-cultural scholarship.

"Performing Transversally is an innovative example of collaborative scholarship aimed at opening the classic Shakespearean text to unexpected interpretive contexts and possibilities. Whether exploring the sado-masochistic dynamics of Othello or bringing Shakespeare and Dario Fo into productive dialogue, Reynolds and his collaborators use Shakespeare to explore uncharted emotional and cognitive landscapes.... Performing Transversally offers a highly-caffeinated alternative to conventional criticism." - Jean E. Howard, William E. Ransford Professor of English, Columbia University "In *Performing Transversally*, Reynolds takes his collaborators and us on a dazzling, even mind-altering trip through what Reynolds calls 'Shakespace,' offering us trenchant sociohistorical readings both of Shakespeare's plays and adaptations of them by Dryden, Polanski, Brecht, Csaire, Wilson, Fo, and Taymor. Reynolds powerfully reaffirms the agency of the subject and offers hope for theoretical intervention as a viable form of political activism conceived quite daringly here as the transcendence of all conceptual, emotional, social, and physical limits." - Richard Burt, author of *Unspeakable Shakespeare* "Transferring models of collaborative authorship from theatre and performance to academic discourse, *Performing Transversally* productively sets out to re-imagine a critical terrain for Shakespeare in which text and critic are in constant movement, where dispersals, expansions, variabilities,

metamorphoses, reconfigurations, alternatives, and contradictions rule. Offering multivocal, processual accounts of how such conversations and negotiations invite links between fields of discourse, Reynolds and co-performers are master jugglers, keeping multiple texts, objects, ideas and ideologies simultaneously in view." - Barbara Hodgdon, University of Michigan "In *Performing Transversally*, Bryan Reynolds and a group of collaborators challenge critical orthodoxy by venturing into 'transversal territory' and into the overlapping realm of 'Shakespeare.' . . . Because it insists that 'transversality' is the liberating, responsibility-conferring space where we can begin to understand and empathize with other people and other cultures, and because it insistently characterizes Shakespearean performance as 'transversal,' the book amounts to an important and marvelously high-spirited contribution to the turn toward ethics in literary and cultural studies." - Paul Yachnin, Tomlinson Professor of Shakespeare Studies, McGill University

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About the Author BRYAN REYNOLDS is Associate Professor of Drama at the University of California at Irvine, USA. He earned his Ph.D. from Harvard, where he studied Shakespeare under Marjorie Garber and Stephen Greenblatt. Bryan has recently been named as one of Gary Taylor's '6 most brilliant Renaissance scholars in the world under 40'