

Wondering into the Subjunctive: A Commentary on *Thought in Motion*

David Lee Carlson, Arizona State University, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6644-7679>,
dcarlson2@gmail.com

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Thinking with the papers in this special issue has been an intense spiritual experience. It is true that for me reading and writing are transmorphic events. The words move into my body, get into my veins, move about, lodge themselves into my stomach and vibrate and mix with memories, molecules, muscles, and thoughts in a sort of flurry that seems rather uncontrollable. I dream about words, lines, and ideas written in this special issue. Language itself is not isolated material; I do not hide out to write or read or cut myself off from the rest of the world to interact with words; they instead become part of me, part of my limited world, the things I eat and drink and shower with. Still, I grapple for words and language to come back when I need to harness them because I stutter and murmur; I'm klutzy, drop things inadvertently and leave the kitchen counter dirty after eating lunch. It is as if I still need to beg for permission to use them when I write, to promise to treat words and sentences with care; and still I need to prove myself with language; it demands my trust; holding onto words and placing them in proper order can seem like trying to carry a plastic bag full of eggs home from a crowded market. Words are indeed "sticky things" (Bowstead). As such, I resist writing as critique, for as Ramos so beautifully writes in her paper, "If you stand in the midst, in relation, object and subject become as inconstant just as right and left depend upon a reference standpoint." I stand in the midst, in relation to the articles in this special issue and to Manning's work. Writing, in this case to use Ramos, is an "eventing," or as "relation as becoming." Her paper gives us clear direction regarding writing beyond the objective and into the "affective dimensions of experience with all its intricacies." I take her suggestion to experiment seriously knowing that "Textures may be crispy and crowded or fluffy," or (in my case) full of

cracks. Murray's and Gale's invitation to wonder about cracked me open, to experimentally write in ways that attune to the crawl of the under-commons, to expose and resist the brutality of neurotypicality because to wonder about "if the world just can't speak through me at all anymore" can seem very real these days. How can I kill this shit but not anything else? I wonder. Attuning to the "speculative" and the "ever always not yet known" initiates movement to touch, to reach towards and beyond, to individuate or attune to the individuations and vibrations. I squeezed through the membrane, too, but not without some scars and some soreness--difference in-formation. Speaking of difference, as you dear reader might suspect, the blank screen is not the thing that scares me the most with words and writing. For many writers, and as a "teacher" of writing I hear this cry from students, the blank page is the most frightening moment, for it represents possibilities and freedom which can be debilitating in the exhilaration. I do not struggle in that way with words because, as Erin Manning said to me in a conversation, we are never alone when we are writing because we have the people we have read and the words we are producing as our companions. Thus, the biggest foe to writing for me is the chair. The chair disciplines and constrains, it renders me tense, planning for dinner-parties that will never happen. The article by Vasquez and colleagues reveals the corporeality of seemingly common objects. Learning, they exclaim, begins with the chair, and teaching and learning depends upon one's comportment in a chair; otherwise, one might have a collection of "leaky buckets." For the fidgety, klutzy ones, chairs and writing do not mix, but that's their point. Educating in and through chairs is based in the false ideas of neurotypical ways of knowing. "Sit up straight and act right," my dad used to grunt. "You'll always follow behind your brother," he would contest as I sat up straight. My brother and I have a good laugh about all of that now as we stitch and zig-zag memories "paying attention to the back in relation to the front" (Coogler & Guyotte, p. 5) looking for the knots, crewel embroideries and embroidered rhythms through time and memories, as he sends me a video of Billy Porter revealing that once he (Porter) leaned into his femininity, the whole world opened up, thus the sweet fracturing of genders and getting out of the chair. We rejected at an early age the hegemonic masculinity; we neither recognized nor appreciated and rather desired a body and a gender that existed more relationally. The body, as Manning states, is a "verb" rather than a noun, or at least we hope so. Masculinities was a process of ongoing becoming, as techniques of movement, as opportunities for multiple contacts and creations as "events proposed." This reconceptualization by Sweet via Manning invites a fracturing of bodies and movement beyond identity and marking of the body, but as relational and gives us not a sense of freedom or liberation, but room to move and air to breath. It is a long way from the farms of South Dakota and fields Billy Porter, my brother, and the complexity of femininity. It brings forth residues of our mother who would have turned 91 yesterday. She appears to us as a ghost as we sit for dinner at a *Día de Los Muertos* event in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico--a city built with rock that sits on a mound of quartz. We think about the offerings we would present to invite her spirit to return to us. Chocolate cake, medium-raw grilled steak, and a glass of lemonade. She is a portal, indeed, a "gateway between one world and the next" (Osgood et. al.)--she is the subjunctive mood in Spanish. The reverence for the mysterious, obscure, mystical, and the passing of the body through time is a vital aspect of Mexican culture. Time is set aside to reconnect with the dead, and chance

and skepticism seem to me part of the "normal," the "virusing-with" and the "magnetized worldings." We, my brother and I, are children, little boys always in need of their mother in a portal, always becoming, begging for a worlding. Singing, dancing to house music with faces painted like goblins uninterested in the return of innocence, but searching for, attuning to the "haunting minks" of our lives. Mink coats is what my father would like to give my mother for the holidays every year, which seems rather strange now, but for him, as a hunter, it was the perfect gift to show appreciation for her. But, I cannot help but think that my brother and I are just two lads hanging out, like the ones described in Pyyry's paper. We hang out with our husbands and friends we just met waiting for dinner with our faces painted as we await our host, Paty who is an artist in San Miguel and one of my husband's closest long-time friends. We sit in chairs "dwelling with" each other; we are far away from home, and I, too, was "reminded of the power of playfulness and participation, and at the same time, the bound unhomeliness somehow sharpened the sense of being in relation" (Pyyry, this issue). The whole place has become a performance piece, part of the "world rhythms" that Pyyry speaks so eloquently about in her paper. We hang out for hours as I attune to the Spanish and English being spoken, translating for my brother and his husband the best I could as the new forms of relations are being formed in the dwelling. This is anything but our living rooms. We are forced to do "nothing" for the first time in a while and instead move to "non-instrumental engagement with friends, spaces, and things around builds new relations" (Pyyry). We are suspended, feeling the "drifting rhythms of hanging out." It feels great, decadent, and unexpectedly hypnotic. New friendships are forged and "sense-making" becomes "connective" and we "feel the intensity of the world" right there at a party in San Miguel, Mexico with people we hardly know and may never see again. We are living the subjunctive, the interval. The subjunctive mood in Spanish is used to express doubt, desires, wishes, recommendations, and overall grayness or unknowingness in expressions. It's when you don't know for sure that something will happen that one uses the subjunctive. The subjunctive is a bodying that "activates the next incipient movement." It is potential and defies the definite and the "logic of the procedure and extraction." It suspends time because it, as Ravindran so clearly states in her paper, "The subjectivity that emerges in another ecological context enters another event-time but holds traces of the past in its future bodying and becoming." The subjunctive in Spanish propels a wondering about, a subjective pause that initiates a pre-articulation, a fracturing of time, a getting out of the chair. Learning how to use, indeed to embody the subjunctive in Spanish is the key to learning the language. I learn it rather quickly--I think with it--it embodies me. The enabling constraints of a language aid in the subjectivities present. They enable the "chaosmosis," or the "precarious interfacing between the inside and the outside, the fast and the slow, the virtual and the actual" of indeterminacy. . . and of love. The subjunctive is the space for the "not-yet-actual" and "loosens matter" in order to invite the mysterious into social worlds. It is the place of love--it is as Bowstead argues citing Moten and Harney (2004) both necessary and unwelcomed; it is needing what she bears but not being able to "bear what she brings." When thinking of the love I have for my husband, it is answering Nietzsche's question about *amor fati* with a resounding yes, knowing that I could be with this person, experience this life again in exactly this way again. We hop in a car, my husband, our friend Rebecca, and mi suegra, Chelito,

to walk the subjunctive. We travel five hours in a car to walk six miles in San Juan de Los Lagos a place about 2 hours outside of Guadalajara, to give reverence to the subjunctive and express gratitude for its many gifts. We are thankful to be together, and as we arrive, I am struck by so many things, the half-built buildings, the demanding hills, the vibrant street market next to the main cathedral that seems to extend for miles all throughout the city center. I have never been to a place like this. As Roussell et. al. suggest, I attune to the "minor movements" of the people and think of the many different worlds that exist simultaneously and the city seems to buzz with a sort of joyful and robust syncopation. Time doesn't stop but is suspended and carried in the present with the "not-quite-yet." We are suspended between London and Manchester, between Mexico City and so many other places. The six mile walk begins and I'm irritated, tired already, but I understand the task. We move out of the city center and into the outer edges of town and the dust, the force of the hills, and the movement of the market begin to write my body as "a movement of forces and tendencies already partaking in the event through which the work is playing out." The city landscape changes from consumer with lots of shops and stores to industrial with mechanic garages, old worn down hotels, and car-part shops. The struggle to make the useless useful again is real. I am parched, my lips are dry and I try to focus on the Spanish conversation occurring between Mau (my husband) and Rebecca. Can I hear the subjunctive? Can I stick with the polyphony of sounds and textures in this unknown and seemingly inaccessible plane? I hear sounds but I can't make sense of them--there is an "ambience of emptiness" to the walk--a clearing out--a relation to many worldings happening simultaneously. I'm not sure but I think that the infrathin is real here. We keep walking, and I notice that the farther we walked, the life seems to change and the hills remain constant. We hit our half-way point (3 miles), and we celebrate and turn around to head back into the city. I wonder about the many worldings that exists and have existed here--the many vital entanglements between the us and the many worlds. Our intrusion, indeed injection into the city must have seemed more like collective performance than a series of minor gestures and techniques. I struggle to braid together thoughts, make sense of it all, but all I can focus on is the dust, the motorcycles racing by, my heavy eyes, the taste of *cajeta con doble crema* in my mouth, and my shuffling feet. For walking to give reverence and gratitude for one's life can be a powerful technique, subtle changes in the body, in the vibrational affect "can be experienced by everyone present in subtle changes, connections and procedural unfolding of the performance." After two hours of walking, we merge back into the crowded city center and gather at the cathedral. We enter the church and sit three to a pew to witness a catholic service. I sit in a side pew and listen to the service in Spanish, reengage with the subjunctive, and stand in the centrifugal force of the midst again in the "quasi chaotic excess" of the moment. I remain here and as I reflect on this journey, this spiritual experience, I consider the myriad of things that I didn't write about in this commentary, and all of the various drafts, starts and stops, crumbs left on the table, undiscovered mounds of quartz and the unexpected turns this process of worlding took. The "uncharted waters" that Bowstead writes so wonderfully about in her article. I return to Cooger and Guyotte's article to consider their question, "How do you feel about mess?" The messiness of trying to harness language to attune to the interconnectedness of many things. The technicity of writing requires experimentation, to move the techniques beyond

the already defined, to blend concepts and terms into worlds before and through me. I have always felt that Manning's work gives me room to move with ideas and words and matter, gives me permission to move words around like an abstract painting. Like Frank Holliday's loud and boisterous artworks move the 50s abstract scene into the contemporary moment mixed with a delicious irreverence, Manning's work has fundamentally changed how I think about research methodologies, approach teaching my classes, engage with language, and see the world. Thank you, Erin! That is why I am in awe of the articles in this special issue. I have tried to write experimentally, to write as Roussell et. al. state "through the infrathin qualities of the suspension events, as untimely variations that rustle at the edges of perception and intelligibility." To the authors and the editors of this special issue, you have rendered me capable and for that I am grateful.