RYAN O'SHEA

AMBIVALENCE IN PERFORMANCE:

THROUGH CAMP, WITH JOY.

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RYAN O'SHEA
MA PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

**HOME OF
PERFORMANCE
PRACTICES**

2023

SYNOPSIS

Ambivalence in performance: through camp, with joy is a research project interested in discovering the differences between performative ambivalence, performing ambivalence and ambivalence in performance . The research views the etymology and definition of the ambivalence through a lens of contemporary, devised performance. The research investigates the differences surrounding ambivalence in performance using a theoretical framework of camp, placing the tools of drag, queer failure, trash aesthetics and joy inside the framework of camp. After outlining theories of camp, and coining the hybrid word campbivalence, this thesis explore examples of how other performance makers have addressed ambivalence in performances through a camp theoretical framework. The method of practice-as-research was critical to this research and as such, this thesis explains how the process of making several performances over a two year period have helped better define performative ambivalence and performing ambivalence. Finally, as this research project is primarily concerned with performance making a traditional conclusion is abandoned in favour of a useful manual for performance makers in order to situate this research in the rehearsal spaces of performance makers. The thesis also uses a unique writing style of Écriture: Camp, in order to stylistically express and further highlight the importance of camp joy within this research project.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly I would like to thank Pavlos Kountouriotis, Head of the HOME OF PERFORMANCE PRACTICE programme and my supervisor, I'm sure at times I tested his patience but his unbelievable capacity for knowledge and brilliant eye for camp detail has meant this thesis simply could not be written without him.

I must also tank all the other teaching staff of the HOME OF PERFORMANCE PRACTICES payroll, especially Joao de silva for helping me feedbacking, Mariella Greil for truly believing in my writing, to daz disley for the technical knowledge and familiar humour, for Fenia Kotsopoulou for bringing frantic joy into every room we share, to Andrea Pagnes and Verena Stenke of VestAndPage for all the mind opening connections, To Maeve O'Brien Braun for your wonderful, refreshing honesty. To all the supporting staff at HOPP, epically Irina Baldini for all help and insights into making it happen and to Maria Pisiou for all our lovely exchanges.

I would also like to thank my cohort of the programme, it's been a two year journey filled with peaks and valleys but we've travelled these paths together and I couldn't have wished for a better group to challenge and inspire me. I must also mention my mentor Bosse Provoost , thank you for all the provocations.

I have adored the collaborations I've made during this research, a special shout out to the incredibly talented Andrea van der Kuil – thank you for the constant, unwavering support and contagious positive energy. To Antti Uimonen – may we share many more dancefloors together. To Mar Esteban Martin because making work with you fills me with sheer delight, thank you for letting me enter your talents and openness, may we go on and on and on collaborating together.

And my most heartfelt gratitude, goes to my sis Ermis Christodoulou – danke schön for everything; I don't know how I would have made this research happen without your constant encouragement, support and deliciously salty cooking. I don't have the words to express how incredible I think you are and how much I will miss seeing your face every day.

DECLARATION

I, Ryan O'Shea, hereby certify that I had personally carried out the work depicted in the thesis entitled, 'Ambivalence in Performance: Through Camp, With Joy.

No part of the thesis has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma prior to this date.

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INTRODUCTION

ÉCRITURE: CAMP

Écriture Camp is a writing style that I will use throughout this thesis. It is writing an academic text in a camp fashion. So firstly, the quotes will not be in quotation marks as traditional, instead they will be highlighted in pink. I find quotation marks strange in texts, I imagine someone reciting it back to me with their hands clenched and two fingers erect and bending like bunny ears in way that I usually perceive to be either patronising, sarcastic or to elaborately emphasise. That being said, quotation marks are not off the table completely but please note if they are used, then I am being patronising, sarcastic or emphasising elaborately. After all Camp sees everything in quotation marks, it's not a lamp but a "lamp"; not a woman but a "woman" (Sontag, 2018, 2). References, usually trapped inside the quotation marks, are a very important element to Écriture Camp. According the OG academic queen of camp Susan Sontag camp it is all about reference, reference and style: Camp is the love of the exaggerated, the "off", of things-being-what-they-are-not' (Sontag, 2018, 3).

So, in Écriture Camp there will be references galore, an embracing of over-stylisation, quotes will be in pink, sarcasm/emphasis in "quotation marks", italics will be used for titles of performance works or books but also for emphasis, brackets will be used as an aside (imagine a speaker turning to their

left to whisper something funny to their friend in the way eccentric British comedian Harry Hill does in Harry Hills TV Burp). People mentioned in this thesis, be they performers, collaborators or academics will receive a fabulous adjective before their name as a gregarious way of introducing them to the reader. For a full list of how Écriture Camp: Campademic writing abides by and disrupts the academic standard please refer to the table below:

THESIS GUIDELINES	ACADEMIC STANDARD	ÉCRITURE: CAMP. CAMPADEMIC WRITING
Language	1. English (British or American) 2. Academic Tone 3. Free from grammatical, lexical, punction errors 4. proof checked	1. English (occasionally French: The conventional and accepted interpretation of Ware's definition concludes that the word "Camp" has a French etymology (Meyer, 1994, 75)) 2. Campedemic tone 3. Absolutely 4. "Puff"checked (Proof checked by a person who identifies as queer just to check the spelling)
Referencing	1. Harvard Referencing 2. List of references will included all sources 3. No plagiarism	1. References will be quoted using pink colour typeface. No quotation marks for quotes. If quotation marks appear within quotes, this will be respected – The quotes will remain the same. All other areas of Harvard referencing will remain. 2. Agreed. 3. No to plagiarism.
Format Font	1. Avenir, Ariel or Times New Roman	1. Avenir* (it is nice and round, Times New Roman is far too dull and standard)

* Typesetter's note : Avenir Next LT Pro - because it's even nicer.

THESIS GUIDELINES	ACADEMIC STANDARD	ÉCRITURE: CAMP. CAMPADEMIC WRITING
Pagination	1. Pages should be numbered 2. A margin of 4cm Tope and left side 3. Begin each chapter on a new page 4. Do the same with the front matter 5. Avoid headings near the bottom of the page 6. Chapters should begin on anew page but sections and sub sections should not	1. Pages will be numbered 2. Only 2.5CM of margin all around the page. Those who fully embrace camp have been marginalised for two long, more space will be taken (But of course leaving a little room to be considerate, camp is apolitical after all) 3. Each chapter will have a new start so the reader can take a breath, before diving in again. 4. The "front matter" is most important, it will require extra space. 5. Although "headings near the bottom" works as a cheeky innuendo which camp revels in, the aesthetics take precedent. Camp is wholly aesthetic (Sontag, 2018, 10) and as heading towards the bottom could become challenging to read. A new start, a new page. So unfortunately this thesis will avoid "headings near the bottom". 6. Agreed

THESIS GUIDELINES	ACADEMIC STANDARD	ÉCRITURE: CAMP. CAMPADEMIC WRITING
Paragraphs	1. New paragraph should start with an indentation of 6mm 2. Double line spacing 3. Single spacing should be used in tables, block quotations, footnotes and references 4. 6mm between paragraphs. You should not use double carriage returns 5. Paragraphs should be justified to the left and no hyphenation	1. A new paragraph should start with a capital letter only. There will be no indentation to mark a new paragraph. A new paragraph will begin on a new line however. 2. Only 1.5 spacing, the words must take up space, to signify their importance whilst still being easy to read. 3. Agreed 4. 6mm between paragraphs is more than enough. Double carriage returns are accepted but ONLY if the carriages are gold The whole point of Camp is to dethrone the seriousness (Sontag, 2018, 10). 5. Paragraphs should be justified by the writer only (Camp sensibility is… at least apolitical (Sontag, 2018, 2). The paragraphs should be aligned to the left side of the page however. No hyphenation.
Captions & Numbering	1. A figure/table should carry a number and a title clearly describing what is being presented 2. Images should carry a number and a caption that clearly attributes it the original producer of the work 3. Numbering of tables will be consecutively 4. First page should include: MA Thesis, Student Name, Year of Graduation, HOPP logo, dissertation title, MA performance Practices, Student name, Year of Graduation	1. A figure should be treated with caution, a good title is always appreciated. 2. Images will be labelled with a number and a fun caption (Camp taste is, above all, a mode of enjoyment (Sontag, 2018, 13). No one is original, darling, but the person who took the image will be correctly credited. 3. Numbering of tables is not relevant but images will be numbered consecutively 4. Agreed

THESIS GUIDELINES	ACADEMIC STANDARD	ÉCRITURE: CAMP. CAMPADEMIC WRITING
Digital Submission	1. Students need to submit on the share point folder 2. The title needs to be as follows: YY_MM_DD_ DissertationbyPractice_ Thesis_Student Name	1. Agreed 2. Agreed

Figure 1: Table comparing the HOME academic standard with Écriture Camp standard.

The usage of camp has become a large part of my artistic practice and a cornerstone during the two years studying at the HOME OF PERFORMANCE PRACTICES master. The performances I have made have utilised camp as a theoretical framework, mixing humour and style with reference as a way of paying homage to my British background with an irreverence and self-deprecation; a way of rooting projects in queerness, of celebrating the seriously unserious, a method of joy. Écriture Camp, echoing the term Écriture féminine coined by French author Hélène Cixous to disrupt traditional styles of masculine writing, is a method to disrupt traditional styles of academic writing. Through dethroning the seriousness of academia, Écriture camp remains very serious it's function to encapsulate the spirit of my research project and its effect and role within the academic discourse. Écriture Camp is not an attack or critique of academia but more over a respectful reframing, a playful aside that reflects my two-year artistic research journey.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND PARAMETERS

This research engages with the question What are the differences between: performativity of ambivalence, performing ambivalence and ambivalence in performance?

I will use renowned gender theorist Judith Butler's definition of gender performativity as an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instated through a stylized repetition of acts (Butler, 2018, 270) as a definition for the word performativity. Performativity is constructed through a repeated series of stylised acts. This research is interested in how a materiality of ambivalence can be constructed through a repetition of specific stylised acts. With the term performing ambivalence however, I am interested in using ambivalence as a tool for performance, understanding if the term can carry performative elements by literally performing ambivalence. The third term ambivalence in performance engages with the two previous terms, questioning whether it is even possible for an audience to feel, to understand, to grasp, to sense ambivalence within performance work.

The etymology of the word ambivalence comes from Latin ambi- "both, on both sides" (see ambi-) + valentia "strength," (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2001). Therefore, ambivalence is a word that deals with a duality and strength suggesting that two things running parallel have equal strength. The Cambridge dictionary definition of ambivalence is: The state of having two opposing feelings at the same time, or being uncertain about how you feel. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023a). Ambivalence is a word interested in a duality of feelings whilst also indicating that there is equality within that duality; if one feeling were stronger it would no longer be ambivalence. This research is interested in ambivalence within a performance setting, a performance setting mainly rooted in contemporary, devised theatre. It is important to make clear

that this research is not interested in the sociology of the broad term of ambivalence nor is it interested in the wider linguistic field or psychology of ambivalence. Specifically, this research is interested in looking at ambivalence through the lens of contemporary devised performance work. The research is not interested in ambivalence outside of the parameters of performance. However, within the lens of performance it is important to eliminate ambivalence from the perspective of the performer in this research, specifically understanding that the performer(s) have knowledge of the frame in which they are performing inside of. This is not a research about putting performers into unknown situations, ambivalent from their perspective . Furthermore, another parameter to add would be the exclusion of confusion from this research, confusion implies and unknowing whereas ambivalence is very different, it has two strands and both have strength, both strands know exactly what they are.

To clarify my view of ambivalence that this research will be dealing with, I have prepared a few examples of ambivalence viewed through the specific lens of performance:

Example 1: Subtitles. Using subtitles in a physical performance where the words being projected don't necessarily align with the physical movements of performers happening within one frame. Strength in both subtitles and physically being used simultaneously. The performance *GUERRILLA (2016)* by wonderful Spanish company *El Conde de Torrefiel* uses this

technique throughout.

Example 2: The theatrical technique of lip syncing. The audience has an understanding, a knowledge that that the performer is not using their own voice, a knowledge that the voice is coming from an outside source. However, in the technique of lip syncing, the perform embodies the voice of an outside source. Both detached elements (the performers lips and the voice coming from outside of the body) have strength. The theatrical works by lip sync extradentary *Dicky Beau* are stupendous examples.

Example 3: DIY Drag personas. Drag personas carry an inherent ambivalence, which is amplified with a DIY, or basic, or quick, or trashy drag aesthetic. Audiences can understand that the performer is not intending to become another gender but rather play with, exaggerate, heighten, or amplify gendered characteristics resulting in a strength of two simultaneous gendered codifiers. Annette Curtains, a drag persona from Bristol's fabulous Tom Marshman, serves as a good example.

Example 4: Voiceover. The theriacal technique of voice being heard but not coming directly from the performer on stage. There is the strong element of voice that an audience understands is not coming from the performer(s) and the strong element of the performer(s) themselves. An example of this technique being played with in the form of audio

description is Louise Ahl (previously known as Ultimate Dancer)'s: *For Now We See Through A Mirror, Darkly. (2018)*

Example 5: Headphones. Working with headphones can create immersive environments that can create an ambivalence in performance settings. The device can be used to create a sense of non-diegetic sound detaching audiences from what they are visually seeing in their environments and what they are. A recent example of this non-diegetic headphone technique in action would be *Golden Age* (2023) by performance makers' Igor Cardellini and Tomas Gonzalez, a performance in the form of a guided walking tour of a shopping centre.

Example 6: Projection. Projecting video in a performance with physical performers that creates a detachment. There is both strength in the video projection and strength in performers performing. Performance makers' Bert and Nasi employ this technique in their performance The End (2019).

This is by no means a definitive list of examples of ambivalence in performance. However, it clarifies my viewpoint of ambivalence when looking through the lens of performance making. In these examples, there is an understanding of two strong elements, layers, notions that when brought simultaneously in conjunction with one another create a feeling or perception that's greater than the sum of its parts. In these examples (such as example 1: subtitles), the repetition of the

acts, such as the repetition of sentences that form the subtitles themselves, points to the performativity of ambivalence whilst at the same, time, this performativity of ambivalence has an effect on the physical performer(s), meaning they are literally performing ambivalence. Subtitle after subtitle after subtitle after subtitle is a repetition of acts and this repetition of acts, or performativity, coupled with the ambivalence of action in performers performing something different (the fact that the performers are not literally performing as subtitles) creates a performing of ambivalence.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

To further investigate the differences between performativity of ambivalence and performing ambivalence, I have employed the following methods of research: practice-as-research, engagement with academic theory, watching performances and feedbacking.

Practice-as-research: I see this research as a culmination of many different performances, the process involved to make the performances and the aftermath of experience after the performances. In short: It's all about performances. Some performances have had a long process (months of rehearsals and collaboration), other performances were thrown together in a matter of hours It is important that these two types of performance hold the same weight in this research, something made very quickly (or a "spit ball"

performance as I like to call them) hold the same validity as the final performance, months in the making. Taking time to digest material, to disseminate what is being conjured in the rehearsal room, has been an important practice in the longer performances process. However, digestion plays a key role in the aftermath of the small "spit ball" performances too, they might be small in hours of process but not necessarily in the après processing. I use the term digesting as the process of digestion is the bodily process of breaking down food in order to obtain nutrients that humans need to fuel them. I will aim to this with my performance process too, breaking them down in order to obtain what is useful and considering how it can be used as fuel for the research.

Engaging with academic theory: Through engagement of academic theory I am able to create a theoretical framework that underpins the research project. By engaging, specifically with theories on camp and on joy, methods for research and the terminology needed to articulate the research is clarified.

Watching of Performances: watching performances gives an insight into what is practically happening in the field. This is a research project rooted in the practice of making performance therefore it is imperative to watch performances and understand what techniques have been employed by makers and how these techniques can relate to performative ambivalence or performing ambivalence. I

will then take these techniques back into the studio to further explore ambivalence. These examples will pepper this thesis, steering the research further into a practical field and further helping define the importance of a public audience upon this research project.

Feedbacking: I use feedback as a method to survey the audience in order to understand how audiences received ambivalence within the performance work. The research is centred around defining terms of ambivalence and the audience plays an important role in defining such definitions. Feedbacking also gave room for opinions and other theoretical references to be revealed, what audiences associate with the performance can reveal if ambivalence as a feeling was present.

URGENCY OF RESEARCH

Ambivalence occurs often in performance work and it is my desire for the research to highlight where ambivalence occurs and think about how it can be utilised. Going back to the wonderous Susan Sontag: One must distinguish between naïve and deliberate camp. Pure camp is always naïve. Camp which knows itself to be camp ("camping") is usually less satisfying. (Sontag, 2018, 6). If I may be so bold as to take this thinking, apply it to ambivalence and then reverse it; it would result in a desire for a deliberate ambivalence. Performance makers are dabbling in ambivalence in many different ways,

if it became possible to target ambivalence and to apply it deliberately, then performances could be enriched by ambivalence rather than ambivalence being a by-product of the performance.

Ambivalence is a term often confused with ambiguity, a term that has a history of usage within historical theatre discourses. I will briefly switch lanes to ambiguity in order to briefly take stock of the discourse that can then lay a foundation upon which a discourse around ambivalence might, in the future, be built upon. Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique was a literal theatre built in Paris in 1770, it heralded a turn in theatre ambiguity was very en-vougevogue. Rooted in comedy, Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, gave the audience many signifiers for the audience interpret as they wish, an example of such signifiers could be the cross-dressing element of Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, a hangover from Shakespearean and Elizabethan era theatre and used to create comic ambiguity in the 18th century. Comic ambiguity evolved into a genre with coded character types such as the trickster.

In Trickster narratives, ambiguity plays an important role in structuring relationships between images and is a key component of the metaphoric process which untimely develops themes.
(Konrad, 2015, 89)

Academic Zinta Konrad writes in Ewe Comic Heroes (1994) that trickster narratives are purposefully ambiguous. She

explains that there are two different types of trickster ambiguity: the "conjunctive ambiguity" occurs when separate meanings are jointly effective in interpretation. (ibid) while, "Disjunctive ambiguity" on the other hand, features opposite meanings as alternatives in the process of interpretation. (ibid). Taking into account two versions of comic ambiguity that Konrad believes occur within trickster narratives, it is clear to see a relationship between comic ambiguity and the term ambivalence in performance. In both "conjunctive" and "disjunctive" narratives there are strong signifiers creating meanings from different directions. By using this historical foundation, I aim to build a new term ambivalence in performance, which address two strong thought, feeling or signifiers and exposes them simultaneously within the framework of performance.

STRUCTURE

In chapter 1. I will discuss how academic theories on camp lead to me to consider how camp is inherently ambivalent thus leading me to the term *campbivalence* (camp, ambivalence). I will then use theories to discuss the politics of camp, arguing that camp is ambivalent in its politics and therefore vital for queer performance contexts.

In chapter 2, I will bring forward specific examples of *campbivalence* in other artists, going deeper into the process of making performance work and explaining the

importance of embracing the techniques of queer failure and trash aesthetics in relation to the political importance of campbivalence.

In chapter 3, I will discuss my own performance projects, based on the knowledge gained from theory and through experiencing other makers' performance work. I will then begin to make my own discoveries through the method of performance making. I will specifically look at how finding the joy within the ordinary became a technique of campbivalence.

Instead of a conclusion, there will be a practical manual for performance makers. This list of exercises, methods and techniques places this thesis back into a realm of performance making. It's a rallying call for other performance makers interested in camp and interested in ambivalence to take these pages and use them in the rehearsal room. This whole research has relied heavily on the method of practice-as-research and theretofore it's vital that the conclusion of this research exists as a means to practically develop future performance work. A feeding forward in a practical, tangible, comprehensible way.

CHAPTER 1: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF CAMP

I will begin by explaining the term: campbivalence as I use it throughout this thesis. Campbivalence is a hybrid term made from the words camp and ambivalence. They are terms that both hold equal strength in the research and by fusing them together I am further highlighting the performativity of ambivalence .

CAMP

Camp theory pioneer Susan Sontag states Camp sensibility is disengaged, depoliticized – or at least apolitical (Sontag, 2018, 2). In the book The Politics and Poetics of Camp (1994) the inquisitive academic Moe Meyer argues that this isn't the case at all. Camp is both political and critical (Meyer, 1994, 1) Meyer suggests that camp is inherently political due to its deep roots within queer culture.

> *With it's homosexual connotations downplayed, sanitized, and made safe for public consumption, Sontag's version of camp was extolled, emulated, and elaborated upon in a flurry of writing on the subject.*
> *(Meyer, 1994, 7)*

Meyer feistily attacks Susan Sontag's downplaying of the role of queerness within camp. Meyer thinks Sontag's version of camp (written in 1964) should not be heralded among

academics as the "bible of camp". There are no different kinds of camp. There is only one. And it is queer. (Meyer, 1994, 5). Meyer insists. The book The Politics and Poetics of Camp (1994) serves as an attempt to re-write the discourse on camp, a discourse occupied chiefly by Susan Sontag. While I agree with Meyer that camp is inherently queer and can be political, I disagree that camp is monolithic, that it is only one thing. It's all about dualities, doubles, things-being what-they-are-not (Sontag, 2018, 3) If I take Meyer's political, queer perspective but also Sontag's insistence that camp is all about aestheticism and artifice, then the artform of drag can become an exciting arena in which to play out these dialogues on camp. Although it's important to state that not all drag is camp nor does drag entirely encompass the meaning of camp. In this research I use camp as a theoretical framework and I use drag as an artform to pull out examples of camp and ambivalence. Drag is an artform, a tool to propel the research forward.

Queer theory enthusiast Jorge Sandoval distinguishes the relationship between gender theory pioneer Judith Butler's performativity of gender and the operation of drag. When discussing drag, it's imperative to understand that drag becomes a performance of gender rather than an imitation of an original gender, whatever that would be. (Sandoval, 2018, 102). Sandoval uses Butler to demonstrate that drag is interested in performativity not imitation . Drag is not about

recreating or becoming a gender, it's about using stylised acts of gender and playing with them in performance. There is strength in using the stylised acts of gender and strength in playing with them resulting in duality of strength; ambivalence. This ambivalence can be viewed as camp if the drag performer not only plays with the performance of gender but does so by playing with aestheticism and artifice. Drag is also an artform that is inherently political as Sandoval outlines Drag has been culturally attached to gestures of resistance when referring to gender politics, as in the case of the Stonewall Riots in 1969 (ibid). Within a camp discourse, drag becomes a prime tool to explore expressions of campiness and politics, planting itself in the middle ground between the theories of Butler and Meyer.

QUEER FAILURE & TRASH AESTHETICS

Drag, however, is not the only tool that can be planted in this middle ground; both queer failure and trash aesthetics are political tools too, loaded with ambivalence and sitting, perhaps slightly messily, within the critical framework of camp. Queer failure and trash aesthetics were employed within the first year of the research to start to define the term campbivalence; exploring through performance, how failure and trash aesthetics when viewed through the lens of camp highlights ambivalence.

The marvellous academic Jack Halberstam describes the

queer art of failure:

The queer art of failure turns on the impossible, the improbable, the unlikely, and the unremarkable. It quietly loses, and in losing it imagines other goals for life, for love, for art, and for being.
(Halberstam, 2013, 88)

By turning on the impossible, by quietly losing, queer performers can take something that can be seen as negative in the eyes of a heteronormative society (failure, loosing, being un-remarkable) and flips it through queerness into something positive (for love, for art, for being). The fabulous queer author Jose Muñoz writes that queer failure is closely linked with concepts of virtuosity, that queerness is inherently about failure, failure from the heteronormative agenda, failure to obtain normative virtuosity, but in this failure a new (more exiting) virtuosity is born, a virtuosity of awareness and openness.

Failure and virtuosity are both equally important aspects of queer utopia or queerness as utopian. Queer utopia is not just a failure to achieve normative virtuosity: it is also a virtuosity that is born in the face of failure within straight time's measure.
(Muñoz, 2009, 177)

In the failure to achieve normative virtuosity, queer performers mark themselves as other. It is the element of othering, which marks out queer failure as an important discourse, a discourse that embraces failure in a heteronormative society that is always attempting to reject failure. The late academic Richard Dyer in Fabio Cleto's fabulous collection of camp theory, Camp (1999), writes Identity and togetherness, fun and wit, self-protection and thorns in the flesh of straight society - these are the pluses of camp. (Dyer, 1999, 111). Like Munoz's virtuosity, Dyer is explaining that otherness, or societal "thorns", becomes a key ingredient to the concept of queer failure. Another tool that embraces queer failure and can effectively be viewed through the lens of camp is trash aesthetics. After all, camp is all about aesthetics.

Trash connoisseur Emily Colucci of website Filthy Dreams makes clear the link between failure and trash aesthetics. Failure is inexorably linked with trash whether literal garbage, cheaply made throwaway items, economic stagnation or ignorance of good taste. (Colucci, 2017). The throwaway quality speaks to a queer generation, of turning something that has failed, trash, and turning into treasure that can succeed. Trash aesthetics also revels in ambivalence, It's multi-purpose-ness, the old meaning of what the trash was and the new meaning for it is now being used for. There is strength in the two dualities of trash when it is repurposed. Colucci rummages further in the rubbish bin, stating: Trash can arrive uninvited–a naïve, sincere vision of bad taste (ibid). The naivety of trash, like the naivety of camp which Sontag references, further exposes the ambivalence of queer failure

via trash aesthetics. Within the critical framework of camp, the tools of drag, queer failure and trash aesthetics have been located. Joy is the fourth tool I would like to plant within that framework.

JOY

As Richard dyer expressed in the above quote, fun and wit are also important ingredients in camp. As Sontag confirms: The whole point of camp is to dethrone the serious (Sontag, 2018, 10). Therefore I plant the term joy into the critical framework of camp. The eminent writer of various queer topics, Sara Ahmed discusses the slippery nature of happiness: Happiness can arrive in a moment and be lost by virtue of its recognition (Ahmed, 2010, 33). By recognising happiness, by pointing it out, by thinking about it, happiness itself is at risk of being lost. It's an interesting contradiction which immediately makes me think about the song No Choir (2018) by the sensational British pop/rock group Florence and the Machine And it's hard to write about being happy. 'Cause, the older I get, I find that happiness is an extremely uneventful subject. (Florence and The Machine, 2018). The opening lyrics of this quietly brilliant track, echoes Ahmed's thoughts on the elusive nature of happiness. I rather love the song because it amplifies the mundane, banality of happiness. That happiness could be simply being in the company of others unaware of one's own joy. And there will be no grand

choirs to sing, No chorus could come in, About two people sitting doing nothing. (Florence and The Machine, 2018). Much like Sontag discusses about camp: Pure camp is always naïve. Camp which knows itself to be camp ("camping") is usually less satisfying (Sontag, 2018, 6), Joy (via thinking from Florence And The Machine and Sara Ahmed) could then be described thus; Pure joy is always naïve. Joy which knows itself to be joy is usually less satisfying. When attempting to be joyful, when joy is forced, it can easily become strained, uncomfortable, even possibly harbouring the opposite effect. *Ahmed* sums it up: You feel happy, not quite knowing why, and the feeling can be catchy, as a kind of brimming over that exceeds what you encounter. (Ahmed, 2010, 33) the excess quality of joy mixed with its characteristics of unknown-ness makes it a ripe tool for performance with the framework of camp.

Frenetic writer on the subject of laugher and psychoanalyst Nuar Alsadir begins her intoxicating book about laughter: *Animal Joy (2022)* with a quote from *George Orwell:* A thing is funny… when in some way that is not actually offensive or frightening -it upsets the established order. Every joke is a tiny revolution. (Orwell in Alsadir, 2022, 1). This quote demonstrates that there is ambivalence in laughter just as Ahmed discusses that there is ambivalence in happiness; that happiness can be happening and one does not understand why, that the moment one tries to understand the moment is

lost. According to the Cambridge dictionary, joy is defined as Great happiness. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023b). Alsadir goes on to discuss her experiences at a clown school and describes anecdotes of humorous intersections with her daughter but also attempts to navigate our messy world, often citing Donald Trump in relation to psychoanalysis. I particularly enjoyed the book for its celebration of the ordinary, by putting a conversation with her daughter side by side with an analysis of Freud, Alsadir is unafraid to expose the everyday, or ordinary experiences; uncovering the complicated, messy, brilliant tissue of life.

Within the critical framework of camp I have highlighted the important tools of drag, queer failure, trash aesthetics and joy. I will then find examples of performance makers using these tools.

CHAPTER 2: EXAMPLES OF CAMPBIVALENCE

Annette Curtain is the drag persona of legendary Bristol darling and good friend Tom Marshman. One of the things that differentiates Annette from the high-end polish and glamour of the drag queens from cultural phenomenon *RuPauls* Drag Race is how rudimentary the drag elements are. She fits into this little shoebox really, pair of slippers, that dress that folds up really neatly, pair of tights, she's just like… there. (Marshman, 2023). Marshman proudly told me in a recent interview. Annette Curtain is a nosey-neighbour character with a severe Bristol accent; an older matriarch, in charge of her domestic dwelling. Working class and witty, her favourite pastime of peeping through the net curtains to see what the neighbours are up to speaks to a generation of yesteryear. Perhaps Marshman would agree with Meyer that camp is inherently political as when discussing *Annette's* reginal accent and the early roots of the character, Tom says: Those voices are still very under represented. (ibid). Demonstrating that Marshman feels that drag can be used as a tool to voice the underrepresented and therefore a political tool, a tool that can used to change status quo's. Tom neatly boils down the essence of the character of Annette, and uses these essences (wig, pair of tights, slippers, that dress that folds up really neatly, the glasses) as rudimentary beacons

of gender performativity, infused with political undertones in the form of a thick, Bristolian working-class accent.

Paul O'Grady and Barry Humphries the men behind the famous drag personas of Lilly Savage and Dame Edna Everage, respectively, also employ similar operations of gender performativity. Both died recently and I have been watching old videos of Lilly Savage ad-libbing as she would simultaneously "read" an audience and have them doubled-over in hysterics.

When Lily Savage or Dame Edna Everage stalk onto the stage and fascinate their terrorized audience they are recreating for us one of the oldest of our totems, becoming emblems of the unseen but ever present tension between order and chaos.
(Baker in Sandoval, 2018, 112)

The late great queer author Roger Baker goes onto explain this in DRAG: A history of female impressionism (1994). Savage's and Everage's ability to terrorize and fascinate their audience employs the operation of ambivalence; an audience laughing, loving, terrified they might be singled out, picked next, gleeful when it happens, horrified that it is happening. It is also an operation that echoes that of comic ambiguity, that of the archetypal trickster character giving off two strong signals at the same time: to terrorise and to fascinate.

When I spoke with Tom Marshman recently, we discussed Lilly Savage, her resemblance to Annette Curtain and a

lineage of representing underrepresented working-class older female voices. Annette Curtain was a character with in-built ambivalence, Seemingly judgemental but actually with a very open attitude towards difference (Marshman, 2023). This juxtaposition in humour echoed the tension between order and chaos (Baker in Sandoval, 2018, 112) that was present in Everage and Savage while eking out comedy through the concept of comic-ambiguity. The mode of a drag which champions the working class, matriarchal woman is one of pure campbivalence. Camp in the usage of drag and ambivalent in humour.

Other notable players in the field of campbivalence include Charity Shop Sue, a character created by Selina Mosinski who (with wig and reginal, working class British accent) documents the shenanigans of managing a second hand clothing (or charity shop) in Nottingham. Whilst Charity Shop Sue isn't defined as a drag queen, she amplifies the performance of gender by highlighting, like Annette Curtains, specific gendered signifiers. Charity Shop Sue is notably different however, existing primarily outside of queer spaces, gaining notoriety through videos on social media platforms. Placing Charity Shop Sue within the framework of camp would therefore align her closer to Sontag's un apolitical assertions on camp and not align so closely with Meyer's assertions that Camp is solely a queer discourse (Meyer, 1994, 1).

Someone who might locate themselves closer to Meyer's hard-lined camp camp, would be infamously divine drag performance artist David Hoyle, who takes political camp to an extreme by employing methods of shock, offence and aggression. Ben Walters from British newspaper The Guardian once described Hoyle as:

> *A kind of anti-drag queen whose lacerating social commentary – targeting both bourgeois Britain and the materialistic-hedonistic gay scene, which he called "the biggest suicide cult in history" – was offset by breath-taking instances of self-recrimination and even self-harm.*
> *(Walters, 2010)*

Hoyle's outrageousness harks to something unflinchingly political. Hoyle uses elements of drag (the embellishing of character, obvious wig, extreme make-up) But unlike Annette, Savage or Everage or Charity Shop Sue, Hoyle is not interested in presenting a female working class matriarch. Hoyle's "drag" is far more messy, taking elements of drag and subverting them to become grotesque, terrifying, emblems; the wig is luminous, the make-up preposterous, the character monstrous. David Hoyle rises like a creature from the black lagoon, swamped with signifiers that play with the performing of gender, camp signifiers. But it's Hoyle's unflinching political views and sometimes aggressive confrontations with audiences, that make Hoyle an icon of political camp. These coded signifiers aren't just loaded with politics, there

also emblems of trash aesthetic and queer failure. The messy grotesques aesthetic fails unsubtly to fit into any kind of societal norm. Hoyle takes Dyer's notion of camp being thorns in the flesh of straight society (Dyer, 1999, 111) and uses trash aesthetic, drag, and queer failure to sharped those thorns into a knifes .

CHAPTER 3: OWN PERFORMANCE EXAMPLES

XPAT

There was a gap in the research, a need, a desire to fully embrace and investigate the tool of drag in order to understand how it could sit inside the theoretical framework of camp. There became a need to playfully perform with gender but without totally ignoring the political, queer roots of Meyer's definition of camp. Welcome to the stage: XPat. XPat is a drag character I created in the second year of research. Born from the gap, XPat (like Annette Curtain) utilises rudimentary drag signifiers to demonstrate her camp. A red Sharon Osborn-esq wig was chosen, accompanied with several white pearl necklaces and an outfit that conformed only to the colours of red, white and blue (the colours of both the British and Netherlands notational flags). Just before going onstage for the first time as XPat I looked in the mirror, and decided I did not look eccentric enough, the gender performativity was coming across (to my horror) as subtle. XPat needed to embrace some trash aesthetics. I looked around the dressing room and there it was, a roll of pink gaffer tape. I rudimentarily tore two pieces off and stuck them on my forehead. The exaggerated eyebrows were perfect: clownish, monstrous, unrealistic, failing queerly as eyebrows and most importantly they were two pink emblems of camp

written at large on my forehead, XPat's face was now a just little garish; a small homage to Hoyle.

Savage's, Everage, and Annette Curtain's ability to interact with audiences, to create a playfully ambivalent tension was right at the core of making XPat. For this feeling of campbivalence to be discovered in XPat, I made sure her first appearance at: *XPat's Table Top Cabaret (2023)*, left a large portion of the performance to be plunging a microphone into the faces of the audience members, chatting, improvising, provoking. Although the first audience of XPat were mostly people I knew, making it a relatively safe space to try out such ideas, the tension by audience members of not wanting to be singled out by being asked a question was still rife, making XPat an ingénue to the comically-ambiguous narrative of the trickster. The method of feedback was used when I spoke to some audience members afterwards, there seemed to be a consensus that I could have been braver, more political, less apologetic, even more political.

Politics, however, already formed a large role in the creation of XPat: a character that has pride in being British whilst attacking British politics. Especially critical of Brexit the political separation that ousted her from the UK causing her to be an expat. I explored this in the final song of the cabaret, changing the lyrics of the song *Shoutout to my Ex* by Britisg girl group Little Mix to Shoutout to my Expats: Including other

lyrics such as: Shoutout to the BrEXit, you're really quite the shit, you made my heartbreak and that made me want to quit. (O'Shea, 2023). This song was rallying call for leaving your homeland, for crossing borders and an acknowledgement of something that caused pain whilst simultaneously being a positive force of change. This ambivalence was wrapped up in a pop song with changed lyrics delivered by a drag character marked as campbivalence.

XPat used methods of audience interaction (à la Savage & Humphries), political attack (à la David Hoyle) and rudimental drag (à la Annette Curtain & Charity Shop Sue) in order to create dualities that were both camp and ambivalent. In order to truly explore camp, I used the tool of drag and mixed in tools of queer failure and trash aesthetics and then poured in a large dose of humour and joy because as camp academic Kate Davy explains using a quote from mother of camp writing: Esther Newton defines camp as a system of humour, stating that "the drag queen is it's natural exponent". (Davy in Meyer, 1994, 134). Through the research, I identified that the tool of drag could be used in performance to align with both Sontag's and Meyer's definitions of camp illuminating a gap in the research. A gap that I filled with drag character XPat. I discovered that Camp taste is a kind of love, love for human nature (Sontag, 2018, 13) and that Camp is both political and critical (Meyer, 1994, 1) and these can be expressed ambivalently, simultaneously with strength in both

Figure 2: XPat speaking to the audience at XPat's table top Cabaret (2023).
Image credit: Steef Kersbergen.

trains of thought. I therefore plant XPat within the camp field as a contribution, that drag is a useful tool to explore camp. There are still some gaps however, I would like to explore how XPat can exist outside of queer spaces (à la Charity Shop Sue) to truly test Meyer's theory that The un-queer do not have access to the discourse on camp (Meyer, 1994, 1). 1

DONATELLA AND THE TOUR

In the performance piece *Donatella (2022)*, I was exploring the theatrical technique of lip-syncing but through the research method of feedbacking, discovered the power of ambivalence within the tool of trash aesthetics . In *Donatella*, I lip sync to a video I found of fashion icon Donatella Versace guiding a camera crew around her house in Milan whilst being asked questions in the unintentionally hilarious (naïvely camp) Vouge video series *73 Questions With Donatella Versace (2018)*. Her answers are ludicrous but her seriousness is unwavering. I recreated this video with the sentiment of queer failure in mind, splitting the audio into two parts and only lip syncing the Donatella dialogue whilst guiding the audience through the residency space our HOME OF PERFORMANCE PRACTICES Master cohort were using in Venice. Not only was I unintentionally failing to synchronise my lips to the audio, I was intentionally failing to recreate the aesthetics of the video. I failed to bring high heels with me to the residency which meant I had to make some (*Donatella* references the

importance of wearing heels in the video). I achieved this in rudimental fashion with blocks of wood taped (with shinny blue gaffer tape) around my shoes. Receiving feedback from this performance, a lecturer pointed at me as if calling me "Trash, trash, trash" before finally finding the term… "I'm thinking of trash aesthetics". The incident was one of hilarity amongst our cohort (my serious face, bewildered facial expression added comic ambivalence to the situation). Trash aesthetics though soon revealed to me a campbivalence ; camp is all about aesthetics: Camp is a certain mode of aestheticism. It is one way of seeing the world of aesthetic phenomenon (Sontag, 2018, 2) and trash aesthetics have their own queer-coded campery when used in a performance.

On the same residency came the performance *The Tour (2022);* inspired by the method of guiding an audience and the camp trash laden aesthetic of *Donatella*, and inspired by the camp gestures that radiate from Italian tour guides. The Tour perhaps best epitomises the term campbivalence; as the audience listened via headphones to a banal, pre-recorded text, describing encounters I had witnessed in a steam-of-consciousness mode of delivery, they were toured around a picturesque island in Venice. I, as the tour guide, outfitted myself in a voiceless persona that seemed to be talking a lot. The surface-level persona of the tour guide was accompanied by gestures and gesticulations that oozed charisma. My tour guide persona failed as a tour guide; they

walked too fast, pointed out un-relevant material (treating a rubbish bin as if it was the Sistine Chapel), not explaining anything at all and in a climax of failure, abandoning the tour group visible and vulnerable on an open-air stage in the middle of a busy piazza. The marvellous Jack Halberstam outlines a link between camp and queer failure: Failure presents an opportunity rather than a dead end; in true camp fashion, the queer artist works with rather than against failure (Halberstam, 2013, 96). The embracing of failure only goes onto amplify the camp in *The Tour (2022)*, working with the failure to create a camp persona whilst at the same time creating ambivalence through the method of detaching the voice via a pre-recorded soundtrack. Essentially, the audience are hearing one context whilst seeing a completely different context; with both contexts having equal strength. Both *Donatella (2022) and The Tour (2022)* were made in a few days at the end of the first year of the research, these "spit ball" performances demonstrate a progression in research topics. I arrived at *Donatella (2022)*; gifting me trash aesthetics, using both trash aesthetics and queer failure, I incorporated these into my fascination of detachment to arrive at *The Tour (2022),* a performance that exudes campbivalence. Through using trash aesthetics and queer failure as tools, performances can visually expose the artifice of camp immediately, directing audiences to the sensation of ambivalence formed through camp.

AS IT WAS AND COWS CLOUDS CHAOS

Through Alsadir's writing style and psychoanalytical reflections on joy and with phenomenology of Ahmed's ambivalent approach to happiness, another gap in the research was found. Joydinary (or finding the Joy within the ordinary) first manifested itself as a writing style created by noticing small moments of joy and writing them down. This text was then edited and eventually became the opening scene of the performance As It Was (2022). The text is delivered as subtitles projected onto the backs of myself and *Mar Esteban Martin* who co-devised the piece. After a few minutes of joydinary subtitles Mar and I take a walk around the perimeter of the playing space - we do this circle 4 or 5 times all the while muttering so the audience can't quite hear what we are saying. This became a joydinary and ambivalent moment for the performance, as there was banality equally in the writing style and in the action (there is strength in both the text and in the action of walking). Sontag states: What was banal, with the passage of time, can become fantastic (Sontag, 2018, 8). The passage of time was explored in *As It Was (2022)* through the pacing and punctuation of each scene. The joydinary subtitles in scene 1, offers little physical action conditioning the audience into a state of banality, then in scene 2, Mar and I walk in a circle whispering to each other offering only physical action with no audible words; the exclusion of verbal, contextualising text amplified the

banal-ness. The banal-ness in tempo then gives way to an energetic dance sequence between Mar, myself and a plastic sheet. This dance becomes the fantastic reward to the banal passage of time, framed at the beginning with the joydinary text. The ending of *As It Was (2022)* returns to a banal tempo as Mar and I lay the plastic sheet flat and slowly approach the audience dragging the plastic sheeting across the floor, from the back of the playing space. The audience begins to laugh when at this moment the *Andrea Boceli's Con te Partirò* plays as Mar and I slowly ebb closer towards the audience. The laughter comes from the serious expressions on the faces of the performers whilst at the same time, over-the-top classical music comes out of nowhere and a knowing sense that the plastic sheet will completely envelope the audience as it creeps closer. There is strength in the elements of camp music, serious expressions and absurd action. Sontag explains: In naïve or pure camp, the essential element is seriousness, a seriousness that fails. (Sontag, 2018, 7). The seriousness of the performers expression coupled with the outlandish, juxtaposing music causes joy. This campbivalence is heightened by the using the plastic sheet, a small homage to trash aesthetics. The joy expressed through laughter of the audience is rooted in signifiers signifying strength simultaneously. Laughter, explains Alsadir threatens authority – the authority of others, but also of the self. (Alsadir, 2022, 121). The authority in *As it Was (2022)* can be viewed as the

seriousness of the performance installed in the banality of the opening scenes. The laughter threatens this authority in joyous way. Laughter become a highlighter of the camp in this context. Starting with joy in the ordinary form my perspective as a maker (the self) , the performance ends in joy as a collective through laughter.

In *Cows Clouds Chaos*, a performance piece that became the final project of the first year of research, I once again applied the writing style of finding the joy within the ordinary. The audience were listening to pre-recorded soundtrack filled with everyday encounters and delivered in a humdrum voice. Whilst listening to this the audience were experiencing a tour of the ArtEZ art school, starting in the canteen and leading to a rehearsal space where they encountered a group of 12 students, playing improvised games that slowly developed into a pre-choreographed dance routine. The audience were then escorted out of the building where they were re-joined by the performers and exposed to a plastic sheet which they were invited to interact with. The song *Oh Baby* by *LCD Soundsystem* played loudly, emphatically, directly into the heads of the audience.

To take in reality and look from a fact-based perspective at your ideas about your life, at the eye twitching rituals and procedures that uphold them , is to bring out, as Gervais puts it, "the absurdity of what you are doing". (Alsadir, 2022, 144)

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Figure 3: Performer E.Christodoulou guiding the audience as part of Cows
Clouds Chaos (2022). Image credit: Fenia Kotsopoulou on behalf of HOME
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In Cows Clouds Chaos (2022), by utilising the joydinary writing style and framing it around an open-day like tour of an arts school with the reality of working with actual students, actually playing games. The reality of situations where exposed and often in their juxtapositions (the banal text with the frenetic chorography for example) the absurdity of what [we] were doing, as British provocateur Ricky Gervais would say, was brought to light.

Through the writing of Ahmed and Alsadir, I understood that joy was an inherently ambivalent notion. The making of *As It Was (2022)* and *Cows Clouds Chaos (2022)* opened up moments of joy by literally describing them to audiences with ambivalent methods. *In As It Was (2022)* the detached joydinary subtitles left a chasm where banality could itself become a source of joy. In *Cows Clouds Chaos (2022),* a detached voice delivered through headphones separated the audience from events that were happening in front of their eyes. This non-diegetic approach opened up a space where absurdity was rife. I discovered that, combined with theatrical techniques of ambivalence such as a voiceover through headphones, or subtitles, a fertile chasm emerges that can become a place for joydinary moments to grow.

UMMM YEAH OKAY AND?

In Ummm Yeah Okay And? (2023), the final performance of this research, theatrical smoke machines are deployed to create environments in which audience members sit engulphed, submerged in fog. The materiality of theatrical stage fog was used as a literal metaphor of ambivalence – fog has strength in the dualities of visually obscuring while at the same time showing something that couldn't not be seen before. For example, theatrical fog can cover an object making it invisible while beams of light that were invisible become visible. The ability to show by obscuring became a large part of: Ummm *Yeah Okay And? (2023),* in one scene I physically handle a profile light, making the beam very tight, so that amongst the theatrical smoke a pillar of light appears. By physically handling the light, I am also metaphorically shining a light onto aspects of the theatre that usually remain hidden. The gaze of the audience followed the light beam, looking up at the grid, shinning a light on the other, now dormant lights. Playing with the fog became an exploration into the performing of ambivalence through the materiality of fog while utilising, and exposing the mechanics of a theatre. Fog was chosen as a material because it was an opportunity to expose the performativity of ambivalence , in its repeated stylised acts or qualities of constantly covering and uncovering. In online magazine Cabinet, the curious editors, Cathy Haynes and Sally O'Reilly speak of the contradictions of smoke:

Perhaps smoke's sole reliable qualities are inconstancy and contradiction. It represents immateriality and dissolution… It is an inconstant ally, a double agent that disappears not quite without trace.
(Hayes and O'Reilly, 2008)

If I take Butler's definition of performativity and apply it theatrical fog, or smoke, then the repetition of fog within the performance itself but also in the repeated stylised acts of covering/uncovering make clear the performativity of ambivalence through the materiality of fog. The performativity of ambivalence lies in fogs ability to consistently be a strong "double agent".

However, *Ummm Yeah Okay and? (2023)* was also interested in performing ambivalence, most notably through the tools of joy, specifically revelling in absurdity. I was particularly interested in taking on board Alsadir's comments about her time in clown school and incorporating them into the performance.

Both psychoanalysis and the art of clowning - though in radically different ways - create a path toward the unconscious, making it easier to access the unsocialized self, or in philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's terms, to 'become the one you are'.
(Alsadir, 2022, 3)

Becoming the one you are, is a revolutionary declaration. A call to follow the desire and ambivalent humour of camp, a desire to find joy without naming it joy directly.

Alsadir goes onto to talk a lot about her lively clown instructor Christopher Bayes. Each of us has a clown inside us (Bayes in Alsadir, 2022, 3) Bayes explains. The clown became more and more relevant because it is also a container for ambivalence. I f everyone is housing their own clown, if the clown truly is an unknown universality, then the clown could be used as a tool to expose banality or express ordinariness. However, at the same time, the clown is interested in the absurd. There is a strength between the ordinary and a strength in the absurd. The clown can then become a conduit between the mundane and the extraordinary, helping better define the messy connecting tissue of life through pain, through joy and most importantly for Bayes radical honesty.

The clown gets up before an audience and risks letting whatever is inside them deep out, just as analysands in psychoanalysis free-associate, let their thoughts go wherever the mind takes them
(Alsadir, 2022, 4)

Theatrical fog too can become a metaphor for this free-association . The fog will go wherever it wants to go, controlled by a multitude of uncontrollable elements in the atmosphere (temperature, wind direction) the fog flows, dissipates in different directions, forming different shapes and different densities. The free association of clowning was perhaps most present in a scene of *Ummm Yeah Okay And? (2023)* when the smoke machine (Sharon) and haze machine (Pam) have a conversation with one another. The first thing we did when

rehearsing for the project was to name the smoke machines we were working with, they were our collaborates and became the 4th and 5th performers in the work. Alsadir also speaks about the importance of naming when Bayes leads the group of clowning students through an exercise where they must name their "inner clowns".

My clown name reflected the ambivalence I often experience being onstage – lost in a holy intensity until the floorboards creak behind me and I become gripped by existential shame, imagining how others will perceive me if they see my enjoyment. In the end he named my ambivalence, marking it as the thing I needed to explore. (ibid)

This brutally honest exercise demonstrates the rawness of the self and the power of naming ambivalence, of naming the two strands of equal strength. When naming the smoke machine and the hazer we looked at what qualities they possessed, the smoke machine was inconsistent, throwing out large bursts of dense, think smoke and then refusing to produce any more until the machine was at the right temperature, we called this machine Sharon mainly because of the intense shhhhhhhhh noise it would produce. Pam the hazer, in contrast, was reliable and produced a thin but consistent fog, the noise the hazer made was a rhythmic padam padam every second. Sharon and Pam were integral members of the team. In the scene in which they converse, fellow performer and collaborator Antti Uimonen's voice takes on the role of Pam and my voice, the role of Sharon. Sharon was a diva,

not letting Pam get a word in edgeways. The text was always improvised – I had no idea what Sharon would say when I got to this part of the performance. Through improvisation and free-associating I started talking about a dance performance I saw last week in ArtEZ, about working conditions, about the desire to have a cigarette break, about going on a holiday. Much like drag, I was speaking through the concept of Sharon realising me to talk about whatever was there inside me with a fearlessness, a fearlessness caused by the glorification of character. This scene in the performance helped locate it within the theoretical framework of camp, as after all Camp is the glorification of "Character". (Sontag, 2018, 9). *Ummm Yeah Okay And? (2023)* started with the premiss of playing with theatrical fog as a way of exploring the performativity of ambivalence but was later overtaken in this desire by the preforming of ambivalence developed mainly through the characterisation of the two smoke machines .

Through the method of practice-as-research I have investigated the critical framework of camp in order to define the differences between performativity of ambivalence and performing of ambivalence. In the creation of drag persona XPat, I was able to explore how the politics of drag helped define the performance of ambivalence. Queer failure and trash aesthetics became useful tools to further explore ambivalence in performance   in the projects *Donatella (2022)* and *The Tour (2022),* highlighting the importance of

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Figure 4: Shining a light on campbivalence from the performance Ummm Yeah Okay And?
Image credit: Fenia Kotsopoulou on behalf of HOME OF PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

the method of feedbacking within the research. In *As It Was (2022)* and *Cows Clouds Chaos (2022),* a "Joydinary" writing style was employed to specifically focus on the importance of joy within the critical framework of camp and expose joy as critical tool of performative ambivalence. Finally, *Ummm Yeah Okay And? (2023)* attempted to tackle the critical framework of camp by using theatrical fog as a material of performative ambivalence. However, characterisation took the project into the realm of preforming ambivalence.

Going forward in the research I hope to clarify the role of fog within the critical framework of camp as a marker of ambivalence. However, fog somewhat clouds the research and could potentially become a parasitic element, blurring the focus on ambivalence.

CONCLUSION

I have foregone a traditional conclusion to instead make a series a notes that can be used as a manual for other performance makers. These notes (in homage to Sontag) takes the conclusion back out into the practical field, to be used in studios during the process of making performances. This practical manual offers advice, techniques and methods of how ambivalence can be a deliberate effect within performance. These methods and technique are often physical and should be employed with collaborators you trust in the safe-space of a rehearsal room.

NOTES ON AMBIVALENCE (A MANUAL):

1: Use the elements of drag no matter what the subject area. Use rudimental drag signifiers (wigs, shoes, tights) to create instant characters or personas. As Sontag once told us Camp is the glorification of "Character". (Sontag, 2018, 9), therefore use surface level characters during rehearsals. These characters need not be representations of people but could become representations of ideas you have in your project. Dress up ideas and give them a name. Rudimental drag signifiers can immediately help create artifice and unseriousness (hallmarks of camp) but also create ambivalence.

2: Keep failing. As famous playwright and linguist provocateur Samuel Becket puts it: Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try

again. Fail again. Fail better. (Beckett, 1989, 1). Devise an idea for a scene or vignette with a task in mind (put the ball in the bucket) and fail. Do it again but fail better. Keep revisiting the same tasks in performances and work out how to make them fail. Notate these failures and see where the gold lies.

3: Embrace trash aesthetics. Trash aesthetics can create immediate ambivalence through using items, props that used to have another function. Utilise the method of 'spit balling' with trash aesthetics to make props, costumes quickly, These objects can become the building blocks of devising work.

4: Find the joy within the ordinary. Practice these techniques by walking around locations busy with people and noticing idiosyncrasies within the crowd. Those things that resonate with you, make you smile - these are the moments of joy within the ordinary.

5: Practice joydinary writing techniques by carrying a notebook with you and jotting down actions of strangers that resonate in some way. These texts can be refined or edited later but they can become the bones for devising material, often helping create an abstract textual skeleton.

6: Subtitles are a good tool of instant ambivalence. Write some sentences (these can be Joydinary sentences) and project them in a space. Devise some physical action completely separately to the subtitles the overlay the two. Notice what happens if the subtitles align with what the performer is doing, if it's completely clashing. Play with placement of subtitles. Question if the performers knows the content of the subtitles, magic might happen if the performer is unaware of what is being projected. Experiment with having two strong streams of consciousness on the go within the same frame.

7: Collaborate with multiple bodies in one space and together physicalise clouds. This could resemble the chorographic practice of flocking where the group moves together in formation like a flock of birds or it could become more abstract with different bodies embodying molecules. People could be grouped: liquid, gas, air, how will this affect their movements in relation to each other. What happens when the different states interact with one another.

8: Embrace your inner clown by working with techniques that scare you. Improvise with text if you feel more comfortable physically. Say sentences that just pop into your mind. Free yourself to perform actions, the rehearsal room, the studio is a place for fearlessness.

9: Name it. Name the kettle Brian, call the chair Florentina. If a plastic sheet is an important prop within the performance-try calling it Steve. Using Bayer' naming techniques for clown and repurposes this for objects – find their inherent ambivalence and name it because by naming something,

something gains importance. By personifying materials and objects, the inherent performativity of ambivalence has a potential to be exposed.

10: If camp proposes a comic vision of the world (Sontag, 2018, 11), then inject comic vision into the rehearsal room. This doesn't need to effect the content of the project but rather an approach towards making. The piece could be dark in content but make it light in rehearsing. Create environments were other feel able to joke – checking in and out at the start and end of a rehearsal can help realise stresses or anxieties by naming them.

11: Embrace theoretical framework of camp by wearing something outlandish to a rehearsal.

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