Camp Affections

Experiential Insights into British Camp Performance

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I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

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Abstract

This thesis combines both a practical and written analysis of male camp identity in British popular performance. Motivated by a desire to resist the continual recirculation of phobic tropes that view camp as insipid and artificial, this thesis undertakes a self-reflective approach to embodied historiography in order to claim new insights into camp embodiment. Through practice research, it articulates camp as a complex queer subjectivity that signals both an exploitative and resistive practice of effeminacy, which rests in an ambivalent position of indeterminacy.

Starting from the position that when camp is expressed as an aesthetic of artifice and subject of frivolity (Sontag, 1964) it feeds a negative genealogy of camp visibility, the thesis advances a contemporary definition of camp as a process of queer parody which recognises the complexity of camp subjectivities, both past and present (Houlbrook, 2005). It focuses on three iconic British camp figures, Kenneth Williams, Frankie Howerd and Larry Grayson, through archival research, studio practice and a body of creative work: *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping* (2015), *Flash, Bang, Wallop* (2018) and *Tickle Your Fancy* (2019). Supporting the practice-based methodology of the research are the specific methods of lip-synching and reenactment as queer strategies of embodiment, explored in the practice by way of three discernible markers: mouth, gesture and interaction with material objects. Through this practice, and inspired by Freeman's erotohistoriography (2010), the thesis locates affective insights from unique int*ra*animate (Schneider, 2017) moments that bind cross-historical subjectivity.

This project offers new insights, generated through performance, that address ways of thinking about historical narratives of camp embodiment. The performance elements of the project offer a way to understand and address camp as a complex and productive queer subjectivity, and recognises new ways to think about the work and legacy of Williams, Howerd and Grayson, as figures of queer British history.

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Introduction

This research starts from the knotty and convoluted history the term camp has within queer and gay histories, where it is often seen as both a positive and negative marker of identity, alongside artificial and insipid notions of style and taste (Sontag, 1964). However, it also starts from my experience of being labelled as camp. As a young child growing up during the 1990s, I was frequently described as camp through similarities in my mannerisms and gestures to the performer Kenneth Williams. This association fed into my teenage years, when many would use camp to describe my affective and effeminate way of being and often use it to speak about my sexuality. I struggled to come to terms with how my camp affected me in two ways. Firstly, how my camp effeminacy often presumed my sexuality, and secondly, how other male gay friends would often snub my camp manner. I became intrigued to understand more about this relationship. I wanted to understand more about camp as an identity marker, its relationship with homosexuality, its association with other camp men, and I was motivated by a desire to resist certain phobic energies or tropes often attributed to the term that I had experienced. My impulse for this research was to think about connections of lived-experiences between historical narratives of camp; what connects my way of being camp to other men attributed to the term.[1]

This thesis combines a practical and written examination of male camp identity in British popular performance. Through archival research, studio practice and performance, it focuses on three iconic British camp figures: Kenneth Williams, Frankie Howerd and Larry Grayson through both the written component and a body of creative work: a preliminary explorative piece, *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping* (2015), and two focused works, *Flash, Bang, Wallop* (2018) and *Tickle Your Fancy* (2019). Through a self-reflective approach to embodied historiography, it finds new insights into camp embodiment through my personal experience of Williams, Howerd and Grayson's chosen repertoire that offers new ways to think about

[1] José Esteban Muñoz also claims the personal as a source of data in an academic enquiry. In *Cruising Utopia* (2009), he writes: 'My writing brings in my own personal experience as another way to ground historical queer sites with lived queer experience' (Muñoz, 2009: 3).

their work and legacy. This thesis's driving force is the lived experience of being camp and the affective experience of doing historical research.

Notes on "Chapters" [2]

This introductory chapter starts with a brief outline of my research process and how it feeds into the corresponding performances and three complementary chapters. It explores the complicated relationship gay men and comedians have with being described as camp, and how historical comparison is made, like my own personal narrative, to predecessors of the form. Much of this is negative rhetoric that branches from movements in camp scholarship, which erase not only histories of queerness in understandings of camp, but also ignore its queer cultural complexities. In countering the lack of clarity in camp scholarship, I discuss key movements in the field and arrive at Moe Meyer's contemporary definition of camp as a process of 'queer parody' which takes a 'performance-centred' approach and 'privileges process, the agency of knowledgeable performers, and the constructed nature of human realities' (Meyer, 1994: 9). Meyer's approach to camp allows a framework to address the cultural specificities of British male camp performance and lived experience.

In view of Meyer's definition, Chapter One takes a performance centred approach to charting histories of camp lived-experience. It uses Williams, Howerd and Grayson as the focus for its trajectory and historicises their performance identities and repertoires in the field of British entertainment alongside their lived-experiences. It draws personal and professional connections with each other and discovers deeper resonances between histories of queerness and class through complex accounts of camp lived experience.

[2] My use of 'Notes on' with quotation marks to frame a word takes influenced from Susan Sontag's 'Notes on "Camp"' and its subsequent use in other matters related to the subject. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Spring 2019 exhibition, *Camp: Notes on Fashion*. In addition, I am playfully inspired by Sontag's assertion that 'Camp sees everything in quotation marks. It's not a lamp, but a "lamp"; not a woman, but a "woman"' (2009: 280). Alongside the derisive paradox, that 'Camp which knows itself to be Camp ("camping") is usually less satisfying' (2009: 282).

Chapter Two addresses how the methods of lip-synching and reenactment, as queer strategies of embodiment, have been central to this research methodology's creative components. This chapter explores how these methods examine the chosen elements of Williams, Howerd and Grayson's performance repertoires by way of three markers: the mouth, gesture and material interaction with props, specifically a chair. It examines how drag performance and contemporary artists use lip-synching to draw performative connections between the past and the present and in so doing, advance its potential as a creative research methodology. It explores how breathing and breath-work, and vocal surrogation have been a crucial method of lip-synching to connect with wider elements of the body, such as gesture, facial expressions and touching objects. Inspired by Elizabeth Freeman's erotohistoriography (2010), this chapter characterises the research's creative practice as a mode of queer archival performance, whereby the three markers function as corporeal indices to speak about experiential forms of historical knowledge.

Chapter Three discusses the affective historical connections constructed at the three markers. It locates affective insights through int*ra*animate (Schneider, 2017) moments that bind cross-historical subjectivity. Int*ra*animate describes how my body is both/and attuned to the past, whilst simultaneously rooted in the present. My body receives knowledge on Williams, Howerd and Grayson, that is both bound to histories of camp performance, whilst at the same time, critiques and offers new perspectives drawn from my experience. This chapter draws from precise moments of the performances to explore one marker with each case study: Williams and the mouth, Howerd and gesture, Grayson and material interaction with a chair.

This research methodology sits within a Practice as Research (PaR) context that asserts the value of experiential knowing through doing (Nelson, 2006). Later, I develop that within a PaR context, understanding my affective experience carries significant contribution to knowledge of camp through what Tracy C. Davis and Barnaby King term 'feeling[s] of co-performative intimacy' (2013: 189). However, before outlining further insights into the PaR methodology of this research, I will briefly outline the research process and indicate how to read the documentation of my performances alongside the writing.

Notes on "Process"

The research process for this thesis revolves around three iterative cycles of archival research, studio experiments, and performance, with self-reflection throughout. Initial research on camp and effeminacy in performance explores wide-ranging material from film, television, and stand-up comedy, and pays attention to references that acknowledge being camp or effeminate as part of their performance. Preliminary research also reviews primary archival sources where possible, such as Kenneth Williams's diaries and letters at the British Library, and Larry Grayson's scrapbooks and ephemera at the Victoria and Albert Museum's Theatre and Performance Collections. The important conduits of queerness and class establishes Williams, Grayson and Howerd's connection to deeper and complex histories of camp lived experience, such as queer experience during London's inter-war period. The pragmatic function of camp for those queerly identified against working-class masculinities, draws a striking resemblance to resilient examples of camp performance witnessed in post-war British entertainment.

The primary review of documentation on camp performance establishes thematic similarities between the work of Grayson, Howerd and Williams, however, this study resists labelling their work by way of generic categories, such as: enacting weakness, being bitchy or gossipy; having a heightened awareness of cleanliness or appearance.[3] Although each study draws on similar themes to establish their camp comedy, describing their repertoire in this manner recirculates many phobic tropes of weakness, passivity, and lacks recognition of their unique and distinctive camp craft, skill and resilience. Thus, to catalogue their work through physicality and embodied nuances, rather than via normative generic categories, the studio process employs lip-synching and reenactment as methods to explore their repertoires and embodiment.

[3] See Medhurst (2007) for an extended discussion on generic stereotypes of camp effeminacy. Chapter One uses Medhurst and Sinfield's distinction of the Wildean Queen to demarcate the complexity and nuanced classed differences between varieties of camp performance.

Alongside the written account, this thesis comprises of a body of creative work, presented as three pieces of performance documentation at the end of each cycle. The first pilot piece, *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping* (2015)*,* presents my lip-synch reenactments of selected historical source materials on Williams, Howerd and Grayson in tandem with current examples of camp performance work and performers, such as Julian Clary, Graham Norton, and Alan Carr. Although it is most known for its use in the queer performance of drag as a parody or impersonation process, at its core, lip-synching, like reenactment, engages with the co-presence and reanimation of bodies. Even though lip-synch work does not strictly attempt to re-create the past, it is an embodied experience. Through re-voicing another body, the experiential connection my body makes with the past is a method used to speak *about* camp performance from the experience of *doing* camp performance.

The pilot piece, *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping,* showed that further context was needed about the performers to understand their unique style of camp performance. Early insights found from this piece, alongside further historical research, reduced my focus down to specific camp performance elements and three accented markers of embodiment. As a result, the next studio steps took a nuanced approach to cataloguing camp performance through the embodied impulses of the voice and mouth, gestures and upper body movement, and interactions with audiences, objects, things, or costume. The subsequent pieces examine the mouth and gesture in *Flash, Bang, Wallop* (2018)*,* and material interaction with a chair in *Tickle Your Fancy* (2019). Insights generated through performance, by way of each bodily marker, address camp embodiment as a complex and productive queer subjectivity; an insight that offers new ways to think about the work and legacy of Williams, Howerd and Grayson, as complicated figures of queer British history.

Documentation of the performance can be found on the accompanying DVD. To gain a greater understanding of my research process and performance form, I recommend watching *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping* after the introduction and before the body of the thesis. Prior to Chapter Two, I recommend watching *Flash, Bang, Wallop* and *Tickle Your Fancy.* In Chapter Three, I highlight specific moments from these works to engage with further alongside my critical reflection. These specific moments, separated from the entire performances, are intended as snapshots, capturing key moments of the work I also address in writing.

Notes on "Being Camp"

Cultural understandings of camp are complicated, and many convoluted intricacies stem from it being a concept nationally and historically contingent. Dominant literature on the subject comes from an American perspective, which draw it as a signifier for low-ranking styles and tastes (Sontag, 1964), this discourse often disregards lived-experience and views people as artificial products of camp sensibilities. However, what attains the label 'camp' in the US, might not be the same as in the UK. Additionally, certain cultural artefacts, or people viewed as products of culture, may attain the label of camp over time, and by extension, what was called camp in the past might not be so today. As Fabio Cleto notes, camp

> draws its significance when, and as, culturally constructed […] inscribed in the domain of the 'aesthetic,' the 'ephemeral', and the 'superfluous'. As an indication of privilege, though, it presupposes the materiality of labour, social hierarchy and technology (Cleto, 1999: 1-2).

Although definitions and understandings of camp are ever-changing, an over-arching use of the term describes the ironic placement, or recognition, of things and people who parody hierarchical structures. However, beyond theoretical or stylistic concepts of the term, a more prosaic use of camp often describes eccentric and exaggerated forms of femininity, male effeminacy, and stereotypical traits of homosexuality. It also has colloquial usage, to describe someone as "being camp" can be a euphemism for their assumed sexuality or effeminate attributes, and one can speak from experience, "having a camp time" may describe a fun or light-hearted activity. As a descriptive term or identity marker, camp has diverse and ambiguous meanings or connotations, which are context dependent.

In contemporary Britain, the everyday media and popular press frequently recirculate phobic attitudes towards being effeminate, camp and gay. Effeminacy is often met disapprovingly as it somewhat betrays essentialised visions of masculinity. As Stone charts in the *London Evening Standard*, we live in a camp-phobic 'culture that prizes masculinity and derides campness' (Stone, 2015). Such phobic tendencies develop when flamboyant and 'effeminate men are accused of 'putting it on'' (Stone, 2015). Many view effeminacy as a form of self-

mockery, that is, camp performance actively lampoons. Contemporary camp performers also note feelings of ambivalence towards their campness. Graham Norton comments:

> It's a much harder thing to accept than being gay. Gay is easy. Being camp is difficult in that it comes with judgment all round. That moment you realise that you are quite fey and quite camp, it's a difficult one because these are not qualities that are admired by anybody. As you move forward you can own it and camp it up to the hilt or you can try and tone it down (Norton in Stadlen, 2013).

In noting how others place negative emphasis on his feminine qualities, Norton suggests that his fame has come from owning it and accepting the difficulties it may bring. On the other hand, comedian Alan Carr also acknowledges that his camp identity makes his sexuality self-evident: he has 'never come out - there's never been any need to' (Carr in Hattenstone, 2012). However, Carr is more optimistic than Norton about being camp, and this comes from an economic stance as he states: 'It's made me a lot of money' (Carr in Hattenstone, 2012). Carr contrasts Norton's negative emphasis on his feminine qualities, however, both acknowledge their livelihood stems from being camp in forms of performance, but that this is intimately linked to, and affected by, their lived experiences of being effeminate and gay.

This research is motivated by the desire to resist the continual recirculation of phobic tropes that view camp as insipid and artificial, and addresses camp as a complex way of being that moves in-between prosaic and performance usages. In addition, following my autobiographical impulse, a key driver is to understand in what ways being camp today is deeply connected to its historical visions. Contemporary debates and opinions around camp visibility, homosexuality and current camp performance often call attention to historical figures like Williams, Grayson and Howerd. Early in his career, Carr is imagined as 'the love child of Kenneth Williams and Frankie Howerd' (Hattenstone, 2012). However, this is often viewed negatively, as 'a throwback to the limp-wristed homosexual stereotypes of the 1970s' (Day, 2008). Norton self-identifies with Grayson, as he 'recalls watching [him] on television at home in Ireland with a sense of self-loathing. "I'd recognize myself in him, but didn't like it. And I'm sure there are kids watching me now on TV thinking, 'Oh shit…here we go'" (Norton in Gilbert, 2012). Even as recent as 2020, in a BBC interview, more recent gay camp comedian Tom Allen speaks about the performance arena as being a comfortable space to be himself

and ‘overcome the shame he felt in his childhood’ (McIntosh, 2020). Allen continues the legacy and cultural association with former performers, Williams, Howerd and Grayson, ‘with whom he felt a certain affinity’ (McIntosh, 2020). On being camp as a heightened way of being in the world, Allen notes that although ‘people are dismissive of anybody described as camp, as though they're putting on a performance’, yet, to some extent, he remarks, ‘everyone is putting on a performance in life’ (Allen in McIntosh, 2020). Carr, Norton and Allen, all view camp as a mode of being that moves in-between their lived-experiences and performance craft. They each describe a sense of self-awareness that extends beyond the present moment and draws upon the form’s more profound history. Although Chapter One extends these complicated notions as it locates Williams, Grayson and Howerd within broader accounts of camp performance and lived-experience, much of this negative rhetoric stems from its discussion as a style and taste of artifice.

Not only do movements in camp scholarship erase histories of queerness in understandings of camp, but they often ignore its queer cultural complexities. Many scholars struggle to accept that camp is knotty and complicated as they either attempt to list multiple examples of camp things in an encyclopaedic fashion, such as Phillip Core’s *Camp: The Lie That Tells the Truth* (1984) or they are too fastidious in determining what *is* and *is not* camp, such as Mark Booth’s *Camp* (1983). Furthermore, authors like Core and Booth speak about what *they* deem camp without questioning this rationale or any justification for their claims. Their methodology, in part, stems from one of the most read text on the subject, ‘Notes on "Camp"' (2009 [1964]). In her bullet-pointed personal musings, Susan Sontag sees camp as a two-fold sensibility that gives rise to a certain taste and provides a cacophony of references for the reader. She considers that one who exhibits the camp sensibility, does so through a ‘love of the unnatural; of artifice and exaggeration' (Sontag, 2009: 275), and that these exhibitionists see it as ‘a private code, a badge of identity' (Sontag, 2009: 275). For Sontag, the general outcome of camp sensibility ‘converts the serious into the frivolous’ (Sontag, 2009: 276). However, her broad-spectrum of notes encourages a series of comprehensive and like-minded texts, like Core and Booth, that provide wide-ranging examples of camp without rigour or justification.

Whereas Andrew Ross's 'Uses of Camp' (1989) is more thoughtful, he attempts to unpick Sontag's early musing and offer a potential methodology to locate the camp sign's function and understand how and why camp became a catch-all phrase. Ross speaks to four specific moments of film, art, music, and celebrity culture from the 1960s onwards. Fuelled by socio-economic changes, Ross argues that the use of camp emerged alongside perceptions of value attached to art and culture that shifted due to 'growing surplus value' (Ross, 1989: 137). He writes that in the 1960s, style and taste became accessible to the common market, which challenged previously ridged hierarchies of the consumer and art market. In an emerging commodity culture, 'camp can be seen as a *cultural economy* which challenged, and, in some cases, helped to overturn legitimate definitions of taste and sexuality' (Ross, 1989: 169, emphasis in original). However, Ross often neglects to recognise any agency these people had as cultural 'products' of the time and fails to recognise that being camp is also a complex personal experience.

Earlier definitions of camp are interesting to highlight as they edge around the camp individual, yet note eccentric forms of self-presentation as a crucial part of *being* camp. A slang definition found in J. Redding Ware's *Passing English of the Victorian Era* (1909) describes camp is a street term meaning: 'Actions and gestures of exaggerated emphasis. Probably from the French. Used chiefly by persons of exceptional want of character. 'How very camp he is' (Ware, 1909: 61). One speculative definition by Baker suggests the term K.A.M.P. derives from 'Known as Male Prostitute' (Baker, 2002: 168).[4] Booth acknowledges that 'se camper' was used by the French dramatist Theophile Gautier in the nineteenth century, meaning to 'present oneself in an expansive but flimsy manner (like a tent), with overtones […] of theatricality, vanity, dressiness, and provocation' (Booth, 1983: 33). However, Booth's *Camp* notes that to be camp, '*is to present oneself as being committed to the marginal with a commitment greater than the marginal merits*' (17-18: 1983, emphasis in original). Marginality also arises in Sontag's notes, however, rather than queer, she notes that 'homosexuals, by and large, constitute the vanguard – and most articulate audience – of Camp […] hav[ing] pinned their integration into society on promoting the aesthetic sense'

[4] Chapter One explores the relationship being camp had to sexual trade during the interwar period of London.

(Sontag, 2009: 290). She develops that 'its metaphor of life as theatre is peculiarly suited as a justification and projection of a certain aspect of the situation of homosexuals' (Sontag, 2009: 290-291). For Sontag, being camp subverts marginality by making light out of this position. Yet, such a positionality's pragmatism and the reality behind those who recognise camp as part of their identity is not acknowledged.

One author who addresses camp as a mode of being and recognises its potential to move between lived experiences and performance forms is Esther Newton. In her ethnographic study of drag performers in America during the 1960s, Newton dedicates a whole section to the role of 'The Camp' and its relationship and difference to that of a drag performer. In her historical account, Newton writes

> the drag queen and the camp are expressive performing roles, and both specialize in transformation. But the drag queen is concerned with masculine-feminine transformation, while the camp is concerned with what might be called a philosophy of transformation and incongruity (Newton, 1972: 104-105).

The recurrent characteristics of 'The Camp' are '*incongruity, theatricality*, and *humor*' (Newton, 1972: 106, emphasis in original) and performers interviewed by Newton are quick to note Sontag's misreading of the queer sensibility at the heart of camp, and in doing so, how Sontag erased rich history to the term.

In 'Reclaiming the Discourse of Camp' (1994), Moe Meyer also examines the relationship between drag and camp. He advances a contemporary definition of camp as a process of queer parody that stems from its use in performance studies as he unpicks the relationship between lived-experience and queer politics to propose a reconceptualisation of camp.[5] In his essay, he theoretically and practically reclaims the term from the pop culture emphasis of

[5] In 2010, Meyer reformulates his conception on camp and substitutes the term 'queer' for 'gay'. For him now, camp becomes 'the process for the social signification of gayness – the production of gay social visibility' (Meyer, 2010: 4). I argue that his casual swap is highly problematic, as being camp is recognised historically before the categorisation of homosexuality, or cultural understandings of a 'gay' style or taste. I find queer a more productive term in my assessment and continue to use his earlier assessment.

style over content (Sontag, 1964) and argues that the theatrically camp 'activist strategy for organizations such as ACT UP and Queer Nation […] is both political and critical' (Meyer, 1994: 1). [6] He writes post-Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and uses her early theory of gender performativity to unpack the person who is being or doing camp. Meyer writes explicitly about Joan Jett Blakk, a drag queen who ran for the mayor of Chicago in 1991, who used theatricality as a political activism strategy. In the previous model, pioneered by Sontag and Ross, camp's use is wholly a sensibility or style and taste, viewed as an ironic repetition of popular culture, which destabilises through intertextual manipulation of cultural texts and ideological conventions. In this respect, it is not a serious subject; it is apolitical. However, Meyer looks at the activism employed by a drag queen, an example of a camp/queer body, and the camp strategy used to talk about something highly politicised.

In Meyer's assessment, the body and performance of the drag queen are used as a figurehead to draw attention to a queer political issue. Using the example of a drag queen as a figurehead of camp, Blakk calls into question the politics of gender identity and the hierarchies of legitimate speech acts. Most important to note here is that 'a drag queen for the office of mayor did not sit well with the powers that be' and Blakk was

> ignored by the gay press even though she attracted enough attention to elevate her to international Superqueer status. Assimilationist gays – many in editorial positions – were dismayed by Blakk's campaign strategy, one based on the practice of Camp. […] Camp strategy was not serious work, and that the Queer Nation candidate would do damage to the gains made by so-called legitimate caucuses (Meyer 1994: 6).

Meyer's framework for reading camp as a strategy of queer parody is useful to look at what a performer, like a drag queen, might do to be camp. His framework considers the broader ideological complexities of camp, which go beyond identity politics and 'contains a critique of a more vast and comprehensive system of class-based practices of which sex/gender identity is only a part' (Meyer, 1994: 3).

[6] In his essay, Meyer's claim is that any work previously identified as camp, which emerged from within the context of compulsory reproductive heterosexuality are noted to be pop cultural expressions of camp: Pop camp (with a small "c").

In Meyer's assessment, 'social identities […] are always accompanied by some sort of public signification in the form of specific enactment, embodiments, or speech acts' (Meyer, 1994: 4). Thus, although gender identity can be performative and processual, 'the actor must do something in order to produce the social visibility by which the identity is manifested' (Meyer, 1994: 4). For Meyer, it is in this manifestation, an over-identification, that camp exploits through theatricality *as* a strategy. However, there is an issue with intentionality when parody is seen as a 'process, not as form' (Meyer, 1994: 10). Camp as queer parody emerges through theatricality. In this case, the analysis views people as actors in social situations and only works when reviewing staged events, such as political activism. As Medhurst critiques, 'Meyer is far more concerned with advancing a rigorous (i.e. inflexible) theoretical model of camp than with recognizing its contentious day-today ambivalences' (Medhurst, 1997: 281). Meyer's essay is complicated and there are blurry lines between the role of performance and identity politics, however, he advances that camp performance should not be devalued and swamped into the category of cultural detritus; it is something to be taken seriously. Furthermore, Meyer's essay advances a framework for theorising how queerness aligns with camp through the complexity of performance and performative identity politics, and that recognition of experience is paramount in a conversation on camp.

In more recent queer scholarship, Elizabeth Freeman proposes that 'the hidden references of the postmodern, ironic reenactment that we call camp are time and class' (Freeman, 2011: 1976).[7] Freeman writes about camp alongside her term temporal drag and the queer archival performance art work of Boudry and Lorenz. I shall go on to explore Freeman's ideas alongside Boudry and Lorenz in Chapter Two, but in this introductory context, her use of erotohistoriography (2010) helps characterise the research's creative practice, and temporal drag (2010) helps develop ideas around queerness, class and camp. In coining temporal drag, Freeman, like Meyer, develops Butler's early ideas in *Gender Trouble* (1990) alongside notions of class and gender. Freeman examines how the body can act as anachronism through the repetition of gendered bodily markers as she critiques Butler's early theory of gender performativity, noting it 'disregards citations of the past that [...] signal the presence of life

[7] In the text, the page numbers are characterised with years – in reverse chronological order. They start at 1856 and end in 2021.

lived otherwise than in the present' (Freeman, 2010: 63). In Freeman's concept, the term 'drag' is two-fold. Firstly, she aligns it 'with all the associations that the word "drag" has with retrogression, delay, and the pull of the past on the present' (Freeman, 2010: 62). This 'drag' signals a weighty gravitational pull that an identity position has, a 'stubborn identification with a set of coordinates that exceed one's own historical moment' (Freeman in Halberstam, 2005: 179). Secondly, the burdensome 'drag' that essentialist representations, or performances of gender identity, sometimes exert on queer and post-modern notions of gender fluidity. This use of 'drag' conceptualises how certain markers of gender identities are intimately tied to often forgotten specific historical subjectivities. Freeman uses the image of the lesbian feminist and butch/femme relationships or identities of pre-liberation queerness to demonstrate the burdensome *drag* that some essentialist visions of identity exert on queer futurity. That certain butch/femme identity positions seem unevolved against the future-oriented time of queerness. Crucial to temporal drag is the meeting of queer bodies and the affective, erotic, or emotional sensations this produces. As a lens to think about performance and art, temporal drag illuminates a way to think about remnants of queerness in the past and how they might appear on bodies that engage with histories of queerness in the present. Halberstam develops that 'Freeman's close reading of temporality, affect, and queer performance points the way to an immensely subtle and complex understanding of the relations between the "now" of performance and the "then" of historical time' (2005: 179-180). Temporal drag reveals itself in moments that *drag*, or somehow signal a queerness of the past on present bodies.

Clarifying her connection between temporal drag and camp, Freeman writes:

> Temporal drag is not only a matter of crossing gender boundaries; in fact, gender drag is in many ways the least interesting aspect of camp. Rather, as some of the earliest scholarship on camp clarifies, camp is a mix of rage and longing, scorn and affection, for seemingly obsolete object and subject-positions. This obsolescence, in turn, has everything to do with capitalism and class. Camp's mixed emotions refuse to let go of what the market tells us is no longer valuable (Freeman, 2011: 1976).

Freeman skilfully reiterates early ideas in camp scholarship and in so doing, recognises subjectivity as a key aspect to advance camp, gender and class in terms of temporal drag.

There is a noteworthy comparable in seeing camp effeminacy like a temporal drag. As reviewed above, camp effeminacy in the present (as seen with the camp comedians) is often viewed with both warmth and derision, as it often signals or echoes remanences of past camp figures and identities.

Rather than view temporal drag like Halberstam and Freeman do with lesbian and queer, I advance a likewise rendering with gay, camp and queer. Dislike for the term camp emerges from common associations that describe it as artificial, exaggerative and obsolescent, rather than seeking to recognise its more resistive and historically queer roots. Advancing camp as a temporal drag enables a way to think about camp effeminacy as an alternative vision of gender identity that resists normative ideals of masculinity; as a way of being that is more resilient, courageous and potent. As Halberstam writes:

> Many young gays and lesbians think of themselves as part of a "post-gender" world and for them the idea of "labelling" becomes a sign of oppression they happily cast off in order to move into a pluralistic world of infinite diversity. In other words, it has become commonplace and even clichéd for young urban (white) gays and lesbians to claim that they do not like "labels" and do not want to be "pigeon holed" by identity categories, even if those same identity categories represent the activist labors of previous generations that brought us to the brink of "liberation" in the first place (Halberstam, 2005: 19).

Acknowledging the queerness of camp, both historically, and today, offers more productive thought and recognises specific subjective complexities around sex, gender and class. It also enables the recognition of a body in the past by way of the present, such as my association with cultural figures who pre-exist my life-time. Williams, Grayson and Howerd were a generation of post-war entertainers known for being overtly camp and were all gay men, active in their careers before and after the Sexual Offences Act of 1967. In Chapter One, I develop this relationship alongside their varied performance work and celebrity status, but in short, there is a complexity to understanding British histories of camp with terms like gay and homosexual. Thus, queer becomes a useful term to not only connect, but recognise deeper and more profound histories of camp, both in its performance and more mundane everyday forms. In addition, the term queer, connects with the creative methods this study uses to explore embodiment. As a queer performance form, lip-synching engages with the co-

presence and reanimation of bodies, which this study advances as a creative method of reenactment and archival performance. As a queer research method, it enables an experiential connection to bodies in the past, and for this study, generates insights that address ways of thinking about historical narratives of camp embodiment.

Notes on "Methodology"

The composition of this process sits within a Practice as Research (PaR) context. Through critical reflection, these creative methods produce what Robin Nelson describes as ''insider' practitioner knowledge' (Nelson, 2006: 107). This tacit knowledge addresses camp performance from the experience of *doing* camp performance as PaR claims 'the value of experiential 'knowing through doing'' (Nelson, 2006: 111). My insights into camp performance, articulated alongside the performance documentation in Chapter Three, emerge through 'sustained and structured reflection to make the 'tacit knowledge' explicit' (Nelson, 2006: 112). Throughout my self-reflective process, I use the knowledge gained from my performance process to expand upon the complexity of camp lived-experience. However, the knowledge gained *from* experience is in part an already recognisable element of my own lived-experience.

Due to my personal impulse and the role my body serves throughout the research process and working with the material of Williams, Howerd and Grayson's lived-experience, a conversation of ethics and ethical responsibility has arisen throughout each iterative stage of the research. Not only have I considered the ethics of speaking on behalf of the dead or respectfully using historical material, but I have also acknowledged my limits and personal well-being as part of the process. Chapter One resists engaging with Williams, Grayson and Howerd as insipid and caricature-like figures of camp comedy and engages with them as complicated queer figures who navigated their sexuality, celebrity and personal life as effeminate figures of British entertainment. This profound bond extends throughout the studio and performance process of the research. Chapter Two discusses how breath-work in lip-synching has created further co-performative bonds with Williams, Howerd and Grayson. In Chapter Three, I discuss my understanding of Howerd's camp performance by way of the limp wrist as a repeated action frequently used as a comic gibe towards my effeminate body

growing up. Although it recirculated feelings of violence and humiliation, my encounter with the limp wrist hinged upon my ability to see it as *both* a symbol of failure *and* a strategy of resistance. Within the creative studio process, I had an ethical responsibility to look after myself and recognise my ability to step away from the process and reflect upon this trauma. I recognise the care and avoidance of harm towards my own body, but also the audiences who came to watch my performance work. Chapter Three speaks to the difficulties faced when using historical material that exhibits racist and phobic behaviours and carefully reflects upon the mindful incorporation of ambiguous homophobic material and explicit edit of direct racism. However, I also reflect deeply upon my complicity in recirculating images, moments, or feelings of low-brow racist comedy throughout my research. This research's driving force aims to deepen the understanding of these men and my body's affiliation with them, and certain uncomfortable truths are part of their complexity and lineage within British camp comedy.

Campbell and Farrier describe the affiliation queer subjectivities have through PaR projects as somewhat messy and complicated. Extending what Nelson calls, 'liquid knowledge' to describe the fluidity of knowing that comes from experience, they write that

> queer PaR is a lived experience that exceeds binary thinking, upsets unitary subjects and presents identities expressed in non-normative sexualities. Researchers take these identity positions to the heart of their research fields, studies and stages – and, in so doing, bring a fluid knowing, or messy existence, to the kinds of knowledge that those research projects produce (Campbell and Farrier, 2015: 84).

My reflections of Williams, Grayson and Howerd's work resists articulating experience through the recirculation of phobic tropes, however, my reflections discover somewhat paradoxical and ambivalent feelings towards being camp that stem from many ingrained negative behavioural attributes. For example, through an exploration of gesture in Chapter Three, I discuss the limp wrist's specific action as one recognised through my exploration of Howerd's repertoire, and a gesture that I have a negative history with, which ultimately affects how I author my experience. To recognise the somewhat messy distinction of being both/and through one moment, I use Rebecca Schneider's term int*ra*animate (2017), whereby both/and helps discuss the citational – or iterative – qualities that occur through

each bodily maker. Int*ra*animate describes how my body is both/and attuned to the past, whilst simultaneously rooted in the present. My insights stem from *within* and *through* my experience of the past; an *intra*-relationship with history that re-animates the repertoires of Williams, Grayson and Howerd. In other words, moments of tacit knowledge stem from unique int*ra*animate ephemeral moments that bind cross-historical subjectivity through performance and critical reflection.

Elizabeth Freeman's erotohistoriography (2010) helps characterises this creative practice as a mode of queer archival performance, whereby the three markers function as corporeal indices to speak about experiential forms of historical knowledge. Erotohistoriography influences this fragmentary approach to exploring three distinct but interconnected realms of the body as it describes the pleasurable, and sometimes erotic, sensations found from the *feeling* of history: feeling as both touching archival material, as well as the affective and disjointed properties of feeling out-of-time. It is

> distinct from the desire for a fully present past, a restoration of bygone times. Erotohistoriography does not write the lost object into the present so much as encounter it already in the present, by treating the present as hybrid. And it uses the body as a tool to effect, figure, or perform that encounter (Freeman, 2010: 95).

In coining erotohistoriography, she builds upon Carolyn Dinshaw's 'queer historical touch' (Dinshaw, 1999: 2). Dinshaw considers how literary texts facilitate desire through a fragmented sense of queer community across time. Literary movements between past and present moments are driven by a 'queer historical impulse', which for Dinshaw is about 'making connections across time between, on the one hand, lives, texts, and other cultural phenomena left out of sexual categories back then and, on the other, those left out of current sexual categories now' (Dinshaw, 1999: 1). Dinshaw finds affective connections to the sensuality of Roland Barthes's writing, which she argues, offers a model of 'textual intimacy', whereby 'touching is accomplished through citation' (Dinshaw, 1999: 49), 'repetition' and 're-enactment' (Dinshaw, 1999: 50). The modality Dinshaw describes through her relationship with Barthes, and Freeman's emphasis on the fragmentary body influences my experiential approach and the ways I theorise cross-historical connections of queerness. However, what

Davis and King term, 'feeling[s] of co-performative intimacy' (Davis and King, 2013: 189), offers a more grounded approach to performance based historical research within a PaR framework.

Davis and King advance the term co-performative intimacy through their PaR project into the nineteenth-century comedian Charles Mathews, which involved the performer King reviving a series of his solo performances. Through 'a variety of performative methods to excavate the techniques and content deployed [...] to better understand Mathews's intentions, and to posit this interpretive range for a twenty-first-century audience' (Davis and King, 2013: 180). Like this thesis, King's body became a tool to experience Mathews's repertoire documented through the method of performance ethnography. A technique that David and King recognise

> is politically and ethically grounded in performance studies' foundational concept that embodied and transferable knowledge has as much validity as archival (or archivable) knowledge. The concept of performativity, the citational process by which the accretion of everyday acts produces the appearance of naturalized categories such as gender, is predicated on this transferability, grounded in J.L. Austin's insight that an utterance may not be merely descriptive but "is the performing of an action." Performance ethnography embeds this theory into ethnographic methods, providing a set of practice-based tools for artist/scholars – data gathering, data analysis, and presentational modes – that are grounded in ethical considerations of performing the "other." (Davis and King, 2013: 188).

In the performance work that King did, his body produced different sensations that felt alien or like his own prior performance knowledge, which he built upon to recognise insight into Mathews's craft. In one instance, exploring the use of song, they found through King's 'persistent difficulties with rhythm, breath, and energy […] Mathews's virtuosity came more sharply into focus', and '[r]eflecting on the sensations and demands of reproducing Mathews's feats, and the inevitable contract with [King's] own performance practice, created new knowledge' (Davis and King, 2013: 189). The 'moment[s] when the ghost of Mathews seemed to merge with [King] as performer, […] produce[d] a new awareness and a feeling of co-performative intimacy' (Davis and King, 2013: 189). I borrow the term co-performative intimacy to describe my research process's insider knowledge on camp performance.

The three bodily markers anchor my experience and are used to recognise the relationship and connectivity they have with each other and each study. Thus, cataloguing embodiment through three distinct markers requires recognition of the cross-overs between each modality. For example, exploring gesture connects to forms of material interaction, and the singularity of the mouth connects to the wider face and body. In addition, my examination of Grayson's interaction with the chair is deeply related to his use of gesture, and so on. Furthermore, my prior association with these figures, alongside my lived experience of being a camp man, also influences this reflective process. The term indexing enables cross recognition from each study's body and my own, as well as movements between the past and the present. This study finds new insights on camp experience through moments of disruption and tension, felt not only through a muscular level, but also an (inter)subjective one. Whilst I reflect on the technique and craft of camp performance discovered through this process, each marker enacts a movement of shared subjectivity and collective representation that seeks not to normalise its queer potential or even the queerness rooted in Williams, Grayson and Howerd's repertoire.

Chapter One[8]

Queer, Class and Comedy: British Histories of Camp Performance

This chapter addresses the potent relationship between camp and comedy within British histories of performance as it draws connections between camp, queerness, and class. Following Meyer's performance-centred approach (1994) to camp identity, it locates Williams, Howerd and Grayson within a broader context of British television, film and radio performance. However, it unearths nuanced examples of camp performance from their stand-up comedy work. This chapter uses class as an important conduit to address both the category of performance work examined in this study and the style of camp Williams, Howerd and Grayson manifested, which drew from the lived-experience of being queer and working-class, in other words, a 'more everyday effeminacy' (Medhurst, 2007: 90). Addressing their queerness, in this respect, builds upon research on London's inter-war period and gives a comprehensive account of camp lived experience. During this time, testimonies show how camp functioned pragmatically for those queerly identified against working-class masculinities. For example, for the London quean, camp is understood as a queer strategy used to navigate the lived realities of being an effeminate working-class man. Being camp is also understood as being something highly amusing or used to entertain, however, celebration could quickly turn to condemnation. These ambiguous lines are useful to demarcate how camp manifests itself in modern and contemporary entertainment forms and provides a valuable social context to deeper and complex histories in which Williams, Grayson and Howerd navigated their lives. This chapter draws connections between a resilient example of camp recognised during the inter-war period and the wide-ranging scope of camp performance, characters, and identities within post-war British entertainment. This contextual material enables a close reading of Williams, Howerd and Grayson's repertoire

[8] To gain a greater understanding of my research process and performance form, I recommend watching *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping* before the body of the thesis. Documentation of this performance can be found on the on the accompanying DVD.

and the chosen instances of performance used in this study's practice.[9] Overall, this chapter moves away from viewing Williams, Howerd and Grayson as caricature-like visions of camp performance, but rather complicated queer figures who navigated their sexuality, celebrity and personal life as effeminate figures of British entertainment.

There is a long lineage of comic effeminacy in British performance history that is often described as camp, which sits alongside more prosaic understandings of effeminacy, often styled under the same term, but not necessarily used to be comical or for entertainment. The term camp is often associated with performance repertoires such as the pantomime dame or drag queen, whereby both traditions exemplify effeminacy through crossed-dressed practice.[10] Although histories of drag or dame performance traditions and persona are more complex and beyond the scope of this study, there is a marked distinction between on-stage and off-stage roles in such work. The distinction between role-playing and character work is further complicated when Williams was cast to play characters called Kenneth in the *Carry On* franchise, which famously echoed his well-known persona.[11] Aside from character-based work, this research focuses on the lineage of camp performance when men, such as Williams, Howerd and Grayson, worked *as* themselves, billed as talk-show hosts, game-show presenters, or most prominently in stand-up comedy, where their lived experiences of being effeminate camp men significantly fed into such work.

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[9] This chapter takes its cue from Elizabeth Freeman's queer commitment to 'close reading' as 'a way into history, not a way out of it, and itself a form of historiography and historical analysis' (Freeman, 2010: 17). Whilst close reading allows one way 'to unfold, slowly, a small number of imaginative texts' (Freeman, 2010: 17), it also acknowledges 'a way into understanding [the] larger contexts' of their sources (Bauer and Cook, 2012: 5). Bauer and Cook emphasise that by 'bringing together diverse and critical voices and a range of approaches and sources' there must be space to 'let the dissonances speak and let connections emerge' (Bauer and Cook, 2012: 5). Attention is paid to different evidence and documentation types throughout this chapter, whether it be criminal, personal, or amassed memorabilia.

[10] Some examples of pantomime dame include, Dan Leno and Douglas Byng, and some examples of drag queens include, Mrs Shuffle Wick, Danny La Rue and Lily Savage. It is worth observing that Grayson did drag performance and performed as dame early on in his career. Howerd regularly performed the role of comic in pantomime and the title role of Mother Goose in 1959. And Williams played one of the Ugly Sister's in Cinderella at the London Coliseum in 1958.

[11] By extension, many other actors like Barbara Windsor and Sid James played characters called Barbara or Sid.

Camp Characters and Comedy Queens

Comedy and camp are intimately related as effeminacy is often used for humour. Andy Medhurst writes extensively about camp performance, and identifies how, where and when performers like Williams, Howerd and Grayson navigated being camp within their vast performance repertoires. He describes camp performers as the *queens* of comedy, yet recognises specific ambiguities between celebration and ridicule that camp often attracts. For although the

> queen is a laugh magnet, […] different audiences laugh for very different reasons, ranging from the laugher of the homophobes who are delighted to see their prejudges confirmed, to the laughter of the fellow homosexuals, so schooled in and attuned to the codes of camp that they miss none of the in-jokes that glisten flirtatiously through pursed lips and the trilled arpeggios of the comedy queen's innuendo riddled banter (Medhurst, 2007: 87).

In addition to Williams, Howerd and Grayson, Medhurst's work focuses on a diverse selection of camp performers predominantly on television, where appearances of effeminate characters vary and where camp manifestations are wide-ranging. For example, in British sitcoms, many iconic characters embody a variety of effeminate eccentricities with enduring catchphrases and unforgettable personalities, but each is camp for contrasting reasons.[12]

Although there are many other characters that demonstrate the wide appeal of camp, Williams, Howerd and Grayson's lived experience fed into their performance work and for that reason their work stands out. For Williams, one clear example to highlight first is the use of Polari, the 'secret language' (Baker, 2002: 1) that he used in the radio programme *Round the Horne* (1965-68). The show revolved around two out of work actors, Julian and Sandy, who explicitly use Polari to establish their camp identity as they continually mock Kenneth Horne. In the early twentieth century, many queer men adopted Polari to communicate

[12] My review focuses on television and film not only due to the vast recorded documentation of such work that is accessible today, but because this popular media was accessible to a wide-ranging audience of its time. Later, I speak about how many post-war performers like Williams, Grayson and Howerd moved between live and recorded entertainment.

without the wider public understanding.[13] As Baker notes, 'for many Polari speakers, camp and effeminacy were ways of being' and 'Polari was one of the many ways in which they were marked as effeminate' (Baker, 2002: 6). The language was a crucial tool for queer effeminate men to navigate public and private spaces, with terms like "*so*" and words like '*ducky, dear, heartface, treasch* and *girl*' (Baker, 2002: 75, emphasis in original) were used to both conceal and reveal one's identity.[14] In addition, Williams's diaries show how he used Polari in everyday vernacular, which was different to its mediated and scripted use in *Round the Horne*. Thus, besides its strategic use, Polari was often entertaining and presented a hyper-theatrical version of oneself. As one facet of camp lived experience and entertainment, Polari demonstrates the complexity between how being camp mediated the everyday and performance.

In the wide-ranging and diverse history of British comedy, alongside characters and performers, many television shows are themselves, iconically camp. For example, the series *Are You Being Served?* (1972-1985) is a classic example of British camp comedy and John Inman's role of Mr Humphries is an archetype of camp performance. *Are You Being Served?* is a farcical and straightforward show set within a department store in London. Humphries establishes his camp performance through the gaiety of his personality, mince in physicality, and running gag surrounding the phrase "I'm free".[15] However, the laughter aimed at Inman's character is more mocking than good-humoured as Mr Humphries is usually the target of a phobic prank. Derisive humour is also evident in the 1980s radio and television work of Kenny Everett, who uses short segments and sketches of exaggerated and cross-dressed characters.[16] For example, one personality, Cupid Stunt, was a bearded lady movie star whose catchphrase, "All in the best possible taste!", mocked femininity through a debauched drag-

[13] The origins of Polari stretch back to travelling communities such as Romany gypsies, circus troupes and sailors, with each community utilising it for their own means, it also has strong ties to people working in theatre.

[14] Later, I revisit testimony on Polari from the inter-war period to note its use as a vital linguistic tool in the strategy of being camp.

[15] Also in the show is the female character of Mrs Slocombe, an archetype of female camp with garish colourful wigs and a running innuendo about her "pussy".

[16] See, *The Kenny Everett Video Show* (1978 – 1981) and later, *The Kenny Everett Television Show* (1981 – 88).

like aesthetic, which was ultimately less sophisticated than camp. The sketch-like framework of Everett's work is a typical frame for television comedy, later utilised by David Walliams and Matt Lucas in *Little Britain* (2003 – 2007). Walliams and Lucas establish stereotypical caricatures who epitomise British eccentricities and the show has recurring characters whose narrative develops over each series. In one recurring sketch, they dress as two Edwardian transvestites in the modern-day, who are oblivious to their anachronistic demeanour with a punch-line that declares they are "ladies" in high-pitched voices. Another character Lucas portrays is the Welsh Daffyd Thomas, dressing in a variety of tight latex clothing and brands anyone who speaks to him as homophobic because he is "the only gay in the village". *Little Britain* had its last series in 2007, which demonstrates that British comedy continues to rely on eccentric characters who employ stereotypes even until reasonably recently.

It is difficult not to ignore the sexist, transphobic, and uncomfortable representations in this lineage. To some extent, these are rooted in a historical period where this behaviour was more socially acceptable, such as Williams's racial stereotyping of the Khasi of Khalabar in *Carry on…Up the Khyber* (1968), or Howerd's portrayal of Ali Oopla, servant to the Wazir, in *Whoops Baghdad* (1973). Chapter Three speaks to the difficulties faced when using historical material in my performance that exhibits racist and phobic behaviours. But it must be noted that following the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020, Lucas and Walliams have been held accountable for their use of black-face in a *Little Britain* scene that lampooned minstrel performance (Blackall, 2020). I want to reiterate the complexity of how many of these characters could be unpicked and analysed with the term camp as they rely upon irony, exaggeration and artifice. Yet, these examples epitomise that primarily, comic *effeminacy* functions through the *situation* of the comedy and the laugher aimed at such characters is more mocking than good-humoured.

Historically, camp characters are often expressed through flamboyancy and exaggeration, and effeminacy is presented as artificial, caricature, always in opposition or juxtaposition to another character or their setting.[17] The viewer is very much aware of this situation, but the

[17] Although some more recent sitcoms delve deeper into the complexity of a gay camp man's existence, such as *Gimmie, Gimmie, Gimmie* (1999-2001), created by Johnathan Harvey. Tom Farrell, portrayed by James Dreyfus, is another out of work actor who lives

other characters are not, which creates a tension of dramatic comic irony. For example, in *Are You Being Served?,* Mr Humphries sexuality is always assumed but never directly mentioned. His flamboyant effeminate character often exists in opposition to masculine counterparts, and comedy is established through the incongruity of his confronted situations. However, alongside this superficial reading is comedy that emerges from incongruous class and power dynamics. It is important to note that Mr Humphries is a working-class effeminate man who attempts to perform certain middle-class expectations within the setting of an up-market department store in London. Not only is the artifice of his character demonstrated by his affective effeminacy, but his failed attempts to supersede his class positioning. Camp performance can be distinguished and demarcated by the precarious class dynamics at play and whether the performer controls the comedy; in short, who laughs at whom. Thus, although work like *Are You Being Served?* is set in a real-world context or setting, such as a work place, the narrative is fictional. John Inman portrays Mr Humphries, *not* himself. His character's sexual artifice is deeply engrained in his aspirations to appear as middle-class but failure to do so, both towards the clients he serves and his counterparts on the shop floor. The comedy of Mr Humphries works because he both fails at his masculinity and class aspirations.[18] However, as a gay man, Inman faced animosity from the gay community for his portray of the camped-up Mr Humphries, but Inman was most known for such fictional work rather than performances of himself. As opposed to Williams and Howerd, for example, who worked both as themselves and fictional characters.

Medhurst writes that since the 1950s, many British sitcoms popularised the effeminate camp character as the Wildean queen. He draws this classed distinction from Sinfield's work on Oscar Wilde, as an example of an upper-class character who 'stood at the centre of a 'disconcerting nexus of effeminacy, leisured idleness, immorality, luxury, insouciance, decadence and aestheticism' (Sinfield in Medhurst, 2007: 89). This character was often portrayed by heterosexual performers lampooning effeminate stereotypes and Medhurst

with the brash and loudmouth Linda LaHughes, performed by Kathy Burke. The show is full of comic innuendo and again plays with problematic representations, but upliftingly concludes with Farrell finally getting his break in television with a role in the soap *Crossroads.*

[18] Similarly, Mrs Slocombe's camp performance reveals itself not only through comic innuendo and garish wigs, but also in her class aspirations.

uses Sid Fields's example in *London Town* (1946). The film was an attempt at Fields, most known for stage comedy in Birmingham of the 1940s, to enter the world of cinema. In one scene, Fields plays a photographer waiting to take Whitaker, the town mayor's, official photograph. The narrative between the two men is minimal, and comedy arises between their conversation and Fields's actions. Medhurst describes:

> His performance is astonishing, taking certain elements of the Wildean queen […] but skilfully coarsening them into a stereotype more appropriate for popular comedy. He is excessive, vain, dandyish, over-emotional, gossipy, prone to tantrums, pays an unmasculine attention to the minutiae of domesticity, enjoys discussing his own and his guest's health and physical well-being in great detail, is unusually tactile, and talks in a mode of strategic extravagance which emphasises certain words with such effete forcefulness that he seems to speak them in lavender italics. He incorporates little skipping movements into his walk, he points his little finger when drinking cups of tea, and when speaking to Whittaker he gets so close and speaks with such enunciatory exaggeration that he seems to be on the verge of licking him. It is dazzlingly funny, and it contains the seeds within it of much of the tradition of camp queening that followed (Medhurst, 2007: 91).

Post-war stage to screen comics, like Fields, exaggerated upper-class sensibilities when performing effeminately, emphasising vanity, child-like tantrums, use of witty language, drinking tea, and other leisure activities. Whereas, in opposition, Medhurst notes 'the persona of a working-class queer' inhabited 'a more everyday effeminacy' (Medhurst, 2017: 90). Working-class queer camp performers drew upon gossip, domesticity, and were more grounded, mundane and pragmatic. Most importantly, Fields

> was a performance of queerness enacted by a heterosexual performer […] a ridiculing of effeminate queerness rather than a use of effeminate queerness as a platform from which to ridicule others […] Fields sketch depends on the queen as object, rather than subject (Medhurst, 2007: 91).

Medhurst's binary of the working-class queer vs Wildean quean is useful to demarcate the role of an effeminate camp character in television and film comedy. However, when figures like Williams, Howerd and Grayson traversed between performing as "themselves", and as characters, the lines are less distinct. Nevertheless, as I focus on Williams, Howerd and Grayson, an understanding of their lived-experience and the complexity they faced navigating

their lives as effeminate and queer men is important to note. With this in mind, rather than view these men as flat caricature-like visions of camp effeminacy, they have depth, and it was often in talk shows, or stand-up work, where they could recognise their lived-experiences as part of the work.

Although Medhurst's class distinction is useful, when speaking to Williams, Howerd and Grayson's social status, and to what extent they *performed* a stereotype of a working-class queer, the lines are ambiguous and knotty. Williams, Howerd and Grayson performed on numerous occasions as themselves and brought material assumed to be anecdotal from their lived-experiences, into their comedy work.[19] Indeed, there is 'a certain amount of ambiguity' (Double, 2017: 22) to what extent the television persona of "Kenneth Williams" is the real Kenneth Williams. However, Oliver Double's work on popular performance helps unpick this knotty distinction.[20] Popular performance forms and traditions stem from and appeal to many working-class sensibilities. John McGrath's (1981) manifesto on popular theatre emphasises certain qualities of performance that 'appeal to working-class audiences: directness, comedy, music, emotion, variety, effect, immediacy, localism (in the sense of 'characters and events with a local feel'), and localism (in the sense of 'a sense of identity with the performer')' (McGrath in Double, 2017: 6-7). More recently, Double identifies four key features of popular performance that, alongside the particularities of class dynamics above, help demarcate the wide-ranging field of camp performance.

1. It involves *direct connection between performer and audience*, eschewing any notion of a fourth wall.
2. It embraces *skill* and *novelty*.

[19] Such work that falls into this remit is when Kenneth Williams presented *The Kenneth Williams Show* (1970 – 1976) and *An Audience with Kenneth Williams* (1983). Frankie Howerd performed stand up work in *That Was The Week That Was* (1962) and presented *The Frankie Howerd Show* (1964 – 1966), which had various sketches interspersed. Similarly, Larry Grayson is known for hosting *Shut that Door!* (1972-77), later called *The Larry Grayson Show*, which was also punctuated with comedy sketches where Grayson played himself, he is most remembered for hosting four series of *The Generation Game* (1978-81).

[20] Examples of popular performance are wide-ranging and include, circus, clowning, burlesque, music hall, variety, stand-up comedy and pantomime. Within the hierarchy of performance tropes, the popular is 'seen as being low, disreputable and unworthy of serious attention because of particular artistic qualities it possesses' (Double, 2017: 7).

3. It is *rooted in the present moment*, directly acknowledging the performance situation and engaging with topical events.
4. It involves an *interlacing of performer and role*, which might, for example, involve the performer playing him- or herself.

(Double, 2017: 8, emphasis and formatting in original)

There is a lineage of work where camp performers connect directly to audiences, acknowledge current affairs, and interweave aspects of their lived experiences, which continues to the present day with Alan Carr and Graham Norton.[21] Although such work is still to some extent a caricature-like version of themselves, it is in the direct address with a live audience, that if the 'performers have to acknowledge the reality of the immediate performance situation, then part of this reality is their own identity' (Double, 2017: 21). Thus, directness, immediacy, and how the work is entirely self-referential and interlaces the camp *entertainer* and the camp *person*, influenced choices behind Williams, Howerd and Grayson's work used in practice I shall discuss later in this chapter.

Although the distinct form of popular performance influenced the chosen material used in practice, another driving force was the context surrounding when and where this work happened. Williams, Howerd and Grayson's personal effects offer insight into how they viewed their own camp identity and performance work away from the public realm. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Williams, Howerd and Grayson performed at differing levels of success and all experienced animosity from the Gay Liberation movements of the period. It is complicated to outline the tensions felt between progressive political movements and these public-facing figures of the time. They were viewed negatively by certain political groups fighting for equality who felt that they exhibited an archaic gendered sensibility. For

[21] In addition to his stand-up comedy work *Tooth Fairy* (2007), *Spexy Beast* (2011) and *Yap, Yap, Yap!* (2015), Carr has also presented *Alan Carr's Celebrity Ding Dong* (2008) and then the more successful *Alan Carr: Chatty Man* (2009-2016). Likewise, as well as playing the flamboyant Father Noel Furlong in *Father Ted* (1996-98), Norton has also worked in stand-up comedy. He is most famous for his late-night chat shows, *So Graham Norton* (1998-2002), *V Graham Norton* (2002-3), *The Graham Norton Effect* (2004-2005), *Graham Norton's Bigger Picture* (2005-6) and currently, *The Graham Norton Show* (2007-Present). As show hosts, presenters and stand-comedy performers in light-entertainment, they are distinguishable from situational comedy where the performers are playing camp characters.

these performers this hatred was partly a generational divide, but wholly a class issue. As Medhurst writes,

> Liberationists in Britain reserved particular scorn for those camp entertainers from working-class backgrounds (Kenneth Williams, Frankie Howerd, Larry Grayson) who have put queening codes at the centre of British popular culture but refused to be open about their sexuality, a scorn which chose to ignore the fact that 'coming out' was usually a far riskier option, or indeed no option at all, beyond the relatively cosy settings of the university or the middle-class professions (Medhurst, 1997: 287).

Williams, Howerd and Grayson's careers overlapped the Sexual Offences Act of 1967. They all negotiated their queerness through both coded and veiled means, which are at the same time, very apparent and obvious. For example, Grayson's catchphrases are naïvely rampant with references towards sexuality: "What a gay day," "Shut that door," and "He seems like a nice boy". There are phobic tendencies felt towards Williams, Howerd and Grayson that chime with negativities towards camp men today. However, Medhurst notes that for a performer like Grayson, he

> was camp in the 'wrong' way – his was an older-generation, working-class, light-entertainment camp, a use of camp as a survival strategy, a bolt for a fey provincial pansy who found showbiz camp the only possible social and cultural space where he could enact a version of himself (Medhurst, 2007: 104).

Medhurst duly notes as often overlooked the strategic and survivalist use of camp from which performers like Grayson's embodied repertoire stems. Each displayed a prosaic effeminacy that echoes the resistive and courageous pre-liberation uses of camp. However, again, the extent to which audiences were accustomed to such vernacular queerness and laughed alongside them or whether audiences found their queerness comical because of its exoticism is ambiguous.[22]

[22] Later in this chapter, I develop how in certain London communities during the interwar period, at the result of amusement, camp effeminacy enabled queer men to negotiate hostile environments. However, for more regional research into similar counter narratives of working class acceptance of queerness, see Chris D'Bray (2021), who recognises this in the rise of the British northern fun pub (NFP) between 1973-93. He notes the NFP 'provided a temporary detachment from the real world for gay people existing in a hostile legislative

Before exploring the personal effects of Williams, Howerd and Grayson, which help build a broader picture behind the personas and the antagonisms between their celebrity, sexuality and self-understanding of camp, I want to add more historical context to the survivalist strategy of camp. As Medhurst notes above, they were of an older-generation, and further context helps understand the deeper and complex histories in which Williams, Grayson and Howerd navigated their lives and how they understood camp. Williams, Howerd and Grayson often performed a persona of themselves that promoted the effeminate body through subjective experience, not as an ambiguous object of amusement. This resilient example of camp links directly to the lived experiences of being camp acknowledged during the inter-war period. The following section uses three case studies of camp experience from London's inter-war period that show how camp was used by effeminate working-class queer men to negotiate power dynamics and encourage camaraderie.

Drag Queans of London: Strategies of Camp[23]

Matt Houlbrook's *Queer London* (2005) documents historical understandings of camp and the lived experience of male effeminacy, which develops a broad picture of queer experience in London during the inter-war period. The historical use of "queer" chimes a lot with contemporary uses and expressions of queerness today, which recognises fluid, fragmented, and dynamic sexes, sexualities, and gender identities. Houlbrook writes that during the inter-war period,

> queer signified men's difference from what was considered "normal." This difference was, in part, located in their sexual or emotional attraction to - and encounters with - other men. Yet it could also encompass differences in behaviour and appearance. Queer, in this sense, could be a mode of self-understanding, a set of cultural practices, and a way of being. Its meanings were, moreover, never self-evident, stable, or singular. Within broader

and socially heteronormative climate, while offering open-minded heterosexual patrons entertainment and camp ambience' (D'Bray, 2021: 30).

[23] Houlbrook notes that the spellings of "queen" and "quean" were used interchangeably during the first half of the twentieth century (Houlbrook, 2005: 277). I use "quean" to distinguish from "drag queen" as a queer performance form discussed in Chapter Two.

> categories of class, race, gender, age, and place […] understandings of sexual difference were multiple and contested (Houlbrook, 2005: 6-7).

Queer encompassed ways of being and understanding oneself that were plural, multifaceted and non-stable, and specific to certain cultural practices, communities and spaces. However, it is essential to note that historical understandings of same-sex – or queer – practices 'cannot be mapped straightforwardly onto the modern categories "gay" or "homosexual."' (Houlbrook, 2005: 140). Likewise, inter-war London is very different 'from London today; however, it still exists as 'a prominent place in the mind of many provincial queer men, representing an enticing space of affirmation and possibility' (Houlbrook, 2005: 8-9). Nevertheless, three case studies are useful to elaborate on Medhurst's reference to queening identity and camp as a survival strategy: the London Quean, Quentin Crisp, and Lady Austin and the Camp Boys. These examples show more complexity to the lived experience of camp and a deeper understanding of the social context that Williams, Grayson and Howerd navigated their lives as an older-generation of performers.

Although historical understandings of gender and sexuality are complicated, class notions are an essential connecting thread throughout. One key figure of the inter-war period who exemplified camp's strategic function was the working-class London drag *quean*: 'a flamboyant and striking figure […] the very embodiment of sexual difference' (Houlbrook, 2005: 7). For the London quean, their working-class experience of effeminacy defined their queerness and ultimately dictated how they understood being camp. Whereby,

> labelling someone a quean – or identifying as such – was thus not who a man had sex with but his gendered character. […] Rather than sexual practice, terms like "pansy," "Nancy-boy," "cissy" and "Poof" denoted particular gendered patterns of appearance and behaviour. They were, in the first instance, used to describe those who failed to do what was expected of a man at work, on the streets, or at play (Houlbrook, 2005: 143).

Men like the London quean, who queerly identified against forms of working-class masculinities, used three emblematic strategies of camp to negotiate the public sphere. The first strategy of camp practice was to enact effeminacy boldly. For men like John Alcock, who "loved being camp...it was defiance...I wasn't going to be the same as everyone else. I wanted

to be different as I was different." […] "You won't accept me...so I'll just let you know that I'm there" (Alcock in Houlbrook, 2005: 149). Being camp was a courageous act of difference as defiance. The second strategy of camp was to react against the negative attention and aggressive behaviour that defiant public effeminacy might receive. Alex Purdie describes camp as his safeguard:

> I don't wait for other people to lift me because I know they're going to sooner or later…In a pub you get the {kiss sound} and all this lark…So I lift myself first. They stand no chance cos I'm a star. And I won't have it any other way… You've got to be the first in…be aggressive…get up the front. Give them a mouthful (Purdie in Houlbrook, 2005: 150).

Being camp meant navigating the lived realities of condemned male effeminacy. The last strategy of camp was to enact coded amity and camaraderie towards another effeminate man, often described as '[c]amp love' (Houlbrook, 2005: 149). Relationships established due to mutual effeminacy, linguistic choices, such as the ironic use of female pronouns, playful bitchiness, or overt use of Polari, each demonstrates an act of camp love.

> We always said Girl at the end of a sentence… You'd say something like "you all right girl" or "fancy a drink girl" … "ooh will you just vada the bona filiomi ajax" …It was all camp and rather silly [Trans. Ooh will you just look at the good looking young man nearby/over there] (May in Houlbrook, 2005: 152, translation my own).

The language of Polari was a vital linguistic strategy of camp and a crucial tool for effeminate men to navigate public and private spaces and served 'a means of expressing conflict' (Baker, 2002: 74) from within groups as well as to the outside world. In a highly theatrical manner, Polari helped 'mitigate appalling circumstances faced by the homosexual man: arrests, entrapments, blackmail and hostility etc., by rendering them comic' (Baker, 2002: 76-77). Polari was both used to be entertaining and to defend oneself in a hyper-theatrical manner. As Houlbrook notes, for men like Alcock, Purdie and May, being camp 'burlesqued the "normal" world, and the everyday practices through which men forged a place in the modern metropolis' (Houlbrook, 2005: 152). Although these tactics reveal a paradigmatic cliché that connect everyday effeminacy to heightened performance forms, often rendered as artificial and presentational, there is more complexity to such visions. Strategies of camp for the

London quean during the inter-war period were utilised to associate with likeminded individuals as well as defend again the hostiles that effeminacy brought.

Quentin Crisp's biography, *The Naked Civil Servant* (1985 [1968]), provides further complexity to camp lived experiences during the inter-war period of London. Although I use his biography to document queer experience, it is worth nothing that later in his life, he attracted the public attention following the television film made of his account, *The Naked Civil Servant* (1975). The film portrays some memorable interpretations of 1920s effeminacy, with interesting parallels to the comic representations of comedy queens and characters discussed above. However, in contrast to Williams, Grayson and Howerd, celebrity and publicity affected Crisp's effeminacy differently, as he eventually made his livelihood as a raconteur and subject of public curiosity for simply being himself and not being afraid to air his personal views and opinions.[24] Nevertheless, Crisp's account is a very influential document on the pre-war queer experience of London.

For Crisp, the initial purpose of being camp was to solicit sexual trade, but it was also a tool used to defend his effeminacy and associate with other effeminate men. Upon moving to London at the age of eighteen, Crisp provides the reader with a colourful image as he first recalls walking through the streets and sees male prostitutes soliciting for business.

> As I wandered along Piccadilly or Shaftesbury Avenue, I passed young men standing at the street corners who said, 'Isn't it terrible tonight, dear? No men about. The Dilly's not what it used to be.' […] Here they were for all the world to recognize – or almost all the world (Crisp, 1985: 25).

Although there was an acknowledgement of these men, Crisp notes it was dependent on who read the coded nuances of advertising sexual trade. He continues to recall that a

> passer-by would have to be very innocent indeed not to catch the meaning of the mannequin walk and the stance in which the hip was only prevented from total dislocation by the hand placed upon it. The whole set of stylizations that

[24] Williams knew John Hurt, who played Crisp in the film. Following his portrayal, Williams writes in his diary that 'he seems to have *taken on* the Quentin Crisp persona!! He was behaving very badly and kissing everyone' (Davies, 1993: 526, emphasis in original).

> are known as ‘camp’ (a word that I was hearing then for the first time) was, in 1926, self-explanatory. Women moved and gesticulated in this way. Homosexuals wished for obvious reasons to copy them. The strange thing about ‘camp’ is that it has become fossilized. The mannerisms have never changed. If I were now to see a woman sitting with her knees clamped together, one hand on her hip and the other lightly touching her back hair, I should think, ‘Either she scored her last social triumph in 1926 or it is a man in drag. (Crisp, 1985: 25-26).

Crisp provides a vivid and amusing description of the male camp body in 1926 that can be categorised merely as an exaggerated feminine man, specifically, exhibiting archaic femininity of the 1920s. Crisp's vision of camp is a heightened and anachronistic vision of femininity that is resistant to adaptation or evolution. He reflects that one reason

> ‘camp’ is set in the ‘twenties [is] because after that differences between the sexes – especially the visible differences – began to fade. This, of course, has never mattered to women in the least. They know they are women. To homosexuals, who must, with every breath they draw, with every step they take, demonstrate they are feminine, it is frustrating. They look back to that more formal era and try to re-live it (Crisp, 1985: 26).

Crisp’s image of camp is deeply rooted in sexuality and sexual preference and the antithesis of a rough working-class man. However, Crisp notes that the ‘[b]oys arrested for soliciting were found guilty before they had spoken […] they were being condemned for effeminacy’ (Crisp, 1985: 29-30). The subtleties of gestures and over-identifications of dress and demeanour were visual ways men expressed their camp identity.

Crip’s memoir was turned into a television film during the 1970s, dramatising many of the anecdotes mentioned above. One early scene shows Crisp wandering London’s streets, as described above, and he interacts with an effeminate man in the street, and this character takes him to a café in Soho. The stranger introduces Crisp to fellow effeminate men; two camp names we hear are “Gloria Swanson” and “Bermondsey Liz”. When asked if he is “on the game”, Crisp is confused and unsure what they mean. Nevertheless, the group confirm his queerness by stating that he “is so alright”. And when asked if he would like to try some lipstick, following the stares around the table, he applies. The film then shifts to Crisp’s narrated commentary, that he learnt a necessary fact of life at this moment: “Exhibitionism

is a drug. You get hooked!" This small moment emphasises that practices like wearing lipstick and cosmetics, or using female names, as well as briefly hinting at Polari, are important markers that demonstrate how effeminate ways of being, bonded communal ties.

A later scene demonstrates how effeminacy held defence in precarious situations. In the same café, we witness the camp boys get harassed and assaulted by a group of east London "Hoxton Boys", exhibiting stereotypical rough working-class masculinity. Crisp provokes his attacker, who points out his effeminacy and presumed sexuality. He then agitates his attacker, by playfully noting how he could read Crisp's effeminacy without affirming his queerness, and that he best "go back to Hoxton before they find out he is a queer". This quip aggravates the man and results in the gang destroying the café. His narrated commentary remarks that although, "some roughs are really queer, some *queers* are really rough".

Crisp does not spend much of his time within groups of camp men like the Dilly Boys as he finds the act of sex a shameful exchange. 'But', as Crisp acerbically notes, 'to the boys this profession never seemed shameful. It was their daytime occupations for which they felt the need to apologize' they 'were prostitutes by vocation – blessed in infancy with gifts for serving the community in a special way' (Crisp, 1985: 30). His departure from such groups was due to not wanting to conceal or navigate his public displays of effeminacy, which alienated him from his contemporaries. For, Crisp reflects, '[t]hose who camped in private and watched their step in public felt that my not doing either was an indirectly expressed criticism of both these activities. They were right' (Crisp, 1985: 86). Although Crisp writes that society was much more rigid and distinguished during the 1920s, he hints at how camp traversed between public and private spaces. Nevertheless, Crisp is one singular narrative that provides evidence on the lived experience of being camp.

Another account that provides a broader picture of how men understood camp as a physical space and a resistive practice is Lady Austin and the Camp Boys. The criminal record 'Lady Austin's 'Camp Dance Club' (CRIM 1/639) documents a warrant for the arrest of sixty people in 1933 who participated in the private "Camp Dance Club" in Holland Park, London. What makes this case noteworthy is that in the weeks leading up to the night of the arrest, the police officers Labbett and Chopping conducted undercover investigations. Both officers

wore women's clothing and cosmetics to blend into the environment. As seen through the officers' testimony, the record states that on 20th December 1933, at about 11.25 p.m. officers entered the ballroom at 27 Holland Park Avenue and arrested sixty people and charged thirty-two men and one woman. The report reads that the twenty-five-year-old Lady Austin, also known as Austin Salmon, was under a warrant, 'for the purpose of exhibiting […] lewd, scandalous, bawdy and obscene performances and practices'. Houlbrook also recognises the importance of this case study (2002). However, I draw from my encounter with the material for the testimonies and statements taken during their arrest for the following section and find striking similarities to the comedic confrontational tactics and sharp-wit used by performers Williams and Howerd.

The report notes that opposite the Holland Park address is the Mitre pub where men would meet before going to the club. The officers knew the pub's role as a meeting point, and there met a man 'who was very effeminate in manner. His lips were rouged, his eyebrows pencilled, face powdered and his person perfumed.' Waiting at the bar: 'He raised his eyebrows, rolled his eyes and smiled […] "Are you going to the 'Drag' tonight?" After some small talk, they crossed the road and entered the Holland Park address. They paid 1/6d to Grace, 'a man dressed as a woman in evening dress, painted and pencilled, bare-backed to the waist […] "Welcome, darlings"', Grace greeted them. In the main hall, half the men were wearing women's evening dress and the other half in lounge suits: these were "Kings" and "Queenies". Officer Labbett acted as Chopping's "Queenie" – "Oh, hasn't she got a lovely colour tonight", someone commented. Within the 'Camp Dance Club', identifications and enactments of gender were fluid, for on one of the nights Austin dressed as a "Queenie", and on the night of the arrest, he was a "King". People also wore fancy dress costumes, and 'small prizes were given for the best […] Scent Sprays, Fancy Soap, Powder Puffs etc.' As well as self-expression, the club offered a space for men to undertake relationships, trade sexual acts, and have fun: 'Phrases such as "Are you coming on, darling?" and "Are you fruity, dear?" were common.' When Labbett asked where they could go to have sex, a man called Clary replied: "Why, in the lavatory or garden, of course." […] "Oh darling, do come outside, I can give you a glorious time".

On the night of the arrest, Lady Austin exhibits the strategic use of camp as evidenced from the same testimony above. As the Chief Inspector entered the club and announced, "I want Lady Austin", she replied: "I am her ladyship". In doing so, Austin upholds a tactical and subversive pride against the Officer's command. In presenting male as a "King", Austin reiterates the title "ladyship" and further antagonises the officers by explaining the rules and regulations to her club. When asked, "Why are these men dressed as women and half naked?" Austin simply replies, "They are the queens tonight. We take it in turns. I was a queenie last week". Moreover, when the officers question the validity of the club, Austin retorts:

> it is a real club The Camp Dance Club and they are all my camp boys […] How difficult is it. You don't understand. We don't like women. A drag is a dance without women and give and take is between ourselves. Oh, dear, this trouble would be obviated if they made our love legal (CRIM 1/639).

Although Austin places himself as the martyr for the Camp Boys, the authorities wanted to make an example out of those arrested. As Houlbrook notes, many tabloid newspapers documented that the men were taken to court the following day, still wearing their female clothing and make-up and made to wear numbers tied around their necks with pink ribbon. He writes that

> [n]umbering objectified the Camp Boys, directing the public gaze to the bodily site that instantiated their transgression – highlighted by some accounts' mischievous suggestion that the cards were secured around their necks by 'pink ribbon' (Houlbrook, 2002:38).

However, 'numbered placards rendered the size of queer networks visual, immediate and undeniable' (Houlbrook, 2002:38), and such publicity 'was countered by a celebratory and aspirational queer subject' (Houlbrook, 2002: 48). Houlbrook notes that although there was an attempt by the police to ridicule and humiliate the Camp Boys, as well as marginalise male effeminacy, it demonstrated the scale and size of queer networks and showed other queer men, they were not alone.

The double edge sword of camp effeminacy is marked in Lady Austin's case, and this precarious duality is recognised further with Houlbrook's examination of the London quean.

For although there is evidence that suggests how in certain communities, the London quean was 'acknowledged, precariously accepted, and often welcomed' (Houlbrook, 2005: 160), this was only at the result of amusement. They 'could forge a place within neighbourhood life precisely because they had forfeited their status as men' (Houlbrook, 2005: 160). The London quean was a figure of quotidian amusement and spectacle for working-class men to enact their masculinity against. This foundation is paramount to recognise as camp transgressed such public and private boundaries; that on the one hand, publicity of effeminacy promoted the queer subject, which resulted in either celebration or ridicule and thus, further ostracism. In addition, it demonstrates the complex social context that Williams, Grayson and Howerd navigated their lives and a richer acknowledgement of camp lived experience in the early twentieth century.

With this more complex history in mind, I return to the three case studies examined in this thesis and reiterate Medhurst's observation on camp comedy. That 'different audiences laugh for very different reasons, ranging from the laugher of the homophobes who are delighted to see their prejudges confirmed, to the laughter of the fellow homosexuals' (Medhurst, 2007: 87). I want to keep in mind the publicity of homosexuality, or queerness, by way of camp, as I move forward and discuss the case studies and aspects of their performance repertoire engaged with through practice. In the following section, I situate Williams, Howerd and Grayson alongside each other, to show the interconnectedness of their careers and discuss them as figures with depth, substance, and complicated lived experiences. By examining Williams, Howerd and Grayson's personal effects, such as diaries, letters and scrapbooks, alongside their performance repertoires, the following section reveals nuances and ambiguities between how they negotiated their queerness through both coded and veiled, but at the same time, very apparent ways.

Behind the Personas: Negotiating Queerness

The last part of this chapter spends some time outlining brief biographies of Grayson, Howerd and then Williams, through their biographies, diaries, letters and scrapbooks, to establish how they viewed themselves as queer, effeminate and camp men. It speaks about their lives through the chosen parts of their vast repertoires used in this research's performance

practice and connects them to the deeper and complex social history of camp laid out above. I use chosen moments that both exemplify their camp performance and are integral to their career, which are used through the practical element of this thesis. The history behind these small instances uncovers connections and interactions between producers, writers and each other, as they comment on the rise of each other's fame and critique their work. What manifests from these personal documents is the legacy of queer performers with celebrated livelihoods negotiating their otherness in the public sphere.[25]

Although Grayson worked in variety, clubs, and drag revues from an early age, it was not until at the age of forty-nine in 1972 that his television career took-off. His biography, *Shut that Door!* (2017), written by scriptwriter and producer Tony Nicholson, extensively narrates Grayson's journey and unpicks his slow and late rise to fame. Nicholson is very reflective in the text and comments on his own memories of the late-performer throughout. Grayson's legacy (as well as Howerd and Williams) lives on through many people's anecdotes and memories. In the foreword to Grayson's biography, Julian Clary illustrates this perfectly:

> As an effeminate child of impressionable age I watched, learned and laughed at Larry Grayson's Generation Game each Saturday Night. […] Of course I didn't realize that Grayson was carrying on a tradition of camp comedy from the likes of Music Hall legends Sid Fields and Douglas Byng or that he was paving the way for me, Paul O'Grady, Graham Norton and Alan Carr in years to come. […] In the mid-eighties, as I made my way in the world, I doubt I thought much about how Grayson influenced my own style of comedy or the debt I owe him (Clary in Nicholson, 2017: 1-2).

Grayson was very self-aware of being camp throughout his work. The playful books he published with imaginative stories are full of innuendo: *Larry Grayson's Parlour Fun Book*

[25] Alongside the anecdote, theatre historian Jacky Bratton uses biography as a case study to advance her notion of intertheatricality, which 'seeks to articulate the mesh of connections between all kinds of theatre texts, and between texts and their users' (Bratton, 37: 2003). The role of biography in personal and professional histories of theatre are one way in which actor's curate and project a future vision for themselves. They must be read 'as part of the hegemonic process' (Bratton, 99: 2003) and 'not simply as the vehicle of more or less dubious or provable facts, but as a process of identity-formation that extends beyond individuals to the group or community to which they belong' (Bratton, 102: 2003).

(1980) and *Grayson's War: How Larry and His Friends Helped the War Along* (1983). The latter is a book that explains through poems, stories and recipes, how Grayson and his "companions", Everard Farquharson, Slack Alice and Apricot Lil, "helped" support the Second World War effort. Most humorously memorable, are sections on 'Slack's Rhubarb', 'The Grand Tickle Your Fancy Competition', and how to 'Dip Your Wick for Britain'. The Larry Grayson Collection in the Theatre and Performance Collections at the Victoria & Albert Museum holds many of Grayson's scrapbooks and journals. There are copious amounts of newspaper clippings Grayson kept documenting his rise to fame in these records. In his early work, Grayson performed under the name Billy Breene, often referred to as the "Northern Frankie Howerd", a comparison that documents his position in the same repertoire of Howerd, albeit a local variety. In the collection are regional newspaper cuttings about his work as a pantomime dame and then a shift in the documentation after he rose to higher celebrity. Following a break-through performance at the London Palladium in 1970, many articles refer to his transition from small-town comedian to a national camp icon. What is insightful is his work and relationship with the female impersonator Danny La Rue. Telegrams, letters and programmes reveal that he used to finish his gigs at the Palladium and then head to perform late-night in La Rue's club.[26] Aside from his career, Grayson was a very generous person, frequently placing full-page advertisements in *The Stage* newspaper to thank those he worked with.[27] Journalists often played with the copious use of the word "camp" and the double meaning of the word "gay". Amongst the scrapbooks and performance memorabilia are his notebooks filled with numerous amounts of religious phrases and Bible verses, which show a hidden side to how Grayson viewed his self and sexuality.

In 1972, Grayson made a stand-out performance on the television show *Saturday Variety*, which propelled his career and celebrity. The practical element of this thesis uses this short five-minute stand-up piece, not only due to its importance in his career, but also because it demonstrates many key attributes and catchphrases Grayson is known to use. However, *Saturday Variety* is not the first-time Grayson appears on the television. In 1956, Kenneth

[26] When La Rue fell ill in 1971, Grayson was the only person he wanted to cover the Mayfair nightclub's revue show.

[27] Full-page advertisements were an established mode of self-promotion for a performer at the end of a run or tour in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century.

Horne, invites Grayson to appear on the comedy special *Opening Night* (1956).[28] But this did not go well:

> Grayson's high camp performance caused […] outrage in middle England, with the chattering classes all lunging for the 'off' button in their droves. Homophobic viewers' letters poured into the BBC complaining that they didn't want to see "that sort of person" on their television sets ever again (Nicholson, 2017: 76).

Grayson eventually returned to perform in local clubs and support more significant artists in regional theatre.[29] In 1970, Michael Grade became Grayson's agent and his career advances.[30] However, Grade, driven by the homophobic context needed to shift Grayson's profile. Nicholson notes, 'if Larry was to become a mainstream star, [Grade had to] extricate him from the drag shows, the gay revues, and the seedy late-night dives, and put him back in a more conventional entertainment environment' (Nicholson, 2017: 92). In 1970, Grayson performed in London for the first time and received rave reviews, which led him to return in 1971 to more high-profile venues, like the London Palladium. He got press attention that compared him to Howerd, who was not amused by such acclaim:

> The London Evening News, the Daily Express and The Stage critics […] all made favourable comparisons with established comedian Frankie Howerd… something which didn't please Frankie Howerd unfortunately. Howerd, an insecure performer at the best of times, decided he was the victim of plagiarism, and took an instant dislike to Larry. In fact their acts were very different, but you could see why critics saw a vague similarity in their high camp gossipy performance styles. Truthfully it was just a case of lazy journalism on the part of the critics, but Frankie Howerd went through life saying that Larry had pinched his act (Nicholson, 2017: 97).

In 1972, *Saturday Variety* launched as a significant new series for ITV and Grade asked the staff booker to look at Grayson, given his recent acclaim at venues such as the London

[28] Most known for the 1960s-comedy radio show *Round the Horne* that features Kenneth Williams.

[29] Grayson plays in a string of high camp variety shows at the *Theatre Royal Stratford East: A Camping We Will Go* (1969-70), *Back to Camp* (1969-70) and *Gaiety Box Revue* (1969-70). As well as in a drag revue show at the Royalty Theatre called, *Birds of a Feather* (1970); a highly produced, extravagant show that ultimately fails.

[30] Grade is a prominent figure of the British television industry.

Palladium. Grayson's booked and ITV was inundated with enthusiastic comments from viewers asking for more, and he eventually appears in sixteen episodes that year. It's difficult to grasp whether Grayson's triumph is due to a change in his material, a shift in audience viewing attitudes, his recent high-profile success, or a combination of all. Nevertheless, later in 1972, he performed in the Royal Gala Show, and started his own television show, *Shut that Door!* (1972-77). The same year, following his own Christmas Special on ITV, Eamon Andrews presented him with the famous red book for *This Is Your Life*. It is remarkable to note how much his career took off from 1970-1972, and at the heart of this trajectory is the short moment on *Saturday Variety*.

Nicholson notes that many critics compared Grayson to Howerd, and in his scrapbooks are early posters that refer to the then titled, Billy Breen, as "The New Frankie Howerd" or "The Midland's Frankie Howerd". Connections between Williams, Howerd and Grayson are easy to make from reviewing their repertoire; however, there are further links in Howerd and Williams's personal records. They both disliked Grayson slowly gaining popularity on the television during the early 1970s. McCann notes, that for Howerd, of 'all the things he disliked about the performer [...] the thing he disliked most was the way Grayson seemed to keep getting jobs that *he* had expected to be offered' (McCann, 2004: 269, emphasis in original). In 1978, Howerd coveted the job of hosting *The Generation Game*, however, when Grayson took over: 'That man,' he grumbled, 'stole my bread and butter' (McCann, 2004: 270). Also, Williams writes in his diary around early 1977, that 'the Grayson TV Show is a complete crib of my stuff, and that Inman is doing the same thing on the BBC! It hadn't hit me before! Of course! they've [sic] found other people to do it, and cheaper in every sense' (Davies, 1993: 533). As well as contempt for each other's work, as they infringed on each other's employment opportunities as the camp comic, they also had admiration. The history behind the material used of Howerd in the performance element of this research not only emphasises the importance of it in his career but reveals further connections between Howerd and Williams.

Alongside Howerd's varied performance work on the radio, television, film and stage, is his autobiography, *On the Way I Lost It* (1976), which omits much of his personal life. Although a centralised archive or collection that concentrates on Howerd does not exist, material

documenting his career and life endures across many private collections and the BBC archive. This material comes together in his biography, *Frankie Howerd: Stand Up Comic* (2004) by historian Graham McCann. Howerd kept his personal life an enigma, yet he chose to write a biography for publicity and commercial reasons. When discussing the rationale behind Howerd compiling his memoir, McCann notes that:

> In a way, it made some commercial sense […]. In another way, however, it made no sense at all: to produce a memoir that was believable as well as readable, Howerd would have to be seen to reveal aspects of a private life that he had worked so assiduously over the past thirty years to keep hidden (McCann, 2004: 255).

Ultimately, 'the facts relating to his sexuality […] were airbrushed out of existence' (McCann, 2004: 256). Now it is known that Howerd's manager, Dennis Heymer, was his long-time companion for more than thirty years until Howerd's death in 1993. When speaking about his performance style, McCann notes that, although Howerd was the product of a deeply prejudice and homophobic era, 'he could never quite curb his compulsion to flirt, or worse, with other men of either sexual persuasion' (McCann, 2004: 258). Howerd's camp performance was very different from the work of Grayson and Williams. McCann describes it as 'rashly irrational' and one that 'steadfastly refused to abandon the old carapace of camped-up heterosexuality' (McCann, 2004: 258). The section of Howerd's performance material used here is from a stand-up monologue featured on *That Was The Week That Was* (*TW3*) in 1963. Howerd's appearance on *TW3* highlights one of his many comebacks and demonstrates his ability to merge his attuned craft of live audience repartee with political satire for a younger audience. The use of this *TW3* sketch, broadly shows that camp comedy is not apolitical, but can use contemporary politics as the foundation for its work and demonstrates many attributes of Howerd's performance style.

During the 1950s, Howerd suffered from nervous exhaustion, depression, and hair loss, and was cast in a series of unsuccessful productions. In 1960, he found out his agent had been stealing his money and sold many assets to stay afloat. However, following an exceptional performance at the 1962 *Evening Standard* Drama Awards he was approached by *Beyond the Fringe* cast member, Peter Cook, to perform at The Establishment, a nightclub in Soho,

London. Founded by Cook and Nicholas Luard, The Establishment club was a notable forerunner to *TW3*, a 'predominantly university-educated and satire-obsessed audience' (McCain, 2004: 189). His set was very similar to *TW3,* as Howerd speaks to the ludicrous nature of his presence at such a venue and incorporates contemporary politics into his act. Williams attended the opening night and wrote in his diary: 'He was v. good but his performance was marred by an awful woman who kept shouting and interrupting him. I must say, he bore it all with good humour' (Davies, 1993: 198). McCain transcribes the audio from this set and reveals that

> the real culprit, when it came to interruptions, has been none other than Williams himself with his extraordinarily loud and unmistakable nasal laugh – WILLIAMS: 'Nnnnnaaahha-ha-ha-ha-ha!' HOWERD: 'Ooh, Gawd help us!' WILLIAMS: '*Nnnnnnnaaaaahha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Heeeeenneeeaahheeeeeah!*' HOWERD: 'Ladies and Gentle-*men*, I want you to watch this, it's very rare – one comedian laughing at another one. And of course, writing it down at the same time! (McCain, 2004: 195, emphasis in original).

Following The Establishment, Howerd appears on the new BBC television's late-night revue, *TW3*: a pioneer in the satire boom of the 1960s that broke comedy grounds by lampooning politics and political figures, it 'was *the* show that the self-styled 'smart' peoples used to savour' (McCain, 2004: 196-7, emphasis in original). With a similar set for this gig, Howerd's performance was a success.

> The audience loved it, and loved him. Although it was a live show, Howerd ran on, and on, and on: scheduled to do eight minutes, he kept going – ten minutes, and still more minutes – clearly revelling in the spotlight, but this time no one complained. No one wanted him to stop (McCain, 2004: 197).

Following *TW3*, 'the papers were full of references to his tremendous televised success. Now there could no longer be any doubt about it: Frankie Howerd's triumphant comeback was complete' (McCain, 2004: 198). Howerd would later go on to star in the London production of Stephen Sondheim's new musical *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1963) and maintain regular television work. Although my practical work engages with the later *TW3* recording of this set, hearing Williams laughter on the audio recording made on the night at The Establishment is noteworthy, and although he doesn't admit to enjoying the performance in his diary, the audio record states otherwise.

Like Howerd, Williams's career spanned various works on stage, radio, television and film and was known as an avid diarist, which the British Library holds possession of alongside approximately 2,000 letters. Revealed in his diary is his pious sense of self that profoundly affected the relationship he had with his sexuality. The journalist and broadcaster Russell Davies published the edited diaries in 1993 and letters in 1994. Williams's broader material exists in various holdings, with assorted artefacts and documents existing nationally in private collections. Paul Richardson, a friend and neighbour of Williams, was left the Williams estate, who donated the letters and diaries to the British Library. Radio broadcaster, Wes Butters, holds a small collection of private notes, scripts and photographs. Butters and Davies published these in *Kenneth Williams Unseen* (2008), a text that documents the chronology of his life through the memorabilia and anecdotes from friends, family and colleagues. Williams himself wrote an autobiography, *Just Williams* (1985) and published *Acid Drops* (1988) and *Back Drops* (1984), which encapsulate story's and jokes documenting his acidic wit and clever word-play.

Williams's letters and diaries reveal insight into his professional and personal life and his views on camp, effeminacy, and homosexuality. In one letter written in response to *The Observer* television critic George Melley in 1968, Williams reveals a lot about how he viewed himself and the subject of camp. Throughout many of his diary entries is a pained sense of self, continuous suicidal thoughts and feelings of shame. The below section quotes at length to show the complicated and internalised feelings he possessed.

> I have had notice after notice in which I have been called 'epicene' and 'feminine' and 'camp' and a 'purveyor of homosexuality' and heaven knows what, and this, when I was performing stuff written by professional writers, not myself. When I first read these sort of notices I was appalled and deeply hurt. I thought to myself 'surely I do not come over like that?' but then it happened so often that I began to think it must be true. True that is, for the objective outsider, not NOT for me. If I really believed that I look in life, like the kind of effeminate poof the critics describe, I think I would do away with myself, and goodness knows there are plenty of occasions in life when I feel near to it. […] The reason I write to you was because you drag in the old queer bit again this Sunday in your column when you say of me 'Kenneth Williams – whom God preserve, if She really exists…' which I suppose means that if there is any God interested in preserving me, you think this God must be feminine, and not

> masculine. […] I take my God very seriously – for me, the word embodies indestructible values that are outside of man, values like Truth and Goodness and Beauty, which I think we can strive after though alas, most of the time we fail, and I think your line quoted above is unworthy. It's the sort of thing one might expect to hear from a smartie queen at the cocktail party. […] You may think that we're 'show-off's' but that's what we are employed for, and in a chat spot we are actually at the moment of creation and we KNOW critics are watching. Ask yourself how you'd feel if there was someone over your shoulder analysing each sentence as it got to paper. I realise that I have been trapped in the façade of the persona I have adopted, but it was forced on me. If anyone gets called a pervert long enough, you adopt the shield you can get hold of to protect yourself. If a bloke is supposed to be comical they should say whether or not he has succeeded in being comical; not whether he is a queer, or psychologically maladjusted or something. Forgive me going on like this but I think your heart is in the right place and wanted you to know how I feel (Davies, 1994: 88-89, emphasis in original).

Ultimately, Williams never sent this letter. However, he was sophisticated enough to understand that his heightened public persona was very much a part of his camp identity formed from his lived experiences of being queer. On the psychology of celebrity, David Giles uses Williams to draw attention to the difficulties many modern celebrities faced with their fame. Giles writes that many found a loss of privacy difficult to manage and notes that '[m]ost of Williams's unpleasant experiences involving members of the public seemed to stem from strangers' knowledge about, and hostility towards, his homosexuality' (Giles, 2000: 96). As Giles notes, Williams's ambivalence towards his celebrity status constantly shifted. Like many other modern celebrities, he fleeted between either craving the stardom or detesting its intrusive nature. Williams's feelings towards his sexuality adds another layer of intricacy and his diary serves as a valuable document to unpick such complexity. However, an urge to understand more *behind* the persona of Williams fed into my decision to use a radio interview from 1977 in my performance practice, *Flash, Bang, Wallop*. The retrospective interview with Clergyman and broadcaster, Owen Spencer-Thomas attempts to reveal the person beyond the persona of "Kenneth Williams". It reveals a profound and intellectual side to the performer, as he speaks to the pious aspect of his identity and devout sense of faith, yet the interview continually returns to his comedy roles. He speaks of many things noted above, such as being 'trapped in the façade of the persona' adopted, but that this forms part of the 'shield' he uses to protect himself. Also, Williams refers to his camp persona in ways that run

parallel to the oral history testimonies presented earlier, where camp becomes a powerful safeguard.

Although Williams's diaries reveal a lonely and reclusive life-style, there are insights into friendships Williams had with other queer men, most notably, the libertine playwright Joe Orton. Four days before the Sexual Offences Act assented, Orton and Williams met and did not speak highly of the article. On Sunday, 23rd July, Williams writes: 'Went up to see Joe Orton & Kenneth [Halliwell]. They were v. kind. We chatted about homosexuality and the effect the new clause would have. We agreed it would accomplish little' (Davies, 1993: 308). Walking back to Kings Cross station springboards their discussion onto Orton's, 'inability to love, his horror of involvement, & his need to be utterly free' (Davies, 1993: 308). Parallels of revulsion are reflected by Williams later, but this time in regard to *his* sex life. He describes it as 'some sort of crisis – this incessant noise, the skin disease, the preponderant sexual problem' (Davies, 1993: 308). The sight of a labourer working half-naked in the summer heat makes him feel '[f]ull of guilt and shame. Even if I did it, I know I couldn't live with sex. I must be going slightly mad' (Davies, 1993: 308). Orton, another avid diarist, recalls this conversation and encourages Williams to shed the sense of guilt and shame he feels towards his sexuality:

> 'You must do whatever you like,' I said, 'as long as you enjoy it and don't hurt anyone else, that's all that matters.' 'I'm basically guilty of being a homosexual you see,' he said. 'Then you shouldn't be,' I said. 'Get yourself fucked if you want to. Get yourself anything you like. Reject all the values of society. And enjoy sex. When you're dead you'll regret not having fun with your genital organs.' […] Kenneth said, 'I feel so guilty about it all.' 'Fucking Judeo-Christian civilisation!' I said, in a furious voice, startling a passing pedestrian. We parted and I hope I'd done him a bit of good. At least I'd told him not to feel guilty. It isn't as simple as that, but at least I've tried to help (Lahr, 1998: 251).

The tension of guilt and shame that shrouds Williams's feelings about his sexuality and sexual identity uncovers itself through his heightened persona. However, in his relationship with Orton, he can discuss these urges and desires that make him feel discouraged. A day later, Williams writes in his diary:

> Wrote to Joe Orton thanking him for being so kind yesterday. He listened so patiently to my problems – so did Kenneth Halliwell. They were both so kind to me. It is v. nice to have them as neighbours I must say, it's good to be able to walk up there and see them (Davies, 1993: 308).

At times, reading parts of Williams diaries are haunting. Most famous is the last line in his final entry that reads: 'what's the bloody point?' (Davies, 1993: 801). An entry from 1963 resonates significantly with this research's scope and its autobiographical impulse, as Williams wonders about his life and legacy.

> I wonder if anyone will ever know about the emptiness in my life. I wonder if anyone will ever stand in a room that I have lived in, and touch the things that were once part of my life, and wonder about me, and ask themselves what manner of man I was. How to ever tell them? How to ever explain? (Davies, 1993: 218)

This entry epitomises the personal and intellectual impulse from where this research stems, as it approaches the complexity of these figures alongside their camp performance and legacy.

Conclusions

Throughout this chapter, the critical components of queerness and class have enabled a deeper discussion on British histories of camp and Williams, Howerd and Grayson's performance work and lived experiences. These factors have exposed a precarious tension between how they navigated their personal and professional life. Their working-class queerness was intimately imbued in both prosaic and performance based visions of camp. Ultimately, their livelihoods rested in a precarious position whereby camp over-identifications with effeminate tropes were used to conceal and hide their lived reality of queerness. In other words, understanding anything sure on Williams, Howerd and Grayson is hidden amongst many falsehoods. A paradox that is well-recognised when discussing camp more broadly and picked up again later throughout Chapter Three.[31] Presently, there are

[31] Phillip Core's encyclopaedic book on camp is titled, *Camp: The Lie that Tells the Truth* (1984) which refers to Jean Cocteau's statement from 1922, 'I am a lie that tells the truth'.

nuanced insights into how they self-identified and understood their camp performance to be an integral and complicated part of their career. This discussion has also exposed connections between each performer and demonstrated how the uniqueness of their type of performance feeds into prior histories of camp lived experience. Such as research on London's inter-war period, where camp practices were recognised to function for those queerly identified against working-class masculinities. However, the co-presence of bodies discussed throughout this chapter has revealed an absence in the liveness and immediacy of their repertoire. Nevertheless, it has promoted an image of camp that is less insipid, weak and caricature-like, and more complex, courageous and resilient. Before returning to speak about Williams, Howerd and Grayson and experiential insights gleaned through practice, I turn to a wider conversation on the creative methodologies employed throughout the research. The following chapter discusses the practical methods employed in this study. It explores how performance offers significant new insights, by examining the repertoires of Williams, Howerd and Grayson, that contributes to ways of thinking about historical narratives of camp embodiment.

Chapter Two[32]

Lip-synching and Reenactment: Queer Strategies of Embodiment

This chapter explores how lip-synching and reenactment have been central to this research methodology's creative elements. There were three cycles of studio and performance process that led to the creative works: an initial pilot piece, *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping* (2015), and then two subsequent pieces, *Flash, Bang, Wallop* (2018), and *Tickle Your Fancy* (2019). In this chapter, I explore how lip-synching and reenactment are employed as queer strategies of embodiment. My methodology is inspired by Rebecca Schneider's inter*in*animation (2011), which I advance with ideas on lip-synching alongside reenactment theories. Most known for its use in the queer performance of drag as a parody or impersonation process, I argue lip-synch work is more than purely mouthing the words of another. It is a multi-layered form with inter*in*animate qualities as it engages with the co-presence and reanimation of bodies. There is 'a constant (re)turn of, to, from, and between states in animation' (Schneider, 2011: 15). In my creative process however, following the preliminary piece, a more nuanced approach to lip-synch work as reenactment shifted and focused on examining the three markers of embodiment: the mouth, gesture, and material interactions with a chair. Rather than use lip-synching to address the whole body in the reenactment process, my studio experiments focused on these singular, but connected, parts of embodiment. My approach to examining the body as a disjointed and fragmentary tool to experience the affect of history takes influence from Elizabeth Freeman's theory of erotohistoriography (2010). The felt connections I made through these three bodily markers arose during the pilot piece's process, and was then honed for future exploration. These markers produce a quality of co-performative intimacy (Davis and King, 2013) between my body and the chosen case studies discussed later in Chapter Three.[33] For now, this chapter explores the time-consuming

[32] Before to Chapter Two, I recommend watching *Flash, Bang, Wallop* and *Tickle Your Fancy.* Documentation of these performances can be found on the on the accompanying DVD.

[33] Co-performative intimacy is a term borrowed from Davis and King (2013). Their research methods draw on Conquergood's performance ethnography (1986), which reimagines participant-observation as co-performative witnessing. Davis and King use King's clown practice to undertake a practice-research historiographical project into the work of nineteenth-century comedian Charles Matthews. King engaged with Matthews technique

process of lip-synch practice, performance and technique, which involves transcribing, editing and learning material, as well as performing, repeating and reflecting upon experience. It also discusses the creative potential in using historical material through lip-synch work that runs akin to forms of artistic reenactments; to revise, amend or speak back to the past, and emphasise the co-presence of bodies mutually bound in the space. I discuss lip-synching and reenactment as forms of queer archival performance and draw from other artists and practitioners alongside theorists who have contributed to scholarship in these overlapping fields. However, I distinguish my intervention that moves these techniques beyond purely performance-making methods and towards embodied research strategies. I start this chapter with a brief description of the various works explored alongside Schneider and Freeman's ideas, to demonstrate my creative research methodology.

In drag performance, lip-synch work is a multi-layered form. Firstly, at the base level, there is the audio track a performer uses that potentially has a dual meaning; its original context or its appropriated meaning for the audience, show or community. Then there is a layer of virtuosity; the performer who skilfully embodies the voice through choreography, costume, or makeup – which again, may add another layer of subversion against the source material. Lastly, there is a dynamic layer of energy between the performer and the audience. The audience might know the original audio material and understand the coded references made in the piece, or they might not.[34] The audience might know the performer and have personal ties to them out of drag or be a fanatic follower who has seen them perform before, or not. In drag performance, the lip-synch serves among other things, a particular pedagogic function for queer communities to connect with these different layers of meaning. Lip-synch work replays not only past bodies and people but also emphasises the cultural significance these texts have with audiences engaging with the work. However, I employ lip-synching as a

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and skill in process and performance and made ethnographic notes throughout the research. They note there is reflexivity in such methods that 'implicates one in the act of researching, and performance becomes a way of showing (and knowing) experience through the body' (Davis and King, 2013: 188). Co-performative intimacy produced new affective insights from King's embodied awareness of history.

[34] The lip-synch, within certain types of drag performance, functions as a form of queer parody, or camp, as defined by Moe Meyer (1994). In such work, there are nuanced and coded references made in specific works that only those who are part of that community may understand.

strategy used to explore embodiment, and argue it transmits certain embodied sensations of the person/text channelled. In this study, the lip-synch is a method of queer performance, *used* as a queer strategy of reenactment.

To demonstrate the various layers of lip-synch work and wide-ranging use of its technique to engage with ideas of embodiment and history, I draw attention to three variants of lip-synch performance. I initially trace histories of lip-synch work in drag performance and examine the more traditional drag aesthetic of Lypsinka. I then turn to the live art and performance work of Dickie Beau, and lastly, the video work of performance artist Foxy and Husk. Lypsinka's work shows how, like many drag performers, she draws upon queer canonical figures (Joan Crawford) and texts (*Mommie Dearest*). Lypsinka's work also demonstrates the potential for lip-synching to create a communal bond between audience and performer. Dickie Beau channels another figure, Judy Garland, but Beau's work enables audiences to see Garland just as constructed as the manufacture of the lip-synch performance. Foxy and Husk extends this meta-theatrical guise through the camera lens, as her performance engages with the voice of an unknown sex-worker. The various ways that each performer uses lip-synch work have been highly influential to its use in this research.

Three examples of lip-synch performance demonstrate its many inter*in*animate qualities, both in terms of the intimacy between the past and present, and the ambiguity between the liveness and absence of dis/embodied voices. I align this intimacy with the affectionate impulse behind Schneider's coining of the term inter*in*animate. Poet and writer John Donne inspires Schneider's use of the term, who uses interanimate in a poem to describe the love between two people, who are either lying still as stone, or are a stone statue. In the poem, Donne's tone is ambiguous as he recognises that the stone ultimately outlives the impermanence of their past love, but one cannot exist without the other. However, as Schneider writes, 'the liveness of one or deadness of the other is ultimately neither decidable nor relevant' (Schneider, 2011: 15). It is the mutual act of love and affection that animates, and re-animates, their existence beyond death. Life is represented and remembered by the stillness of the stone and the statue's endurance. Extending this thought, Schneider draws from theorist Fred Moten's use of interinanimate to describe temporal co-medial construction, whereby different media 'such as photography [and music], cross-identify, and,

more radically, cross-constitute and "improvise" each other' (Schneider, 2011: 15). In lip-synch performance, the present body is not only in service *to* the past but has authorship *over* the past, as both come together through a singular body. For example, in Dickie Beau's work, he juxtaposes the voice of an older Garland heard through the body of a younger Garland as Dorothy Gale from *The Wizard of Oz*. In his performance, Beau's body re-imagines Garland through over-identified gestures that stress her enduring tragedy. As part of the lip-synch technique, I explore how emphasising breath and gesture are central to its use as a creative research method. In my process, breath is one way I locate affective qualities of co-performative intimacy. Breath is a crucial conduit and sub-method of lip-synch technique that aids in the understanding of embodiment, such as gesture and movement. However, at the heart of lip-synching is the present body, and this research takes *my* body as the *too*l to encounter history.

Freeman's erotohistoriography inspires this affective approach in documenting how my body receives knowledge through performance. Erotohistoriography is a useful theory to think about how in performance, history not only happens *across* bodies over time but *through* bodies in the present. In coining erotohistoriography, she draws from Dipesh Chakrabarty's term 'affective histories' (Chakrabarty, 18: 2000), who in turn credits Homi Bhabha. Chakrabarty finds affective histories tied to local forms of collective knowledge. For Freeman, these fragmentary moments are forms of experience rooted in shared collective quotidian gestures of queer social practices. Freeman explains,

> Erotohistoriography is distinct from the desire for a fully present past, a restoration of bygone times. Erotohistoriography does not write the lost object into the present so much as encounter it already in the present, by treating the present as hybrid. And it uses the body as a tool to effect, figure, or perform that encounter. Erotohistoriography admits that contact with historical material can be precipitated by particular bodily dispositions, and that these connections may elicit bodily responses, even pleasurable ones, that are themselves a form of understanding. It sees the body as a method, and historical consciousness as something intimately involved with corporeal sensations (Freeman, 2010: 95-6).

This method champions an awareness that we can never directly contact the past and that history – particularly queerness in history – can never be complete. However, it seeks

potential in understanding history, and historical forms of knowledge, through pleasure and affect, which in performance, as theatre practitioner Alyson Campbell develops, 'opens up a way "history" can be 'conjured up and 'felt' (Campbell, 2016: 227). Not only does erotohistoriography advance ways of thinking about camp as a queer social practice, such as those explored in the prior chapter, but how lip-synching, as a queer performance form, is very much rooted in pleasurable shared experiences. Most important to highlight is how Freeman's ideas advance lip-synching as a creative research method that generates a 'tactile relationship to a collective past, one not simply performative or citational but physical' (Freeman, 2010: 93). As a queer strategy of performance reenactment, lip-synching has advanced ways of thinking about camp performance of the past, through my body in the present.[35]

The frame of queer archival performance guides this self-reflective approach to embodied historiography and how I use the three markers to think about histories of camp performance. These three markers construct connections of Williams, Howerd and Grayson's camp embodiment to my own, through fleeting and fragmentary moments of co-performative intimacy explored in Chapter Three. To explore this frame, I conclude this chapter by referencing the queer archival performance work of Boudry and Lorenz. They describe such affective bonds with history as a form of transtemporal collaboration. Danbolt describes this as the 'practice of *touching history*, a performative historiography that attends to the presence of the past in the present and to the desire of creating affective connections across time' (Danbolt, 2011: 1984, emphasis in original). In this chapter, I speak directly to two pieces by Boudry and Lorenz, whereby the performer Werner Hirsch finds personal connections to the struggles and complexities of past queer figures. In one piece, by way of the queerness of servant Hannah Cullwick's encrusted and callused hands, Hirsch speaks directly to the viewer from his trans-experience in a compelling manner. Like Hirsch and Cullwick's hands, I use

[35] In Chapter Three, I locate these historiographical insights through a co-performative intimacy with my chosen case studies. That through extensive research into the lives and careers of Williams, Howerd and Grayson, I have grown an affectionate bond with who they are and were that extends beyond the archival study room and into the studio process.

three markers of embodiment to talk through my felt experience. However, for now, I explore histories of lip-synch scholarship and performance alongside reenactment theories.

Lip-synching histories: Re-performing voices, bodies and cultural texts

Reenactment studies is a broad discipline and practices of reenactment involve divergent techniques and processes. Although lip-synch work does not strictly attempt to re-create the past, similarities between these fields revolve around embodiment and affect. As Agnew, Lamb, and Tomann note, 'reenactment requires affect in its performers and aims to elicit affect in its audience' (2020: 1). A key driver for reenactment work is 'a desire to learn from the literal recreation of the past and, at the same time, a yearning to experience history somatically and emotionally – to know what it felt like' (McCalman & Pickering, 2010: 6). Like lip-synch work, a present body creates a 'somatic connection with the past' (Johnson in Dean *et al*. 2015: 45). As a queer method used to explore embodiment, lip-synch work contributes to this diverse field.

There are already theoretical similarities between lip-synch work and reenactment. For example, Stephen Farrier writes about the complex ways drag performers use lip-synching, noting how they often pull from the repertoire of low-forms of popular culture, such as songs, movies, and television programmes in their acts, which serve 'a non-heteronormative heritable link with the past' (Farrier, 2016: 198). He notes lip-synch work demonstrates 'a moment when temporalities are porous, as an audience engages with a dead body through a live one lip-synching' (Farrier, 2016: 198). There is a 'call to a place outside the immediate temporal world' (Farrier, 2016: 196) and a connection to a place beyond and before, made through a live body. Lip-synch work, or re-voicing the past, is an embodied experience. It engages with history/or the past *through* the performance of dual, if not multiple, bodies and voices. Lip-synch work engages with the co-presence of bodies and offers a queer strategy to contribute to emerging ideas in the field of reenactment.

The lip-synch is a popular form of entertainment that appeals to a wide range of audiences; however, its roots are in queer communities and performance forms, like drag performance.

On a study of drag queens in Sydney, Australia, Carol Langley (2006) notes that the lip-synch works in drag performance in six ways:

> it appropriates the feminine voice; it foregrounds the choreographic aspect of drag; serves as a vehicle of recognition; produces texture, layering and complexity; it makes a political statement; and serves as a marker for the traditional reveal (Farrier, 2016: 195).

Many drag performers use edited audio footage as part of small vignettes or longer durational pieces of work. In drag performance, lip-synching practices are often playful with countless creative opportunities; many performers impersonate the initial track's identity for homage or parody, or edit contrasting tracks together, and some incorporate spoken word lip-synch alongside singing.

My lip-synch work takes influence from this queer practice and how it has been used beyond the live to incorporate digital media and technology. However, there are notable examples outside of this lineage, for example, the production of musical films that usually use recorded soundtracks made before shooting and then actors will mime along with the audio on set. This practice is commonly called voice dubbing.[36] And in pop music, lip-synching casts a controversial shadow, when artists do not sing live, and technical mishaps result in embarrassing non-synchronistic moments. Most recently, the lip-synch has gained popularity from two reality-style television shows such as *RuPaul's Drag Race* (2009 – Present), where drag performers compete to become America's next drag superstar. Or *Lip-synch Battle* (2015 – Present), where competing celebrities must lip-synch against each other to notable pop-music numbers, some re-creating iconic moments from the original music videos of the tracks they cover. Chronologically, *Lip-synch Battle* gained influence from the success of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Whereas in *Lip-synch Battle*, celebrities use the method to lampoon or parody popular music and cultural references, the work in *RuPaul's Drag Race* is more complicated and akin to queer performance forms.

[36] A classic example that plays with this production is the film *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), which uses the transition period from silent pictures to "talkies" as the setting for a romantic narrative, with comedy miss-haps around voice synchronicity.

RuPaul's Drag Race is an American reality television show that features drag performers who must compete in weekly challenges and contestants up for elimination each week must "lip-synch for their life". Whereas in the *All Stars* version of the show, contestants up for winning that week must "lip-synch for their legacy" to win a cash prize and decide which bottom queen will go home. Most interesting to note is that in *All Stars Season 5* (2020), the winning contestant must compete in a lip-synch battle against a prior contestant, known as a "lip-synch assassin", to win the cash and choose who to send home. Lip-synching is a significant part of the competition. For the performers in *RuPaul's Drag Race*, the lip-synch can be difficult and evoke a variety of emotions – as they must lip-synch to save their place in the competition and send a fellow contestant home. In addition, the lip-synch is primarily the only opportunity queens can perform solo and prove their skill as a performer. In *RuPaul's Drag Race*, and drag performance venues more broadly, queens commonly channel female voices, usually iconic tracks from queer popular culture. Although the lip-synch has expanded recognition through shows like *RuPaul's Drag Race* and *Lip-synch Battle*, the technique and performance craft's origins stem from *live* drag performance.

Historical research on lip-synching notes how performers can conjure the body of the voice heard on a recorded track through parody, pastiche or impersonation. Esther Newton notes the lip-synch in her ethnographic study of drag performers during the 1960s, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (1972). Newton interweaves observations and interviews to understand and document this world of drag performance and various types of performance, from glamour centred pageant acts, to slapstick and comedy. One comedy act she describes is the 'record act', where performers 'will mouth the words of the record exactly […] matching the mouth movement to the words' (Newton, 1972: 44). Economically, these were 'much cheaper to produce' (Newton, 1972: 44), but regarded as low ranking in artistic craft, because the performers simply copied the original track and many felt that 'anybody can mouth a record' (Newton, 1972: 44). Laurence Senelick notes that along with the economic benefits for clubs producing drag, as it removed the cost of a live band, it also opened an avenue for an impersonation type of performance.

> Suddenly, lip synching became the rage, cheap because if obliviated both professional musicians and drag artistes. 'Amateurs took over overnight', an influx deplored by veteran performers. 'The general public judges the whole art of impersonation by what it sees one mimic doing,' complained Pudgy Roberts (Senelick, 2000: 384).

Although it emerged as a low-cost type of performance, many viewed the lip-synch as a low-craft — those who performed live felt that miming lacked talent. Senelick quotes one performer who felt that 'mime often gives very untalented people an excuse for getting onto the stage, and it can be very embarrassing. Let's face it – my mother could do a drag act, and so could yours. My dog could with the right training' (Senelick, 2000: 384-5). Although Senelick's testimonies view lip-synching as lacklustre and unimaginative, the creative potential of editing audio footage and re-creating the source material's bodies and spirits has countless possibilities. Senelick's testimony shows that performers found creative potential around impersonation as audiences could connect both to the live performer and the subject of their act.

My use of the technique takes influence from lip-synch work seen in drag performance and its use of the voice to complement or juxtapose the originating body alongside (and through) the live performing one. Paramount to advance its use as a creative reenactment strategy has been the ways in which lip-synching brings a voice from the past back to life through a present body. One performer who inspires this process and blurs the edges of impersonation and parody is John Epperson's drag persona Lypsinka. Epperson is most known for meticulously editing soundtracks and vocal extracts of female performances, and most frequently uses the work of actress Joan Crawford. He is a crucial performer who has used his craft as a drag artist in theatre, film and fashion. Lypsinka's work exploits Crawford's cultural legacy through the use of the movie *Mommie Dearest* (1981): an adaptation of Christina Crawford's biography of her adoptive mother, most known for its representation of abuse and manipulation. Many famous lines from the film have been re-appropriated within the gay male community: for example, "Don't fuck with me fellas!" and "No wire hangers, ever!" Alongside Crawford, Epperson manipulates many other queer cultural references and female icons to exist in dialogue, or speak to each other, which reveals an uncanny interinanimate quality to lip-synch performance.

The documentary *Wigstock* (1995) captures the annual New York drag festival of the same name, and documents a lip-synch performance of Epperson as Lypsinka, where he uses lines of an iconic scene from *Mommie Dearest* alongside the musical number 'But Alive!' from *Applause*, sung by Lauren Bacall.[37] From *Mommie Dearest*, Epperson uses the scene when Crawford is interviewed for a puff-piece by Barbara Bennet from *Redbook,* and Crawford romanticises her relationship with Christina, who confronts her mother's lies in front of Bennet. Crawford slaps, chokes and abuses Christina, as she is angry that her adopted daughter does not treat her mother the same as her adoring fans. Aside from the combination of glamour, abjection and extreme emotional expression, Lypsinka hyper-theatricalises an already theatrical and dramatic moment through music and dance.[38] Most important is the use of the line: "Why can't you give me the respect that I'm entitled to?", which leads into the song and dance. As the crowd cheers in recognition to the line, Lypsinka's performance demonstrates the form's ability to create a communal bond through specific cultural texts and references.

Lypsinka's work serves to initiate a sense of togetherness through performance and continues the legacy and importance of *Mommie Dearest* as a cultural text within queer communities.[39] Lypsinka brings a moment from the film to her performance, and although not explicitly re-enacting it, there is a moment of temporal duality as Crawford's legacy exists alongside and through Lypsinka's body. It signals the absence of Crawford, however, reappropriates the

[37] For a more extended discussion of Joan Crawford's work and Lypsinka's performance, see Halperin (2012).

[38] Halperin notes that gay male fascination with Crawford comes partly down to the roles Crawford played, 'strong women who nonetheless fall victim' (Halperin, 2012: 152) and her 'signature combination of *glamour* and *abjection* (that is, extreme, degrading humiliation).' (Halperin, 2012: 152, emphasis in original)

[39] The role that popular culture serves in building queer communities or subjectivities is beyond the scope of the study. However, Halperin notes that there are 'particular moments from straight, mainstream culture' which have been 'selected, decontextualised, replayed, and recoded with queer meanings', and 'the circulation and communal sharing of these queered cinematic moments appear to play a crucial role in the social process by which people, both gay and straight, are initiated into the culture of male homosexuality, come to recognise it as such, and gradually forge a sense of personal and cultural identity' (Halperin, 2012: 174-5).

seriousness of this abusive scene through music and song, which serves to continue its endurance as part of queer culture.

Merrie Snell's practice-research into lip-synching work advances ways to think about how it might engage with a singular dis/embodied voice, but it operates through multiple bodies. In her research on lip-synching pop-music, she argues that to understand the complexity of the form, it must be contextualised by looking at the relationship between the performer, the disembodied voice, and its originating body. In this context, this relationship is between Epperson (Lypsinka) and Crawford (or her portrayal in the film *Mommie Dearest*), and how Epperson's embodiment connects these reference points in and through his lip-synch performance. However, Snell argues that in lip-synch work, voices are innately connected to more than one body. She writes that when a viewer hears a disembodied voice, like in lip-synch performance, they not only associate that voice to the present body as a surrogate, but that the viewer attempts to establish the original source of the voice. In this way, lip-synch performance conjures multiple bodies. In her study, she draws upon Steven Connor's work on ventriloquism and the 'vocalic body', who explains:

> Voices are produced by bodies: but can also themselves produce bodies. The vocalic body is the idea—which can take the form of dream, fantasy, ideal, theological doctrine or hallucination—of a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice (Connor in Snell, 2015: 22).

The point for lip-synch work is not to suspend disbelief, like in ventriloquism, but to create distance from the viewer, and in doing so, critique, reclaim, or honour its initial meaning. The vocalic body emphasises how there may be one voice heard, but two bodies visualised.

The voice is essential in lip-synch performance as it brings an element of the prior recorded moment to the forefront: in short, the lip-synch artist conjures up the primary body through the act of re-voicing. Epperson is not re-enacting Crawford but uses her voice to indicate or surrogate a vision of her body. However, opposed to the ventriloquist's dummy, or the dubbed voice in a musical film, which asks the audience to suspend their disbelief, something new emerges in lip-synch work. It moves beyond – whilst at the same time – indexes the

originating track and bodies, and hinges upon 'the *creative act* […] in order to imaginatively and collaboratively assemble something newly formed, or latent, or uncanny, comic, or highly pleasurable in the transfer of voice' (Snell, 2015: 23, emphasis in original). When the transferred voice and cultural text are tied to specific groups and communities, lip-synch work replays the bodies and people from the past, whilst at the same time, emphasises the significance of these texts to the audiences who engage with the work.

Through lip-synching, drag performers like Epperson, engage with past figures or cultural texts as they creatively manipulate the recorded voice. Before moving on to speak specifically about the form's technique and skill, I want to briefly conclude this section by referring to David Román's term archival drag (2005), as a connecting idea that advances lip-synching as a queer strategy of reenactment. To advance this idea, the sources drag performers like Epperson engage with must be thought of *as* archival material and most importantly, rooted in the past. As archival drag not only advances a way to describe 'performance that sets out to reembody and revive a performance from the past' (Román, 2005:140), but also 'refers to the nature of contemporary performances that draw on historical reenactment and expertise, as well as to the possible fatigues readers may face with yet another rumination on the archive or yet another drag performance' (Román, 2005: 142). Román ignites broader thinking around how drag performance engages with notions of history and legacies of cultural texts and popular culture. However, his reading of drag performance questions how such work enables the transmission of queer cultural memory, and in what ways such work re-embodies moments of history for both performer and viewer. Román advances that lip-synching in drag performance is a form of archival performance, by firstly thinking about how many artists accumulate

> performances of female popular celebrities and set out to curate them in such a way that they begin to speak to one another about the shifting ideologies of gender and sexuality over time. Second, these performances house the memories of a subculture who for any number of reasons found points of identification with these women performers (Román, 2005: 159).

According to Román, drag performers somewhat 'collect, in Ann Cvetkovitch's phrasing, an "archive of feeling" – feelings of love, admiration, and respect that escape or elude more

traditional forms of documentation' (Román, 2005: 159). Román uses the idea of curation to describe how performers edit and manipulate voices of the past, and that what is being collected here is more than the materiality of the source, but something ephemeral and affective. There is a worthy comparison to my curation of Williams, Howerd and Grayson's voices and how I have gained insight into the affective experience of camp performance *through* re-embodiment. In short, my studio process has gleaned insight into the performance repertoires of these men beyond traditional sources of documentation, through affect and feeling. The sensations uncovered through my work contributes to both the formation and preservation of these men *as* queer cultural figures with experiences that are far more complex than any archive might figure. As Román argues this affective legacy

> lives not only in the memory of those who witness it but also in the vestiges, artefacts, and performances that survive into a later cultural moment where they may be reembodied by other actors and received by other audiences. Such performances help shape a history that exceeds the traditional archival systems of the museum, the library, or the university. This history endures and is passed on through performances that archive the past even as they restage and reimagine it (Román, 2005: 173-4).

Through lip-synching, there are certain embodied sensations received by the present performer from the past figure channelled, that as Román writes, *exceeds* traditional systems of documentation. My body receives such knowledge through tacit moments of co-performative intimacy that I speak at length to in Chapter Three, however, I now turn to speak about specific technical aspects of lip-synch performance that enable these intimate moments and transmit such complex sensations alongside further reenactment scholarship.

Breathing life into the past: Lip-synch skill and technique

In my creative process, an emphasis on breath and breathing *like* the case studies has opened opportunities to sympathise and create co-performative bonds. In doing so, further connections can be made with reenactment studies and archival performance that also use breath as a way to encounter historical knowledge. Reenactment scholar, Johnathan Lamb, writes that embodied insights into history happen through reenactment practices when there is a complete immersion into the past. He reflects upon his participation in the BBC2 reality

show, *The Ship* (2002). On the programme, a group of participants retrace a gruelling six-week journey from the east coast of Australia to Jakarta, aboard a replica of HM *Endeavour*. In Lamb's reflection, he focuses on the everyday struggle the team faced within such an extreme and extravagant living history project. He highlights that the embodied knowledge gained came from feelings of sympathy with the sailors who undertook this journey in 1768, yet questions:

> If we speak of history through sympathy with the dead, if that is ultimately the point of the various types of sympathy which re-enactment de-ploys, whence do we derive the authority to speak? From the dead? I think not […]. Presumably we speak most persuasively when there is the least of us left, when we are maximally depleted in service of the agency of which we speak (Lamb, 2008: 248-9).

There is a worthwhile parallel to consider alongside Lamb's thinking and lip-synch as a queer strategy of reenactment. In lip-synch work, the voice from the past speaks through the performing body in the present. However, it is more than mouthing the words of another, lip-synching serves as a tool to understand breath pattern and choreography of the mouth and lips. In my studio process, an emphasis on breath occurs early on in my approach to fully understand the person I attempt to channel. When transcribing a track's words, I note pauses for breaths heard or other inaudible sounds and often mark emphasis of phrases and if, or when, the speaker changes their natural rhythm; either speaking slower for contemplation or getting faster, because of excitement or anger. To undertake a closer inspection of the mouth, I use a camera to film and watch back my mouth and lips. Often with the camera on my laptop, before moving to the studio and using a camera and tripod. The camera on the laptop allows me to record myself as I read the words whilst listening to the track. It enables me to make edits to the transcription as often words are initially misheard through transcription. I also often re-write the text phonetically and characterise inaudible sounds to emphasise the choreography of the mouth. This mouth fragmentation and amplification served as a key process repeated to examine gesture and material interaction, whereby touch or the subtly of movement varied through the iterative process.

In her discussion of erotohistoriography, Freeman identifies how breath and the mouth are vital points of contact to draw historical connections between cross-temporal queer

subjectivities. She notes the 'mouth as a temporal device', and the teeth as 'a symbol for the collision of historical moments […] an intersection between the exterior and interior of the body' (Freeman, 2010: 121). Freeman examines how the mouth might act as a conduit to experience through reading the film *The Sticky Fingers of Time.* The film's narrative engages with different historical moments of lesbian experience and shows how divergent temporal moments might enable a way to understand the complexity of another; how the present body might encounter the past, and in doing so, understand its historical complexity. The mouth is a fragmented body part used to represent and enable felt connections between different temporal subjectivities. In her analysis, one of these instances is the smoking of a marijuana joint that demonstrates a 'historical and temporal disjunction, experienced as illicit pleasure, [which assists to] define and enable queer sociability' (Freeman, 2010: 122). The feeling of pleasure – exhibited by the sensuality of breath alongside inhaling hallucinogenic substance – anchors a way to think about and represent temporal connections of bodily sensations over time. In the film, two women from different historical moments connect as they both inhale and exhale, and become consumed in the hazy mind-altering quality of the drug. For Freeman, the mouth connects certain 'joints of time in corporeal terms not limited to the skeletal or a single body' (Freeman, 2010: 122), but to the sensational responses of multiple bodies. Smoking and breathing enact a *trans*temporal connection between two women as *joint* here both refers to the colloquial term of a cannabis *joint*, as well as the *joint* experience of different times.[40] Breath connects the two women through a biological experience that is highly pleasurable, whereby, 'inhalations and exhalations are the very media of temporal contact' (Freeman, 2010: 122). As a sub-method of lip-synch technique, breath, much like how Freeman describes the connections made between these two women, has connected my body to the case studies and the breath pattern I inhabit of them.

My emphasis on breath also parallels the process drag performers undertake to learn audio tracks and deliver a successful lip-synch performance. In an interview with drag artist Meth, Farrier notes the craft and performance technique that chime with my process. Besides

[40] Extending to my insights explored in Chapter Three, I use the limp wrist, as a marker to speak about camp experience. Physiologically, the wrist is a pivot *joint* that allows a rotary movement around a single axis and for the wrist to become limp.

recognising how 'the voice in the song, or speech, completes the words' as a fundamental part of the technique, Meth notes 'other mouth noises, which include non-language sounds such as lip-smacking, audible intakes of breath and vibrato in singing'. For Meth, these all become 'elements […] heightened in performance' through facial expressions and movement (Farrier, 2016: 202). However, there is a difference between performing in a night club or bar, where a gesture and mouth movement must carry meaning across space, opposed to my work, where the mediated image amplifies subtle movements of the mouth. In my work, I found that a small quiver of the lip becomes larger and heightened with a camera and projector and breathing often dictates these subtleties.



Figure 1 (*Flash, Bang, Wallop*, 2018)

A focus on breathing enables a way to pay attention to specific minute details of embodiment, whether that be the mouth, gesture or touch, often picked up by the camera. Dance historian and practitioner, Kate Elswit, writes about the importance of breath's ability to build intimate and physical connections between performers and others. Her *Breath Catalogue* project draws upon a cabinet of curiosities model to capture and catalogue breath and embodiment through dance and digital technology. To document, 'lived experience as [an] object, from the identification and development of distinct breath […] properties and patterns' (Elswit, 2019: 4). From a dance and movement perspective, this work connects with my project. There

are similarities in our inquiry that stem from the subjective and intersubjective experience of breath and how it might pass from one body to another. Yet, Elswit uses 'a bio-media practice that extends these processes using sound, live and recorded data, projected visualizations, and visualization objects' (Elswit, 2019: 2). Although Elswit collects breath like data from the performers' body and movement, there is a unique connection with my project in 'how embodied performance functions as both a kind of remains of the past and also a means of reengaging with it' (Elswit, 2019: 4). Breath is an integral aspect of the technique of lip-synching that in part comes from connecting with the past. Whereas *Breath Catalogue* 'proposes breath experience as a kind of living archival material that can be investigated and re-accessed' (Elswit, 2019: 1), I locate breath *in* the archive as a crucial conduit in the understanding of embodiment.

Breath is a crucial part of lip-synching as a queer strategy of reenactment, I breathe *like* the case studies to breathe *life* into the case studies. Paying acute attention to speech patterns and breath not only enables a synchronised performance, but it connects our bodies over time. Practically, the need to align the rhythm of breath is a technical aspect of the craft and stems from the need to deliver a synchronised performance. As drag performer Meth also 'places a lot of emphasis on breath, particularly the out breath, as a technique to render a song'. However, for 'Meth, this focus on breath serves as a structure for working through the number overall' (Farrier, 2017: 202). Whereas my breath experience, of inhales and exhales, produces an embodied connection to the past. As Elswit emphasises, 'breath might be seen to generate environments in which extreme physical and felt connections can be shared' (Elswit, 2019: 6). Through the studio practice of learning material for the lip-synch, there is a heightened sense of self and other, past and present, and the felt intimacy between them. Overall, understanding breath has been used to connect to broader aspects of embodiment as part of the reenactment process, such as gesture and material interaction.

In this study, lip-synching has offered the potential to re-embody historical figures, whereby an emphasis on breath has enabled a way to think about the body's materiality in performance through specific markers. However, although there is a level of seriousness attuned to research and an academic enquiry, a level of good-humour, play and parody cannot be over-looked to be part of the subject matter (camp performance) and method of

practice (lip-synch performance). Thus, I wish to return briefly to definitions of reenactment to advance the research potential of lip-synch work, which has, what Katherine Johnson describes as, 'pedagogic possibilities' (Johnson in Dean *et al*. 2015: 38).

Johnson demarcates different reenactment types into four spheres: theatrical, film, performance art, and living history. My creative practice interweaves with each of these categories, but most aligns with the more experimental performance art edge of such work. As Johnson writes, this category is like theatrical reenactment, as it 'pertains to the restaging of plays and other forms of theatre, with a focus on recreating a portrayal as close as possible to the so-called original'. However, performance art forms are more concerned with 'critiqu[ing] the event or performance in question, reinterpreting the past or commenting on the present or future' (Johnson in Dean *et al*. 2015: 38). Although my performance work engages with historical material of camp performance, it does so *through* fragmentary moments and *with* fragments of the body that are then abstracted and amplified. In addition, my analysis stems from recognising and elucidating the feeling of historical intimacy that comes from this co-presence of bodies. As Johnson notes, the *process* of reenactment should 'privilege atmosphere and experience over a strict adherence to accuracy, utilizing a performative, bodily […] approach to history' (Johnson in Dean *et al*. 2015: 39). It should aim to 'elucidate the interconnected relationships between temporality, embodiment, culture, performance and history' (Johnson in Dean *et al*. 2015: 36). As part of the creative research process, I utilise self-reflection to recognise my body as the instrument that carries such performative insights. Although findings should be pragmatic and observed, in practices of reenactment, they should also account for the experiential insight and be self-reflective on 'the ways through which we know' (Johnson in Dean *et al*. 2015: 36).

Through playful moments of cross-historical representation, the crux of lip-synching as a queer reenactment strategy hinges upon the relationship between the past and present: not only how audiences perceive the disembodied voice through the present performing body, but how a performer, re-inhabits the past. One performer who demonstrates this complex temporal hybridity is Dickie Beau in a piece called 'Judy Speaks'. Beau is a performer who has pioneered the use the lip-synch in video and performance settings and draws on the tradition of drag but takes the practice to more complex ends. Beau describes himself as a 'physical

performer and intrepid drag fabulist' as he performs various lip-synch work, in and out of drag, 'looting a range of performance traditions, from "low culture" to "high art"' (Beau, 2019). Beau describes his lip-synch practice as '"playback" performance', or 'the uncanny embodiment (or "re-memberment") of found sound'. For Beau, this 'positions the body as an archive […] re-visioning and playing back voices from the margins: voices of figures we might not normally hear in the mainstream, in ways that we might not be accustomed to hearing them' (Beau, 2019). Beau channels multiple voices in his work, but his performance of the figure Judy Garland demonstrates many of the complex temporal nuances of lip-synch work. In 'Judy Speaks', Beau places an emphasis on breath alongside exaggerated facial expressions and repeated choreographed gestures to inhabit and represent the body of Judy Garland.

Beau has performed the vignette 'Judy Speaks', extracted from the full show *Blackouts (Twilights of The Idols)* (2011), at various venues and shows. In the full show, Beau lip-synchs footage of iconic and celebrated female figures such as Marilyn Monroe and Judy Garland. In the segment 'Judy Speaks', Beau uses audio interview footage of Garland from later in her life, speaking about her career and how the industry's pressures affected her health and well-being. She is drinking and slowly gets drunk. As she speaks, her voice becomes agitated and angry, and her words gradually become slurred and erratic. Beau is dressed as the younger image of Garland reminiscent of Dorothy Gale in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and uses his body and mouth to exaggerate the demise heard through the voice and words of the older Garland.[41] There is a mutual relationship between different visions of Garland and an inter*in*animate effect between the two Garland's channelled via Beau's singular body.

In 'Judy Speaks', the lip-synch is used as a tool to hear Garland's unheard words and learn something about her life. As Farrier writes on queer temporal readings of Beau's work, and notes how 'Judy, in the past, can tell us (teach us?), through pop culture, profound things in the present' (Farrier, 2016: 198). Although there is a pedagogic element to Farrier's reading

[41] Like Halperin (2012) and Joan Crawford, Andrew Ross finds similar ways of reading cinema and female stars as camp. He notes that 'Garland […] had little to do with the ironic artifice of camp […] until her personal hardships became public, and she embarked on a phase of repeated comebacks, the conceit of survival in the face of all odds became an intrinsic part of her performing persona' (Ross, 1989: 160).

of Beau, I emphasise how two instances of time from Garland's life are present not only alongside but *through* the labour of Beau's performing body. Beau repeats the same movements early in the piece with exaggerated facial expressions. From crying to screaming, he eventually sits hunched over in a chair and addresses the audience directly. When Beau moves around the stage, he stumbles as if intoxicated and produces a phial of alcohol from his wicker basket. The audio switches between the later interview to snippets from *The Wizard of Oz* with repeated phrases from and older Garland stating: "I've been the one who's had to live with me". The piece ends with theatrical blood dripping from Beau's mouth as we overhear Dorothy say: "Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore" and Beau's body hits the ground. There is a juxtaposition of a younger Garland as Dorothy Gale, and an older Garland, both channelled through Beau's body. As Farrier explains:

> The temporal distance between Beau and Garland, as well as the distance between Garland the person and Garland the product, is made plain through the performance, which itself is constructed in a way to show that it is in the process of "making". The performance is porous; it encourages the audience to see it as constructed while also listening to a recording that appears real. Garland as icon gets undone in the sense that the audience is encouraged to witness her as a person pained by her situation (Farrier, 2013: 58).

However, the piece demonstrates inter*in*animation in process, as the younger image of Dorothy and older words of Garland are not only co-present, but in dialogue as they mutually reanimate each other through Beau's body. But as Farrier notes, Beau is not merely channelling the body of Garland for dramatic effect, he capitalises upon Dorothy's image as a figure of survival and resilience in the gay community. In doing so, this 'not only recasts how Garland is constructed in a way that her nonicon person is in some sense revealed; it also activates something in the room that moves an audience to see Garland in a different way' (Farrier, 2013: 58). Dramaturgically, there is a complex layering and temporal negotiation between Beau, Garland and Dorothy. However, Beau is not void of agency and merely channelling the dead; Beau's is a *doing* body. Johnson's pedagogic possibilities of reenactment eloquently speak to this analysis, as there is an experiential (re)doing as Beau embodies Garland's voice through a re-appropriated Dorothy that sheds light on her unresolved history. The work questions the relationship between the embodied and disembodied and who gets to speak on behalf of whom. Beau's performance offers insight

into Garland's troubled life. The theatricality of gesture and exaggerated facial expressions become a way for both Garlands to meet (or touch) Beau's body in the performance. The over-identification of Beau's actions further emphasises his body as an interlocutor for Garland. However, behind Beau's makeup and costume, there is a performing body – that creates empathy with, and humanises, Garland's figure. Through Beau's re-imagining of Garland, his labouring body emphasises and conveys her enduring tragedy.

Fragmentary moments: Using bodily markers

In digital lip-synch work, technology such as a camera lens/frame can emphasise and exploit the duality or multiplicity of different voices and identities. For example, in my work, re-embodiment is both live and mediated with a live-stream camera to a projector, and subtle movements or miss-haps in synchronicity are exposed and heightened by bodily markers such as gesture or the mouth. One lip-synch performer who I take influence from for this technique is Foxy and Husk: a performance artist who lip-synchs found audio footage through the guise of an anthropomorphic fox. In the video piece, *Fox Dance* (2016), she uses frank testimony from an audio recording with an unknown sex worker and lip-synchs the interview in a lavish evening gown and fur hat, and uses the camera frame to fragment aspects of the body or heighten words for emphasis in performance. She uses 'an animal/human hybrid, [to] pick apart the absurdities of human life through an outsiders' perspective, bypassing cultural, racial and gender divides to reveal surprising patterns and unexpected contrasts' (Foxy and Husk, 2019). In this piece, her sartorial choice over-emphasises femininity to draw critique through irony.

In contrast to Beau and Judy Garland, the viewer has no pre-conceived identity for the unknown sex worker speaking. Her lived experience slowly reveals itself through the voice, talking about being paid for sex and other acts. However, the mediated image further detaches any familiarity, and as the camera angles around Foxy and Husk's body, fragmenting her hands, mouth or eyes into full-frame. When specific phrases such as, "dirty bitch" or "sex work" are spoken, the camera's frame closes in on the mouth. This effect punctuates aspects of the frank testimony while also revealing the performer's painted orange and white lips. It also happens for empathetic impact, when the speaker reflects on her relationships and

families' attitudes towards her work, we see Foxy and Husk's lips hesitate and quiver. Her virtuosity is further entangled with the unknown voice when she states she "likes being different characters" and gives a knowing glance towards the camera. There is highly playful energy in Foxy and Husk's piece. Essentially, it is a woman performing as a fox, lip-synching the words of a sex-worker. A feeling of pleasure runs through many aspects of the work, accentuated through the knowing-ness of these dual bodies/identities. The camera functions to fetishize specific parts that reflect the speaker, and the subject matter spoke. Foxy and Husk sheds light on an intimate topic, but she becomes the authoritative figure through which we hear the unknown sex worker's voice. Not only does Foxy and Husk demonstrate the artistic craft of the lip-synch, but she shows how the camera frame can exploit fragments of the body and mouth to function as conduits to connect multiple identities. Like my work, the camera frame hones focus on each bodily marker, but my work further emphasises the co-medial relationship between my performing body, the camera and the projected image. In addition, as the frame focuses on either my hands, mouth or interaction with the chair, it indexes both the original material and my process of re-enacting the footage. In Chapter Three, I address the experiential insights uncovered from the three specific bodily markers.

The queer archival performance work of Boudry and Lorenz has influenced my use of fragmentation and abstraction of the markers as they use fragmented parts of the body to speak *to* and *from* both past and present experiences of queerness. Their practice uses archival material, such as photographs and films, to create installations of recorded performances that re-stage moments of queerness from the past. Mathias Danbolt writes that '[t]heir art practice is best described in terms of "queer archaeology," taking the form of "excavations" into archives of the late nineteenth century and using the encounter with archive materials as a starting point for historical interventions' (Danbolt, 2011: 1983).[42] Their practice was influential when thinking through my engagement with the historical material on camp performance. Although in my pilot piece, *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping*, and at the start of *Tickle Your Fancy*, the original source material is projected alongside my body, this is for artist merit and to re-present my process, rather than an imperative for research

[42] In the text, the page numbers are characterised with years – in reverse chronological order. They start at 1856 and end in 2021.

insight (See Figures 2 and 3). In Boudry and Lorenz's practice, archival material is directly handled by the performers and then displayed alongside the films in a gallery setting. They primarily

> work with performance to create embodiments which are able to conflate different times and […] connection[s] of desire with human and non-human objects, through a series of actions and practices, carefully carried out, which are recorded and repeated in the projection in the exhibition space. The topic is the performativity of the performance, the actions, the operations, and their effects (Boudry and Lorenz, 2020).



Figure 2

(*Keep Calm and Carry on Camping*, 2015)



Figure 3

Whereas I borrow the term co-performative intimacy to recognise the inter/intra relationship with the past, they describe such affective bonds as 'transtemporal' collaboration; 'they do not see archival materials as dead objects from a distant past but rather as "friends" with lives and agencies of their own' (Danbolt, 2011: 1984). Two pieces demonstrate this affective approach to historiography through specific queer anachronistic moments that hinge upon gesture and touch. In *N.O. Body* (2008) and *Normal Work* (2007), the performer Werner

Hirsch connects with the past through literally and metaphorical touching as moments of cross-temporal connections of subjectivity.[43] The paradox of being both/and attuned to the past, whilst simultaneously rooted in the present, is crucial to exploring my affective insights in Chapter Three. Whereby, my own transtemporal collaboration has enabled moments of meta-theatrical commentary that emphasise my present moment, as researcher/academic, alongside my performing body, a camp man, as both important parts of the historiographical process.

N.O. Body is a film and installation of Boudry and Lorenz's research into Magnus Hirschfeld's transition theory and the American sideshow artist Annie Jones, most known as the woman with a beard displayed at P.T Barnum's American Museum in New York. The work features performer Werner Hirsch who plays the role of Nobody, dressed in Victorian clothing with long hair and a beard, like Jones, who not only worked as a sideshow artist but was also a subject of Hirschfeld's scientific and medical research. In the piece, Hirsch encounters the photographs, material of Jones, and related ephemera from Hirschfeld's book, *Sexology, Pictures* (1930) projected in the space with a carousel projector. The piece is set within an empty lecture hall similar to those Hirschfeld lectured. As Nobody, Werner Hirsch interacts with the projected material moving through the slide show and finding amusement at what they encounter. Nobody gazes out at the auditorium, plays the sound of laughter from a portable radio, and then starts to laugh too. The laughter becomes more intense and haunting while Nobody goes through the slides. The piece ends with the projector turned off, and then the camera follows Nobody's gaze and pans to reveal an empty room.

Throughout the piece, Nobody gestures and caresses the image of Annie Jones with their shadow. Although Nobody cannot touch Jones, their shadow enacts an affectionate gesture as they caress Jones's body in the projected image. This gesture sympathises with the historical violence that Jones's body exists within and ratifies her complex existence as a figure of both scientific and recreational amusement; it speaks *to* the past, *from* the present moment. As Danbolt examines this piece and identifies:

[43] For more on *N.O. Body* (2008), please refer to: www.boudry-lorenz.de/normal-work/ and for more on *Normal Work* (2007), please refer to: www.boudry-lorenz.de/n-o-body/

> This paradoxical touch that connects through rupture designates the pleasurable and generative potential in the partial connection between Jones and our queer work in the present. […] While the shadow draws attention to the power mechanisms and potential violence in archival excavations and historical research, it also points to the fact that *how we touch* forms and informs how the past takes shape in the present (Danbolt, 2011: 1988, emphasis in original).

In the work's ability to speak from the present moment, Danbolt highlights the haunting laughter of Nobody that concludes the piece. The laughter originates from a portable radio and eventually comes from Nobody, which aims to 'disrupt the position and authority of the present' (Danbolt, 2011: 1988). The laughter, at first targeted towards Nobody (or Annie Jones), is then directed out at the public, academic, researcher or historian who attempts to make sense of her in the present.

Another piece by Boudry and Lorenz that demonstrates the potential for a body both in present time, and in the present space, to speak *to* and *from* a figure of history is *Normal Work*: a film installation and thirteen photographs where Werner Hirsch re-stages four photographs taken between 1861-1867 of Hannah Cullwick, a domestic servant to Arthur Munby. Uncovered from her diaries, letters and private photographs is Cullwick and Munby's unusual relationship. The portraits document Cullwick not only as Munby's servant, but also show moments when she would dress up for Munby: as a middle-class man, as well as woman, which she would frequently dress like when travelling with him, and lastly, as an enslaved person in blackface. The photographs document the curious sadomasochistic relationship between the two, where Cullwick, in her diary, notes pleasure and excitement in not only dressing up for Munby but also takes pride in serving him. Cullwick also wears a small leather cuff around her wrist, to symbolise Munby's "possession" and eventually, Cullwick became Munby's wife. In the film, Hirsch dresses as Cullwick and re-stages the photographs. He finds pleasure not only in his interaction with the director but also in himself, as he admires his reflection, meticulously recreating Cullwick's poses. Hirsch enacts both his own and Cullwick's pleasure as he is both directed and in control of the re-staged images.

Freeman has written on this work and uses erotohistoriography to describe the complex power dynamic and sensual pleasure of Cullwick and Munby's relationship, which reveals itself through the temporal friction between Hirsch and Cullwick. As Freeman observes, Hirsch

> portrays a sexually masochistic enjoyment […] in being told what to do and in having his hands, legs, muscles, and breasts exposed to the gaze of unknown others. […] Hirsch seems to be enjoying the friction on his own body, between Hannah's historical moment and our own, as if alternately surrendering to and mastering the past is physically arousing (Freeman, 2011: 1977).

As well as the enjoyment Hirsch finds in touching his body to uncover the enjoyment Cullwick found in staging the photographs, Freeman uses erotohistoriography to describe the complexity between Cullwick's sexuality and her work as a domestic servant, and that we cannot fully comprehend or understand her subjectivity. Central to her relationship with Munby is Cullwick's peculiarity. She was proud of her work and would often refuse to wear gloves in public as she wanted to 'show off her dirt' (Freeman, 2011: 1979). The photographs presented alongside the film, are abstracted images of both Hirsch/Cullwick's callused hands with encrusted dirt under the nails, touching her clothes and body as a symbol of fetish, sexuality and labour. The hands call attention to the various social positions Cullwick crossed and the theatricality of Cullwick and Hirsch's role-play. The hands act as an indexical marker to speak to these multiple and complex moments.

Normal Work exploits the syncopated nature of time, gender, and class. The piece never hides Hirsch's presence and capitalises on his identity as an artist and academic. In a potent moment, Hirsch, by way of Cullwick's hands, speaks directly to the camera and draws attention to his personal and professional struggles. As Freeman describes, 'this scene performs a historical reversal: from the educated Victorian maid-of-all-work, it turns toward the contemporary academic/artist as a drudge. Hirsch's jobs in academe, in the library, as teaching assistant and instructor, appear equivalent to his jobs scrubbing floors and flyering in parking lots' (Freeman, 2011: 1979). The work is broadly a commentary on the crossing of social hierarchies, however, my interest in this technique is how the hands mark a connection between Cullwick and Hirsch. The mark of the hand's functions as a corporeal index to both reveal the theatricality of Cullwick and Munby's power-play dynamic, and Cullwick's

escapism. The construction of *Normal* Work heightens the labour of doing historical research and re-staging history, which in turn, exhibits pleasure from both touching history and role-playing the past. In my work, the indexical markers speak to my experiential understanding of the past, as footnotes used to explore my relationship with Williams, Howerd and Grayson's camp performance.

Conclusions

This chapter has explored how lip-synching is used as a queer strategy of reenactment and embodiment. It has shown how drag performance and contemporary artists have drawn performative connections between the past and the present in multiple ways. The various ways that each performer has used lip-synch work has been highly influential to its use in this research. In the first section of this chapter, I explored the complex surrogating of the vocalic body in lip-synch work and that through such practice, the originating voice/body does not get erased in this process, but the live body acts as a conduit to connect to the past. A critical connection between theoretical work on lip-synching and its performance skill centred on breath and breath-work. In short, my body breathes *life* into the past, by breathing *like* the past. Crucially, I explored how breath-work connects to embodiment by way of gesture, facial expressions and touching objects, which can then be fragmented and abstracted to amplify the intimacy of these moment.

My preliminary work, *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping*, ignited the curious connection between lip-synching and reenactment as queer research strategies. However, the latter two pieces, *Flash, Bang, Wallop,* and *Tickle Your Fancy* have championed the use of technology to isolate specific parts of the body, whilst also recognising their connection to the whole body and its wider materiality. Beneficial to reenactment and archival performance work is the performer or researcher's ability to step away and think *through* the experience of history by way of self-reflective moments. Through the performer's ability to bring their voice into the frame. Throughout my studio process, I have used self-reflection to document and note my experience of history that I explore at length in the following chapter. Understanding the case studies through embodiment is a core aspect of this research methodology, and by lip-syncing camp performance, I have located cross historical forms of subjectivity that happen through

fragmentary pleasures or dissonances, which ultimately contribute to narratives and histories of queer British male camp experience.

Chapter Three

Affective Int*ra*animate Insights; or Being Both/And

This chapter addresses camp embodiment using three indexical markers examined through practice: the mouth, gesture, and material interactions.[44] Whereas the previous chapter addresses lip-synch and reenactment as strategies to explore embodiment and think about affective historical connections, this chapter discusses the relations constructed at these three markers. These affective insights on camp embodiment stem from unique int*ra*animate (Schneider, 2017) moments that bind cross-historical subjectivity. My understanding of the three markers arose through the preliminary creative work, *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping* (2015). Although it sits aside from this chapter's discussion, it was an essential step in developing the research. As a creative work, it functions as a performative demonstration of various modern and contemporary camp performance work. However, as part of the research process, it led to an awareness of the three bodily markers and chosen case studies: Kenneth Williams, Larry Grayson and Frankie Howerd. Following this piece, a more nuanced approach to cataloguing camp performance appeared: through embodied sensations identified through the mouth, gestures and movement, and how the body interacts with objects and things. Rather than thinking about camp performance as something outward and external, my focus shifted to view it as something felt and experienced; as affective and experiential. This chapter draws from precise moments of the performances, *Flash, Bang, Wallop* (2018)*,* and *Tickle Your Fancy* (2019) to explore one marker with each case study: Williams and the mouth, Howerd and gesture, Grayson and material interaction.

My exploration of the three bodily markers extends and contributes to the queer complexity of male camp effeminacy. As Williams, Grayson and Howerd's legacy exists alongside and

[44] This chapter draws finding from the performances of *Flash, Bang, Wallop* and *Tickle Your Fancy.* Documentation of these performances can be found on the on the accompanying DVD. Later in this chapter, I highlight specific moments from these works to engage with further alongside my critical reflection. These are intended as snapshots, capturing key moments of the work I address alongside writing and can be found on the on the accompanying DVD.

through hostile rhetoric on camp identity, and my embodied insights also closely align with many negative stereotypical associations of the male camp body: for example, the effeminate voice; lisping; over-articulate use of language; the limp wrist; mincing; a heightened awareness of objects, hygiene and cleanliness. However, my recognition of camp effeminacy extends this complexity. My understanding arises from moments of disruption and tension, felt at both a muscular and subjective level. Each marker moves between being, and crucially *feeling*, insipid, weak and light-hearted, whilst at the same time, courageous and potent. There is something felt that teeters between being established, repeatable and understood, to something slippery and undetermined. On the one hand, each marker enacts a gesture, or pose, of shared subjectivity and collective representation, yet on the other, something unique and personal. Speaking *to* and *alongside* negativity locates a way to talk about camp embodiment that does not seek to normalise its queer potential or even the queerness rooted in Williams, Grayson and Howerd's repertoire. In other words, although the quotidian vision of camp masculinity seems unevolved against the future-oriented time of queerness, camp *performance* reveals and revels within, and through, the ironic fragility of masculinity. This chapter explores camp through three markers of embodiment that demonstrate its ability to be both an exploitative *and* resistive effeminate practice.

To advance my discussion, I revisit Schneider's work on inter*in*animation from the previous chapter, however, additionally recognise her reappraisal of the term int*ra*animate (2017) as more beneficial for discussing my felt experience through the three markers. Although practically, there is an *inter-* relationship with the past established through mutual text/bodies connected in the performance space, when speaking *from* the bodily markers, the term *intra-* relationship is more advantageous. For example, through gesture, I discuss the limp wrist's specific action as one recognised through my exploration of Howerd's routine and a gesture that I have a history with, which ultimately affects how I author my experiences. I draw comprehensively on Schneider's work to discuss the citational – or iterative – quality that occurs through being both/and its initial gesture and my gesture, both replayed, and experienced in the work. I use the three markers to speak to my experiential understanding of the past as it happens in the present. The mouth, gesture and interaction function as bodily indices to explore my relationship with Williams, Howerd and Grayson's camp performance.

Int*ra*animate frames how the three markers are unique and individual to my experience, but connected to, and come alive *through*, and *from*, the past. In doing so, these three markers bind and connect (our) bodies across time, yet at the same time, differentiate themselves between being past and present. They are '*both* different *and* the same in their' repetitive iterations, and 'this both/and is in fact what remains the same across time' (Schneider, 2017: 111, emphasis in original). The use of both/and is an enhanced, however complicated way, to navigate the varied insights 'rather than either/or' (Schneider, 2017: 158). In other words, the int*ra*animate quality of being both/and locates understanding through a series of fragmented actions that continually repeat to emphasise, as well as index, the iconography of the camp body at work. An iconography that both pre-exists and speaks about my experiences during this research process. All three markers carry a similar quality of energy and produce cross-historical subjective sensations through moments of temporal duality.

The three markers anchor a way to speak through the felt experience of history as I reflect on how my body *receives* knowledge through such moments of co-performative intimacy (Davis and King, 2013). However, through each marker, I uncover complementary but opposite forces. For clarity, this chapter explores each marker and case study. Firstly, through Williams and the mouth I locate feelings of pleasure and discomfort. I highlight moments from *Flash, Bang, Wallop*, where the mouth is both seen and felt as something distinctly a part of my body, yet beyond myself. I discover feelings of embarrassment and discomfort as the mouth shifts between being both humorous and repugnant. Next, insights uncovered from exploring gesture and Howerd hinge upon the repeatable bodily marker of the limp wrist. I locate paradoxical sensations of fluidity and rigidity explored not only through the choreography of Howerd's routine, but through the cutting citational energy of camp identity more broadly, and its peculiar relationship to the indicator of the limp wrist. Lastly, insight into material interaction stems from my relationship with the chair as a thing in performance. Exploring Grayson's repertoire in *Tickle Your Fancy* calls for specific and subversive bodily responses that aid in the migration of his repertoire to my body. Although the chair acts as a physical marker in the space that orientates my body and creates a sense of familiarity, the interaction is less comforting. I explore how replaying his routine also recirculates troubled and uncomfortable histories of overt racism in British light-entertainment. Overall, each marker uses my body as a tool to receive experiential knowledge on Williams, Howerd and Grayson,

that is both bound to histories of camp performance, whilst at the same time, critiques and offers new perspectives drawn from my experience. This chapter writes about insights and tacit findings from hyper-aware moments of both being and doing; being both *present* and *absent*; being *alongside* and *through* Williams, Howerd and Grayson, yet being very much aware of myself and the present moment.

A Camp Mouth

The first cross-historical connection I construct is through my experience of Williams's mouth in *Flash, Bang, Wallop.* As a queer strategy used to explore embodiment, the method of lip-synching drives my engagement with Williams's mouth, as lip-synch work hinges upon the synchronicity of the mouth and breath to re-voice the words of the track used. However, the voice is a key component of camp lived-experience. As linguistic David Shariatmadari notes in a *Guardian* article exploring voice shaming in the gay community, features of the "camp voice" include: 'lisping, the swooning intonation, the clipped tones' (Shariatmadari, 2015). He even recognises Williams as a quintessential example of the camp voice, and notes that for many camp gay men, 'the voice is often the source of shame' (Shariatmadari, 2015). My choice to examine the mouth through Williams was informed by his voice as a camp performance archetype. His voice is uniquely distinctive to many British people; hearing or putting on Williams's tone and vocal quality conjures up the image of his acerbic comedy and wit.[45] His voice is closely connected to his distinct facial expressions, that is a paramount aspect of his legacy. Yet, sources from his diaries and letters revealed a more pragmatic and self-aware identity.[46] He describes his heighten persona as a façade, or a safeguard, used to protect himself from exposing his true self. The humanising impulse also makes its way into conversations throughout all the bodily markers. However, with the mouth and Williams, my exploration reveals something profound and unsettling within my sense of self, mirroring

[45] By way of a personal anecdote to a friend, Paul Baker makes a connection between the use of Polari to mimic Williams's voice. Baker notes that the 'Polari identity' of his friend 'is very different from the way he conducts himself at other times (respectable, middle-class, non-camp)' (Baker, 2002: 81). This type of 'language crossing' (Baker, 2002: 81) is a way of speaking theatrically that does not usually belong to the speaker. When people might put on an effeminate voice to actively distance themselves from what they are saying.
[46] As I have explored in Chapter One.

many aspects of Williams's own lived experiences as a camp man. My examination and reflections of the mouth are deeply related to many negativities I associate with my effeminate voice. However, lip-synching his voice has enabled a way to understand the camp mouth as a complex and often hyper-theatrical orifice.

Flash, Bang, Wallop uses a radio interview of Williams from 1977 with Clergyman and broadcaster, Owen Spencer-Thomas. The retrospective interview attempts to reveal the person beyond the persona of "Kenneth Williams" as it reveals a profound and intellectual side to the performer, yet continually returns to his comedy roles. Williams speaks to the pious aspect of his identity and devout sense of faith, however, the interview shifts between his thoughtful demeanour into wit and intelligent word-play as he notes peculiar parallels of belief between religion and comedy. In doing so, he shifts towards a heightened performance persona as his language quickens and he becomes verbose. As a result, this practice element was challenging to undertake because of the length of material used and its wordiness. Also, as a radio interview, there was no visual reference available for my body to copy mimetically. However, understanding Williams's performance style from *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping* alongside the experience of his breath and tone, dictated where the emphasis shifted in the shape of my mouth or my facial movement.

Generally, Williams's body is tense and stiff, and his movements are precise and accentuated, and this awareness fed into my focus on his mouth and the importance of articulating his words correctly. However, his speech could not be maintained to the lips and teeth and advanced to other parts of the face to produce comically surreal images. Through documentation of my process, I reflected on the images created and came to understand that the more absurd the face became in articulating certain words and phrases, the more that Williams's camp identity seemed to puncture through my performance. Through re-enacting his mouth, I understood that language and voice are important aspects that form part of this marker and contribute to the unusual facial impulses. In part these aid the production of a hyper-theatrical veneer. Yet, although these facial images had a humorous effect, my experience of them was less uplifting. Through his mouth, I locate a deeper connection and understanding of this marker through his voice, face and use of language.

Each piece creatively uses repetition differently, however, in *Flash, Bang, Wallop*, I repeat sections of Williams's interview to emphasise key facial movements caused by the articulation of certain words and phrases. To narrate my insights below, I refer to a specific moment from the latter half of *Flash, Bang, Wallop* that follows one repeated section and then a lengthy run-on answer (Please refer to Video 4 on the accompanying DVD: 'The Mouth: *Flash, Bang, Wallop*').

As a site for historical contact, the need to breathe marks a technical departure into the lip-synch performance. The exhaling of air shifts my mouth to an extended bottom jaw to mime the words of his speech and create the shape of Williams's mouth. A concentrated amount of focus on just the mouth, through my lower-jaw's tension, creates a peculiar energy that ties my understanding of Williams's facial embodiment through long extended phrases and fast word-play. For Williams's speech, energy comes from the lower jaw, when articulating certain words like "vulgar". An emphasis for the "r" sound forces my bottom lip to reveal and over-expose my teeth, which causes a mild sense of discomfort. However, as the speech moves forward, my mouth cannot maintain the words and although I attempt to continuously keep pressure in the lower-jaw, this energy cannot be maintained and incorporates other parts of the face and body. The tension felt shifts to wider facial elements, and in the documentation, the projected image picks up these fleeting instances, such as my flaring nostrils and emphasised gurning jaw. Both in the moment of performance and when re-watching the footage upon reflection, for me, the picture is grotesque. For viewers, the image is comical as the recording captures the gentle muttering of laughter. Also captured in the recording is when I glance at the projected image as there is an innate urge that resists acknowledging it *was* my mouth and *not* at the same time. Throughout my process, I recognised this extended section to be a moment my mouth could not maintain my body's tension, and I had to gesture to punctuate certain words with my hands. Although resisting this urge and attempt to focus on the mouth, there was an overwhelming physical resistance released in the gesturing of hands. However, from knowing Williams's embodied repertoire through prior exploration, this energy had to shift and be re-allocated to the mouth. I had to move towards the ludicrous and surrealism of the image produced and push aside any sense of comfort to embody the totality of Williams's camp mouth.

Connections between Williams's work and the grotesque are also made by Andy Medhurst, who recognises the importance of the face as part of Williams's work alongside Bakhtin's ideas on the grotesque body. He describes Williams's nostrils as 'seemingly on loan from a Gothic cathedral gargoyle and big enough to park a car in, flaring wider and wider as [his] performance and language [becomes] more and more extreme' (Medhurst, 2007: 97). Medhurst reads this as a 'reckless display of bodily comedy in a man usually so traumatised by the thought of unbridled physicality' (Medhurst, 2007: 97). The grotesque is rooted in the exaggerated and hyperbolic, with 'images the human body as multiple, bulging, over- or under-sized, protuberant and incomplete' (Stallybrass and White, 1986: 9). Examples include protruding bodily parts and orifices of entry or exit, like the mouth and nose. As Bakhtin describes, 'the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits' (Bakhtin, 1968: 26). My experience of embodying Williams generated feelings of repulsion in myself, and the grotesque body aids a discussion of the overwhelming and surreal qualities of the camp mouth encountered through this moment.

At the moment discussed, Williams explicitly shifts from interviewee to performer, as he talks about comedy and religion. He moves towards a heightened performance mode, relaying jokes, puns, and re-counting London town names in the Lord's prayer rhythm. This moment was technically challenging, as it was impossible to close the mouth, keep up with his words, or even take a breath. Through repeating phrases like "part-and-parcel" and "belief" – with an emphasis on extending the word "*be-lief*" – facial distinctions between the gurning jaw to the out-stretched cheeks were awkward and tiresome. However, the projected image of this discomfort looked humorous. It is worth noting that *Flash, Bang, Wallop* was the first time I presented this lip-synch work to a live audience, and there is a small moment of laughter heard from the audience. Although in hindsight, it seems thoughtless not to recognise the comedy embedded in the work, nevertheless, the laughter felt unsettling. Through amplification and discomfort of the mouth, the laughter felt peculiarly pointed and uncomfortable.



Figure 4 (*Flash, Bang, Wallop*, 2018)



Figure 5 (*Flash, Bang, Wallop*, 2018)

Through extreme facial physicality, Williams's speech causes certain abject qualities and feelings.[47] Mark Flisher (2020) writes about shame and abjection in relation to the body's materiality in live and visceral performance art. He notes the 'abject sits at the margins of our identities and refuses to be assimilated by the subject. In its refusal to be part of, and not part of our selves, in its ambiguity, the abject causes us to be repulsed, anxious, embarrassed, and in some cases ashamed' (Flisher, 2020: 359). In my work, I intuitively resisted fully embracing the absurdity and grotesque images my body had to produce. However, towards the end of this lip-synch section, as I attempt to keep up with the audio, the need to be synchronised diminishes and an onus on the mouth's absurdity takes over. By embracing something uncomfortable through this co-medial encounter, it cultivated an understanding of Williams's performance style profoundly rooted and connected to his sense of self, identity and heightened camp persona.

[47] Julia Kristeva writes in *The Powers of Horror* (1982), the abject sits on the margins of subjectivity in places that refuse to be acknowledged as part of ourselves. Situated in the ambiguous position of being self/other, the abject aims to safeguard the body from truly understanding a sense of "self".

By way of the mouth, I have come to understand more about how Williams's presence shifts into a heightened performance persona. The mouth functions as a safe-guarding impulse, which rests in both a place of hyper-theatricality and intelligence, whereby the onus is on the grotesque and bulging shape of the mouth to express this veracity. Williams's camp enactment moves towards a hyper-theatrical persona that is captured by the singularity of the mouth. This moment apprehends one way to think about how the comically grotesque is a necessary part of camp's queer performative strategy. The camp mouth operates between pleasure, enjoyment, or humour by cutting through discomfort, exaggeration, and absurdity. Although my premature intention in exploring Williams's mouth was to move beyond notions of shame – it has become a potent way to illuminate my experience. However, this insight narrows ways of understanding the camp body – as something grotesque and comical – through a singular over-emphasised orifice. As the mouth moves into an over-articulate shape to express vocal *and* linguistic virtuosity, it shifts beyond being Williams, the person, and becomes the timeless persona. The camp mouth somewhat acts as a safeguard to hide the/his true self. Consequently, ideas on abjection help tease out this felt experience and reveal certain transgressive limits as the camp mouth moves towards a theatrical safeguard that rests in a comically absurd position.

Ironically, in the last moment of the piece, further insight into Williams comes through no lip-synch performance, rather than being present and allowing him to *speak* for himself. As I zoom the camera lens to project my whole face and listen to Kenneth Williams answer the question: "If you were not "Kenneth Williams", who would you be?" Williams speaks about wanting to study at University and become a teacher. This moment inadvertently and coincidentally reflects upon my current position in the room at that moment. Although initially employed as a creative decision, this moment, both differentiates and binds our experiences on a more profound and humanist level. At this moment, my body enacts an alternative future for Williams that he, in the past, can only speculate and imagine. This poignant and co-performative moment articulates the duality experienced through examining Williams's mouth. Although I visit the past to offer affective insight into Williams's mouth, his legacy outlives and ultimately over-rides any fleeting moment of differentiation.

A Camp Gesture

This chapter now turns to discuss the next indexical marker of camp embodiment: gesture. Discovered through *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping* was that although each study gestures differently, it is a crucial part of each and a connecting thread of embodiment. The first half of *Flash, Bang, Wallop* takes a closer examination of Howerd's use of gesture in his *TW3* routine, where I discovered somewhat paradoxical and ambivalent feelings towards the limp wrist's specific action. In the routine, Howerd continually repeats the action to fuel his movement and it became a choreographed marker to navigate his routine. In this sense, the limp wrist's action was precise and exact. However, the limp wrist also signifies an embodied cultural marker within broader histories of camp, one that epitomises fragility and passivity. Through the limp wrist, I encountered a contradictory experience of Howerd's routine. To explore this, firstly it is worth reiterating its complexity as an identity marker with particular cultural baggage.

Early definitions of camp emphasise exaggerated yet flimsy gestures are central to men being camp (Ware, 1909; Booth, 1983). Even Sontag recognises gesture as an essential aspect of *being* camp; one that 'employs flamboyant mannerisms susceptible of a double interpretation; gestures full of duplicity, with witty meaning for cognoscenti and another' (Sontag, 2009: 281). Exaggerated and stylised gestures also affect the lived experience of being a camp gay man. Certain gestures, like the limp wrist, are a significant point of resentment in the gay community. Discussion of gay men's attitudes towards being camp often view the limp wrist as 'entertaining' and comic, yet not 'sexually attractive' (Troughton, 2010). The limp wrist signifies weakness, passivity and marks a comedic gibe towards men who fail at masculinity. As a result, it somewhat accentuates the inherent misogyny in being camp that demonstrates how 'being female is somehow inferior to being male' (Cain, 2017). Theoretically, gestures have also been meaningful when thinking through Freeman's ideas (2010) that develop Butler's early claim to gender performativity (Butler, 1990). The relationship between gesture and camp has always been paramount and a crucial element discussed in its history. As I developed *Flash, Bang, Wallop* and Howerd's gestural movements, an acute awareness of this narrative alongside my relationship to the limp wrist reverberated throughout my experience.

In *Flash, Bang, Wallop*, my body continually repeats Howerd's gestures until they become choreographed to hit specific pointers articulated with the limp wrist action (Please refer to Video 5 on the accompanying DVD: 'Gesture 01: *Flash, Bang, Wallop*'). Key to re-enacting the routine is hitting the flick of the wrist at the right time. There is a fluidity experienced as my arms move through the choreography of Howerd's gestural movements, which is dependent upon the axis of the wrist and elbow. And then this fluidity breaks as the hand accentuates the limpness of the wrist and hand. There is a bound rigidity felt as the arms must continually hit the same point each time, and then a feeling of release as the hand relaxes from the body. This muscular release of tension coincided with a metaphorical release, as my body attempted to resist the broader signification of the limp wrist, yet was reliant upon the action for the sake of the routine. There is a fluidity and weightiness felt between the limp wrist's direct and indirect nature, a heaviness that echoes its cultural baggage as a complex identity marker. As the hand relaxed from the wrist, there was both a release of muscular tension and emotional liberation, that acknowledged the limp wristed gesture for what it is and has been, whilst admitting embodied possession in the present moment.

My understanding of Howerd's camp performance, by way of the limp wrist as a broader indexical marker of camp lived experience, uncovered something profound and personal for me. Honing down a way to describe or articulate the embodied experience is best described as a *social gestus* that moves in and out of an ambivalent feeling of queerness and failure. Through continually repeating a deeply politicised gesture that is both/and a sign of violence and humiliation, as well as humour and comedy, I felt a muscular and emotional resistance in repeating a gesture that served as a reminder for the cutting nature of specific phobic energies. My recirculation of the limp wrist hinged upon my ability to see it as *both* a symbol of failure *and* a strategy of resistance, rooted in queer experience.

Although I am distant from the work when reflecting on it a fleeting feeling lingers with me beyond the studio that makes me acutely aware of my regular day-to-day movement. Jose Muñoz recognises the slippery distinction I outline in his work on disidentification. He notes that certain performative actions, like the limp wrist, 'index to a shared aesthetic and a communal structure of feeling' (Muñoz, 2009: 70). There is a resilient force in such actions

that remain 'as a transformed materiality, circulating in queer realms of loving and becoming' (Muñoz, 2009: 70). It is 'through small gestures' like those observed with the limp wrist, that 'particular intonations, and other ephemeral traces, queer energies and lives are laid bare' (Muñoz, 2009: 72). The limp wrist is precisely the type of gesture that is an emblem of queer experience and identity. The limp wrist demonstrates how 'one gesture will contain both positive and negative polarities simultaneously, because the pleasure and pain of queerness are not a strict binary' (Muñoz, 2009: 74). Yet, Howerd's work, from which I draw my experience, is rooted in satirical stand-up comedy, and this fact cannot be over-looked. I follow then, the idea that Muñoz makes about camp, as a practice of disidentification more broadly, noting that it hinges upon the 'strategic and disarming use of humor' (Muñoz, 1999: 119). As comedy offers an 'important cultural critique while at the same time providing cover from, and enabling avoidance itself of, scenarios of direct confrontation with phobic and reactionary ideologies' (Muñoz, 1999: 119). Nevertheless, the shrewd-ness and knowing-ness Howerd embodies transfers to my reiterative practice in the limp wrist's singular performative gesture. As Muñoz notes, the 'deployment of camp styles and practices is, at its core, a performative move', and that '[r]eiteration and citation are the most easily identifiable characteristics of the mode of camp performativity' (Muñoz, 1999: 128). Thus, repeating the limp wrist gesture as a citational act, a *social gestus* of camp experience, was crucial to my exploration.

In *Flash, Bang, Wallop*, the limp wristed action dictated when choreographed repetitions occurred. For example, at the start of the piece, there are three individual hand gestures and then a flick of both wrists that break the routine's flow as it returns to the start. After three repetitions of this sequence, it moves forward and follows a similar pattern; returning to the start or repeating moments that emphasise the limp wristed action. In one instance, Howerd holds his body in a posed position that emphasises the gestures held against the body. As he notes that in the audience "someone has dropped something", the arms and hands freeze as the torso moves from left to right as the torso artistically frames the wrist.



Figure 6 (*Flash, Bang, Wallop*, 2018)



Figure 7 (*Flash, Bang, Wallop*, 2018)

Not only repeating, but holding the limp wristed gesture, allowed time to stand still and give space to this postured enactment as it transitioned from Howerd's body to mine. The repetition of movement from one body to another, is what Schneider describes as body-jumping (2018). When certain repeated gestures move between bodies, they repeat a prior moment and delay the natural progression of time. As they move from one body to another, they alter and adapt to each body that re-inhabits the initial movement. However, the repetition of certain politicised gestures demonstrate the 'potential to carry history in different directions with each irruptive singularity' (Schneider, 2018: 286). Although Howerd's initial routine dictated the gestures, my embodied recognition of the limp wrist signalled points of repetition that attempt to reclaim this movement for myself. In short, at that moment, we are both the same and different but bound by the singular sensation of the limp wrist. As Schneider develops:

> Gesture can interrupt the otherwise uncritical flow of the norm, freezing or holding time on the one hand, or cutting, jumping, making time fly on the other. Gesture moves not only bodies, the air around bodies, the configuration

> of bodies in relation, and ideas about bodies, but it moves or alters time as well. In the theatre, the use of gesture may be rendered obvious or overt, but whether in the theatre or on the street, gesture can arguably turn time back, forward, to the side, or all the way around on itself (Schneider, 2018: 297).

Through the embodied citation of Howerd's gesture, I experienced a hyper-awareness of the limp wrist as a marker of camp embodiment. Yet, Howerd's routine and gestures are, and will always be, embedded in the past, whereas my performance happens in the present through repetitive mediation and in a theatrical space. Furthermore, my reflection now looks back on the past moment of this performance. With its in/direct movement, it not only exists alongside or on top of my body as described above, but *through* my body. This gesture *moves* from Howerd's body to mine in a forward-looking move that allows me to reflect upon my embodied experience. My repeated gestures are unique and distinctive; they are *my* gestures, but rooted by, and defined in relation to the past.

Throughout studio practice, my body resisted repeating the limp wrist because there was an innate sense of shame and embarrassment behind doing an action used as a comic taunt towards my body as a symbolic failure of my masculinity. Yet, the theatrical mode of performance enabled me to be both within and separate from this gesture. It somewhat becomes a social *gestus* that attempts to resist and undo its defining signification, yet fails to surpass its defining characteristic, failure. In conversation with Lucia Ruprecht, Schneider discusses ideas on inter*in*animation through gesture and specifically, 'the politics of citation and reiteration' of gesture as a call and response (Schneider and Ruprecht, 2017: 108). Like many others, Schneider takes influence from feminist writers and theatre-makers who use Bertolt Brecht's theories to engage in acts of overt repetition and over-identification to expose social and economic injustices.[48] In the context of my analysis, Howerd's gesture is a

[48] Their discussion draws reference to Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre and the verfremdungeffeckte of gestus. The verfremdungeffeckte are dramaturgical tools employed 'to reveal a suppressed or unconsidered alternative' in dramatic narrative, 'to show the possibilities for change implicit in difference and contradiction' (Brooker in Thomson and Sacks, 1994: 194). One tool that demonstrates the political nature of a gestural citation is gestus: 'a combination of physical gesture and social attitude' (Eddershaw in Thomson and Sacks, 1994: 256). Theatrically, gestus is used to examine the repetitive act of performing stock phrases or gestures and 'contributes to the audience's understanding of the

call from the past that I take up as a response in the theatrical present. And although there is an *inter*- relationship between are temporal coordinates, the limp wrist gesture enacts a moment where we are int*ra*animate of each other.

To explore this idea, I turn to discuss a second moment from the recording towards the end of the segment, when my body continually repeats the routine in its entirety beyond Howerd's sketch (Please refer to Video 6 on the accompanying DVD: 'Gesture 02: *Flash, Bang, Wallop*'). This moment includes the final audio of the *TW3* episode that features a joke about homosexuality and paedophilia, whereby David Frost states: a psychiatrist notes, a man accused of relations with two young girls has "feelings of a homosexual nature", and in doing so, he is taking a "step in the right direction". There is mindful incorporation of this element as its punchline is ambiguous. It lacks clarity about whether the comedy is about the defamatory description of homosexuals-as or even as-not paedophiles. However, playing the joke is not for this irony or cruel nostalgia. It presents a 1960s reality *from* the satirical viewpoint of *TW3.* It allows history, and the lived realities of many, to unfold through what Johnathan Walker describes as textual realism, 'a self-conscious and critically engaged form of intertextuality' that 'replaces imitation with selective, critical quotation and commentary' (Walker, 2010: 90). This creative impulse, as Walker explains, is a strategy that 'redefines the notion of realism and changes its target. Rather than attempt to represent directly the lived reality of a past era, it re-enacts the characteristic ways in which a past era represented its experiences to itself' (Walker, 2010: 90). Given the research context for this study and lived reality of Howerd, replaying this instance felt justified. More crucial is how this audio footage appears alongside the continual repetition of Howerd's gestures. As they become more robotic and choreographed, and the accented limp wrist sharpens, the gestures are no longer Howerd's movement and become my own. Yet as the ambiguous joke lingers in the audio, my movements are ultimately tied to Howerd and his 1960s truth.

As a social *gestus*, the limp wrist is an emblem that echoes and reverberates throughout histories of male effeminacy in its enactment. It is at once a throwaway commonplace

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character's social significance within the play' (Eddershaw in Thomson and Sacks, 1994: 256).

gesture, but also a marker specifically tied to an identity position and cultural status. The theatrical notion of *gestus* is beneficial, as it demonstrates the both/and of a situation via

> the fostering of a "critical distance"—distance between the performer and that which the performer is re-presenting or surrogating (sometimes termed distantiated or alienated performance); distance between the audience and the performers so that the audience can think for themselves; and also *historical* distance, in that a time gestured toward, referred to, or re-enacted on stage should be removed from the time of the critical spectator in the house (Schneider, 2017: 109, emphasis in original).

Schneider extends the critical social and economic function of gesture (*gestus*) to include historicity and temporality. That a repeated gesture, viewed as a *gestus*, happens in a critical historical relationship with the present. She explains,

> the "social *gestus*," of a situation is always already historical as well as always already pitched toward a future in which change might occur. Rendering replay explicit is an effort to ask one time to stand in critical relationship to another time, even within the shared time of a theatrical production. The space of repetition invites a critical opening for (re)experience, for analysis, for further engagement (Schneider, 2017: 109, emphasis in original).

Crucial here is the precarious opening that a replayed gesture evokes; in the same move, a gesture cites the past and a present in a new movement that critically looks forward. Schneider offers the example of a living foot and the step(s) it may take or might have taken, as well as the future footsteps a person might take in the same path or elsewhere. The act of stepping and the foot, 'will be *both* different *and* the same in their stepping and that this both/and is in fact what remains the same across time' (Schneider, 2017: 111, emphasis in original). The limp wrist gesture enacts a pose of shared subjectivity as it *moves* across time, and it *haunts* present being(s) in its repetition. The limp wrist is an indexical action that *remains* through repetition, but remains *differently*; at different times, historically, and the various bodies that enact this action in the(ir) multiple presents. However, the extent that my limp wristed *re*-gesture can move beyond its cultural signification is ultimately embedded in failure, as my re-gesture cannot detach itself from its broader meaning or historicity.

As a cultural marker, the limp wrist is bound to a camp male effeminate identity position. Yet, as a social *gestus*, it exposes this cultural marker as a mere choreographed movement. My exploration and critical reflection allows a way to side-step and recognise that the limp wrist is defined by a system that will always present it as a perceived failure – as an effeminate gesture. Although there is a theoretical and emotional challenge to think about how Howerd's gesture migrates from his body to mine, as Schneider writes, 'such intervals may be difficult, awkward, painful, or hard' (Schneider, 2018: 304). Yet,

> it is important to note that resurgence is not representation pointing only backward as documentation. Rather, resurgence is reiteration, pitched toward open-ended response-ability. Not representational image, but image as jump, as mimetic or extended gesture folded in the fabric of call and response and generative of intervals that are not just between (as between one past and one future), but intervals among, beside, and with hosts of alternatives that might yet become, might yet have been (Schneider, 2018: 306).

In doing so, the limp wrist is a highly performative part of camp embodiment. At its core, there is a strategic impulse to over-identify, or dis-identify, with the limp wrist, which is layered by its need to be both fluid and precise. Identified through the limp-wrist is a paradoxical desire to encapsulate past and present, and potentially reach beyond, to future experiences of effeminacy.

A Camp Interaction

This chapter now moves forward to discuss the last indexical marker of camp embodiment that stems from my interaction with the chair in Grayson's performance on *Saturday Variety*. As opposed to the first two elements, the mouth and gesture, which are distinct physical parts of the body, the chair centres my exploration of Grayson's work. I gained experiential insight through both familiar and uncomfortable moments. Grayson's movement felt comfortable and intimate, yet my bodily shapes that intertwined with the chair were peculiar and distorted. As a marker of camp embodiment, interaction encourages a broader discussion about the body's materiality in performance and the uncomfortable legacies of such work.

Int*ra*animate moments are experienced through Grayson's subversive interaction with the chair, as he never sits in the chair, but leans, moves and manipulates it in ways that call for specific bodily responses that enable the performative migration of his physicality to my body. However, my experience of un/familiarity opens a way to think through the camp performer's legacy in British popular entertainment, whereby this effeminate tradition of comedy orients the viewer in an identifiable sense of familiarity. In other words, I felt both at home and alien through the way my body interacted with the chair, and this sensation echoes cultural attitudes felt towards the history and legacy of camp performers more generally.

The experience of being both/and located from my work with the mouth and gesture happens with interaction primarily through touching the chair as part of re-enacting Grayson's work in *Tickle Your Fancy*. In the work, there is a co-presence of not only bodies but a material relationship with an object. However, although my chair work is not with Grayson's specific chair, it is still *a* chair that produces an embodied experience. Like the specific embodied interactions with archival objects explored in Chapter Two, as a method of *touching history*, this performative relationship 'attends to the presence of the past in the present and to the desire of creating affective connections across time' (Danbolt, 2011: 1984). The touching of history - and by extension the chair - illuminates many ways that the labour of *doing* practical research feeds its way into broader conversations about the camp body, cleanliness, and the complexity of Grayson's domestic demeanour. Observed by reviewing the vast repertoire of camp performance work for *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping*, cleanliness was one category that grouped the extensive material. Many performers emphasise an obsession with cleanliness, noting when certain areas are dirty, or vilifying germs or disease.[49] However, attention to an environment's sanitation should not just apply to camp people, and one would hope to be the desired norm, rather than a comedic exception. Nonetheless, an acute level of domesticity feeds into broader class-based narratives in British comic traditions that emphasise a need to better oneself. Medhurst notes Grayson's domestic demeanour and describes him as

[49] Which is ironic given Quentin Crisp, a figure I explore in-depth within Chapter One, had a reserved attitude to housework. He is most famous for stating that: "There is no need to do any housework at all, because after the first four years the dirt doesn't get any worse" (Barrow, 1998).

> a put-upon housewife in a man's lounge suit, forever lamenting the state of his health, disapprovingly revealing the poor standard of cleanliness in the studio. […] [A] gentle, domesticated, retrospective camp that celebrated the friendships between working-class queens and their women friends. […] There was nothing abrasive or threating about Grayson, he was a tame old auntie rather than a knife-sharp queen-bitch (Medhurst, 2007: 104).

Grayson's unique way he interacts with audiences distinguishes him from Howerd and Williams, who interact with audiences to show off or exhibit a put-down. Spurred by his interaction with the chair, Grayson's brand of camp performance is less acerbic and more familiar as he places himself in a position that begs for sympathy. For Grayson, and my body in-turn, the chair is an extension of his physicality. It becomes a supportive crutch that acts as a physical marker in the space and orientates our bodies. Although this creates a sense of familiarity, the interaction is less comforting as my body contorts around the object. My body's presence is not only alongside the chair but *through* Grayson's interaction with the chair.

Tickle Your Fancy is like *Flash, Bang, Wallop*, whereby my interaction with the chair dictates repetition of movement. However, the piece starts by showing Grayson's original footage to establish our bodies' co-presence and the subtle a/synchronicities between us. Following this, *Tickle Your Fancy's* focus is how the camera draws attention to specific bodily interactions with the chair; the camera fragments the gaze and emphasises specific embodied energies that shift and change. There are five key moments of interaction with the chair. First, Grayson establishes contact with the chair as an opportunity to state his weakness and lack of energy: "Well, I'm worn out before I start". Next, he notes the chair is dirty with a well-known catchphrase: "Look at the muck on 'ere!" The third time is when he uses the chair for physical support, noting that he is "riddled with arthritis", which swiftly connects to a bodily lean backwards and then forwards, with an abrupt swing of the left arm pointed outwards, to state: "Shut that door!" Following this, Grayson makes contact with the chair through a more extended section, and the chair is physically moved from left to right – "Let's have a change of scenery" – which leads into another abrupt lean back on the chair as Grayson states he is "sweating like a dray horse". This connection with the chair concludes with a repetitive sequence of "No…shut that door…no…" and then a targeted "riff-raff" towards audience

laughter. The final time he contacts the chair, he reiterates his ailments by stating that he is "feeling ever so giddy" because of "the brown bread". Aside from using the chair to note its uncleanliness, he ultimately uses the chair to facilitate his aliments', as a literal support mechanism for his body. There was a familiarity in the studio process through my initial experience of repeating the various leans against the chair. However, using the camera frame to abstract specific parts of the body and hone focus on these specific interactions, the bodily poses were more awkward and uncomfortable.

From my prior work, I understood Grayson's embodied energy to be very spontaneous, floppy and care-free, which initially made parts the routine hard to grasp. Whereas someone like Williams is tense and precise with his movement, Grayson is the opposite. Not only is the image of Grayson leaning on the chair is a prominent part of his legacy, but a physical prop that helps my body navigate its way through the work: moving the chair, leaning on the chair, touching the chair as it grounds my centre of gravity. His use of the chair invites my body to interact with it in the same manner, however, like Howerd's gesture, my embodied reading of Grayson's routine happens in the present moment.

To explore my insights, I focus on the extended section where Grayson makes contact with the chair and physically moves it from left to right and whereby the camera mediates in-between my live and projected body in the space (Please refer to Video 7 on the accompanying DVD: 'Interaction: *Tickle Your Fancy*'). Grayson continually moves throughout this sequence and as the clip repeats and the tempo slows, each movement and position flow into one another in a continuous stream. As the chair arrives on the right-hand side, Grayson/I take a breath to relax into a lean on the chair that creates an arch to the lower back, whilst the legs twist, with the feet in a semi-bevelled position. And then last the left hand comes to the forehead for the line, "sweating like a dray horse". Abstracting these bodily images through the camera frame meant that my focus was on the peculiar specificity of Grayson's shape. On the last iteration of this sequence, like with the whole performance, my body repeats the sequence tediously slowly in awkward silence. The movements become my own as I meticulously work through the routine, silently mouthing the words. The connection of breath here helps me stay in the natural flow of the routine and connects our bodies, as inhales and exhales navigate my sense of direction.



Figure 8 (*Tickle Your Fancy*, 2019)

Grayson's use of the chair resists its prosaic function. In this sense, the chair functions as a subversive 'scriptive thing' (Bernstein, 2009), which, when *not* used for sitting, invites other ways to engage with it through performance. Robin Bernstein coins the term *scriptive thing* as she discusses material culture and the performance of race. From reviewing a photograph that documents both racist behaviour and an object that *invites* a body to be racist, she theorises how such ephemera (photograph and object) produce historically located meanings. The photograph Bernstein observes is from the 1930s, and is of a white American woman standing behind the object of a wooden cut out of a young Black boy eating an oversized watermelon. The photograph documents the woman's body entangled with the racist cut out. Bernstein notes that as it 'arranged her body in response to the caricature's coordinates; it prompted, inspired, and structured her actions. In this dense interaction between thing and human, the caricature scripted the woman's performance' (Bernstein, 2009: 68). Bernstein's interest is in understanding *why* and *how* this text produces its historically located meaning, and ultimately, 'how humans perform with racially meaningful,

three-dimensional material culture' (Bernstein, 2009: 69). In doing so, she coins the term scriptive thing. The term ‘script denotes not a rigid dictation of performed action but, rather, a necessary openness to resistance, interpretation, and improvisation' (Bernstein, 2009: 68). Certain artefacts of culture 'script' action, whereby, 'agency, intention, and racial subjectivation co-emerge through everyday physical encounters with the material world' (Bernstein, 2009: 69). Most useful here are the parallels she finds with the theatrical use of the term 'script', for a 'scriptive thing' is ‘like a play script, [which] broadly structures a performance while simultaneously allowing for resistance and unleashing original, live variations that may not be individually predictable' (Bernstein, 2009: 69). As an object, the chair pre-supposes particular bodily interaction and shape. However, through re-animating Grayson's work, the chair becomes a *thing* that Grayson manipulates for his camp artistry. As Bernstein distinguishes *objects* and t*hings*, she uses the example of a knife to expand upon how an amateur cook and a professional chef might use the same item. Bernstein states that

> when an amateur cook uses a knife to chop an onion, the knife might function as an object that the amateur barely notices; in this scenario, the knife is only a tool used to obtain the chopped onion that the human desires. For a trained chef, however, a knife can never be an object: for such a person, each edge of a knife glitters individually with potential and stubbornness, with past, present, and future motions of slicing and chopping. The trained chef's knife is thus a thing with which a chef negotiates, while an amateur's knife is an object to the extent that it is only a means to an end. If the amateur's knife should slip and cut a finger, however, that knife suddenly becomes a thing that has leapt up and asserted itself, a thing that demands to be reckoned with (Bernstein, 2009: 69).

The difference between objects and things is 'situational and subjective' (Bernstein, 2009: 69). For Grayson, the chair is emblematic of his unique camp performance practice; it is not only a thing he negotiates to assert his camp presence, but also a symbol of his camp performance repertoire. However, like a performance of a play script, certain objects in performance allow 'for resistance' (Bernstein, 2009: 69). As an object, the chair 'transmit[s] meaning that originates in humans' to be used for sitting. In contrast, the chair as a thing in performance, used for anything other than sitting, 'forces a person into an awareness of the self in material relation to the thing […] it upsets the boundary between person and object' (Bernstein, 2009: 69). Through performance, Grayson subverts the traditional use of the

chair. Bernstein coincidently writes about how a performer might use a chair, as opposed to a non-performer and that certain chairs, 'prompt different styles of sitting and that each of those practices of sitting is embedded in a system of culture' (Bernstein, 2009: 69). Like the *amateur* cook held against the *trained* chef, Grayson is the camp *master,* and his legacy calls attention to broader histories of variety and forms of performance popularised on the television in the 1970s.

Given how Bernstein uses a racist image to describe the term scriptive thing, I want to briefly note how racist undertones of Grayson's work emerged through my chair work, as another way I resisted and negotiated embodied differences between Grayson and myself. Throughout my exploration, although my body is somewhat in service to history as part of the reenactment process, it has agency to react against past material, particularly when this is offensive or inappropriate. Earlier, I note the mindful incorporation of ambiguous homophobic material, however, in the performance material I use of Grayson's act on *Saturday Variety*, he makes two racist comments. I edit a direct racist joke in every performance, whereby Grayson has a female co-host of South-East Asian origin whom he has difficulty understanding. For a short while, he translates her speech with comic innuendo. After a brief back and forth between the two, she speaks English fluently. The removal of this part was a simple choice due to its explicit racism; however, examining Grayson's interaction with *Tickle Your Fancy's* chair made me acutely aware of the punchline "Chocolate Soldier". Although the term has historical meaning, contemporary use hints as a racial slur.[50] Even though my removal of this line was a conscious decision to censor and not replay racism from the 1970s, the source material and Grayson's body will always be rooted in a time when people could be explicitly racist on television. When thinking through how my body generates

[50] It originates as a derogatory label for a soldier who cares more about their appearance than fighting in war: a term popularised in the play by George Bernard Shaw, *Arms and the Man* (1894), and an operetta based on the play called *The Chocolate Soldier* (1908). Most interestingly, in the early 1970s when Grayson performs this sketch, 'Chocolate Soldier' was a Parliamentary term used to describe funding given by chocolate entrepreneur Joseph Rowntree for Labour Party posts. It aimed to counteract the benefits that governments ministers enjoyed through travel and social activities.

insights that are int*ra*animate of both/and past/present, this line's racist undertones was disturbing.

Broadly, the 1970s impression I enliven through my body still harkens back to difficult moments of British light-entertainment, where people like Grayson could be racist on television. Fred Moten speaks about such co-medial qualities and the necessity to read one artist medium through another. For although I censor and resist racist language, the behaviour traits and its legacy does not disappear and somewhat lingers through other mediums and forms. Schneider uses Moten's idea in her development of inter*in*animate, as he reads the highly politicised photography of racial torture *through* the sounds of blues music. As Schneider writes, he 'takes the blues as a figure of thought' and notes

> there is a political imperative in the display and circulation of such painful images and sounds […] that is "never disconnected from an aesthetic one." The imperative is an encounter, not only across time but across medial forms, as a way of opening up, of negotiating and moving history (Schneider, 2011: 163).

For Moten, and Schneider after, this is a call and response as hearing and seeing happen together, yet one pre-exists before the other. The photograph calls for a response made by music; however, the blues music invokes the painful memories invoked by the former, the photograph. Each one invokes the feelings of the other to the spectator or audience/viewer. As I discussed earlier with Howerd's gestural call from the past that I take up as a response in the present, Grayson's call from the past highlights that his work is bound up in a time and place when performers could explicitly be racist. Grayson's call problematises my response: in what ways am I complicit in recirculating images, moments, or feelings of low-brow racist comedy? Even though I remove this element from my re-circulation of the material, does denying or censoring material call attention to the deletion and its initial utterance? As Moten writes:

> The question here concerns the inevitability of such reproduction even in the denial of it. This is the question of whether the performance of subjectivity […] always and everywhere reproduces what lies before it […] the ongoing (re)production […] in all its guises […] is always already present in and disruptive of the supposed originarity (Moten, 2003: 5).

Although there is a conscious decision to replay and then not replay the racial slur – the point, in turn, is that one is not void of the other and racist behavioural traits rooted in 1970s Britain still exist in the initial material.[51] However, this moment of uncomfortable self-reflection permeated my relationship with Grayson and the chair. It invites my body to encounter Grayson's repertoire and its legacy, but just as my body intertwined with the object, so is my engagement with such tenuous material.

I want to re-connect my discomfort with the chair and broader ideas of uneasiness and distress re-circulated through my work, through a sense of familiarity, or unfamiliarity encountered with Grayson. The chair acts as a material marker in the space that my body is oriented by, and physical support that my body leans on to create Grayson's bodily shapes. The longer I engaged with Grayson, the more at home I felt with his bodily shapes and unique movements. From Heideggerian philosophy, queer theorist Sara Ahmed notes that 'orientation is not about differentiating between the sides of the body, which allow us to know which way to turn, but about the familiarity of the world' (Ahmed, 2006: 6). Her work advances a queer lens to phenomenology. It examines the situated quality of non-normative bodies in time and space, and how bodies shape their movement through the world, directing themselves toward or away from objects and others. Although the chair is not the *same* chair that Grayson ever used, it still invites my body to understand Grayson's performance repertoire. Through my experience, Grayson finds solace and comfort; the chair acts as a point of safety. He uses it for physical support and returns to the chair when attempting to reign back the audience's focus. For me, it centred myself throughout the vast repetitions; if I ever felt lost or uncertain, the chair helped pull focus. Ahmed extends that:

> Familiarity is what is, as it were, given, and which in being given "gives" the body the capacity to be orientated in this way or in that. The question of orientation becomes, then, a question not only about how we "find our way" but how we come to "feel at home" (Ahmed, 2006: 7).

[51] Consequently, *Tickle Your Fancy* uses Grayson's routine in its entirety for the first iteration, with the line removed and silence played for subsequent repetitions for the line.

Ahmed's reflection on the significance of objects in shaping experience helps develop the feelings of un/familiarity I encountered through my relationship with the chair. The chair enabled me to understand Grayson's work; it orientated my position in the performance space and worked as a physical marker and a contingent placeholder that stayed the same throughout each iteration of practice. The chair's familiarity creates 'an effect of inhabitance' (Ahmed, 2006: 7), but as my relationship with the chair, and in turn Grayson, changed throughout each iteration, this familiarity fleeted between feeling lost and found. As my body repeated sections of his routine, it became accustomed to the shapes and movements, and most importantly, Grayson himself. However, my interaction with the chair brings Grayson's legacy from the past into the present space, which like with gesture, there is a critical awareness that these actions are different from its initial occurrence through my body's forwarding orientation.

Conclusions

To conclude this chapter, I return to the inciting phrase: "Look at the muck on 'ere!", as a throwaway comment that Grayson makes with his first contact to the chair, which mirrors many broader aspects of embodiment, performance and archival research. Grayson's phrase reflects that studio work is quite sweaty, and archival work, often seen as something mysterious and exciting, can be quite filthy. It is a comment that opens many ways to think through Grayson's historical context and his camp performance's familiarity. There was an unusual feeling of being both very accustomed and familiar to Grayson's embodiment, yet at the same time, finding it not so comfortable. Specifically, when reading Grayson as 'a put-upon housewife' (Medhurst, 2007: 106), which emphasises many negative and complex aspects of his work. Thus, not only did a physical tension reside in my body, but anxiety stemmed from sympathy with Grayson and his legacy. The moment of his repertoire used spurred his popularity as a familiar face on British television whilst incited hostility towards him from groups like the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). Chapter One notes the political complexities around not only Grayson's work but Williams and Howerd too, specifically around groups who saw them as targets of heterosexual prejudice and for not using their celebrity to champion gay liberation. My knowledge of this retrospective context affected the repetition of movements and awry tensions felt in my body through all the bodily markers.

These elements of hindsight narrative are essential to note when speaking through my experiences.

Although the three bodily markers were recognised before entering the studio, they became integral to exploring each case study in depth. This chapter has noted specific int*ra*animate qualities, found through moments of co-performative intimacy, whereby both/and has been a valuable phrase to acknowledge how these markers both pre-exist and are used to speak about my experiences. This chapter first reflected on my understanding of the camp mouth alongside and through Williams's repertoire. Through this exploration I located feelings of pleasure and discomfort as Williams's performance shifted and heightened. I found that although this tension activates a performative safeguard – initially identified in Chapter One – it also triggers something comically grotesque. In other words, the overemphasis of the mouth, in turn, theatricalised, or camp*ed up*, the impression of Williams. My reflection on gesture through Howerd's work discovered somewhat paradoxical and ambivalent feelings towards the specific action of the limp wrist. I discovered a hyper-awareness of this marker as both a positive and negative image of camp embodiment more broadly. I learnt that although this sign could be re-presented with critical distanciation, like the mouth, this re-gesture's theatricality could not detach itself from its broader meaning or historicity. And lastly, my interactions with the chair uncovered similar ambivalent feelings around the familiarity and domesticated, non-threatening brand of Grayson's performance that was both physically and emotionally uncomfortable. Although my interaction with the chair was somewhat soiled, Medhurst also notes that 'now the dust has settled on that particular ideological tussle it is easier to understand where Grayson was coming from and to savour his significant contribution to the effeminate tradition' (Medhurst, 2007: 106). Nevertheless, how my body was int*ra*animate with Grayson's racist rhetoric is part of this ideological struggle. As I reflect on all three markers and move forward to conclude this thesis more broadly, found through these co-performative moments of intimacy are ways in which camp performance is wholly a performative and relational experience, whether that relationship is material, historical, or affectual. Through practice, I found that each marker carries similar qualities of energy that are not vacuous – they are deeply connected to each other and the body. These cross-historical sensations, my affective insights, contribute to broader discussions of camp as a complex cultural phenomenon and on-going discourse.

Conclusion

Archives, Artefacts and Affect; or Becoming and Belonging

This thesis articulates camp experience as an archive of affective bodily practices, and in doing so, it accepts its ability to emerge through haunting, thrilling, humorous, and sometimes uncomfortable or ambiguous, but ultimately, queer moments of understanding. This study claims two connected insights, generated through performance, that address ways of thinking about historical narratives of camp. Firstly, it claims a unique int*ra*animate (Schneider, 2017) approach to manage and talk through the complexity of doing queer performance-based historical research. Secondly, this framework has generated int*ra*animate reflections on Kenneth Williams, Larry Grayson and Frankie Howerd's work that views them as deep, complex and complicated figures and offers new ways to think about their legacy as figures of queer British history. Overall, this project offers a way to understand and address camp as a complex and productive queer subjectivity.

This study has explored connections between camp performance and the lived experience of male effeminacy. It started from resisting camp as an aesthetic of artifice and subject of frivolity (Sontag, 1964), because such a position feeds a negative genealogy of camp visibility and lived experience. This study advanced the contemporary definition of camp as a process of queer parody (Meyer, 1994) to understand the complexity of past and present camp subjectivities. Crucial to advancing this notion has been the body of performance work submitted as a key part of the research project: *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping* (2015), *Flash, Bang, Wallop* (2018) and *Tickle Your Fancy* (2019). The three performances engage with distinct elements of Williams, Grayson and Howerd's repertoire to explore cataloguing camp embodiment *from* the experience of *doing* camp performance. As I conclude this thesis and emphasise its key findings, it is helpful to return to my research motivations and prior personal connection to the performer Kenneth Williams, as core insights arose from my extended study on not only Williams, but Grayson and Howerd too.

Growing up, I was often described as being camp due to similarities in my gestures and mannerisms to Williams. I struggled to understand how my camp ways often presumed my sexuality for others and how many gay male friends would insult my camp manner for being too affected or effeminate. For this research, I was motivated by the connections between effeminate lived experiences and historical narratives of camp. In other words, what connected my way of being effeminate, which signalled 'camp', to other men attributed to the term, who pre-existed my life. I wanted to understand more about the histories of camp as an identity marker, its relationship with homosexuality, its association with other camp men, and I was motivated by a desire to resist certain phobic energies or tropes often attributed to the term that I had experienced. I chose to focus on Kenneth Williams due to my affiliation with him and prior knowledge I had, before embarking on this research, about his own conflicted sense of self and sexuality. However, following archival and historical research, Howerd and Grayson were subsequently chosen not only because they were contemporaries to Williams, but they also had interesting and conflicted relationships with their celebrity, sexuality and effeminacy. Chapter One recognises Williams, Howerd and Grayson as performers who exemplified 'the persona of a working-class queer' who inhabited 'a more everyday effeminacy' (Medhurst, 2017: 90). They traversed performing as "themselves" and as fictional characters, however, when reviewing work billed as themselves, there emerged an awareness of their lived experience and the complexity they faced navigating their lives as effeminate and queer men. Their working-class queerness was intimately imbued in both prosaic and performance-based visions of everyday effeminacy and heightened camp presentation. Chapter One recognises their historical context and lineage of working-class effeminacy to enable deeper connections with resilient examples of camp and the effeminate body. This complexity enabled one way to view these men, not as flat caricature-like visions of camp effeminacy, but as deep, multifaceted and complicated figures.

Although archival and historical research has enabled one way to approach these figures, practical study through studio and performance-based settings enabled a more profound self-reflective account on affected embodied connections to histories of camp performance more fully. My performance practice has generated new insights into camp embodiment through a self-reflective approach to embodied historiography and a personal experience of Williams,

Howerd and Grayson's chosen repertoire. My insights offer new ways to think about their work and legacy as complex figures of queer British history.

This study has uncovered new insights on camp experience through felt moments of disruption and tension. Found through studio practice was each marker's ability to enact a moment of shared subjectivity and collective representation that sought not to normalise its queer potential or queerness rooted in Williams, Grayson and Howerd's repertoire. Following a humanising impulse that implicated my lived experience as part of the research process, this study advances Williams, Grayson and Howerd as complex queer identities rather than insipid and caricature-like figures of camp comedy. Thus, as a complex queer subjectivity, I have found that attempting to understand camp rests and revels in the space of indeterminacy. My insights into camp experience have enabled a discussion on camp identity, lived experience and performance as a queer archive of affective practices.

This study had developed a unique framework for working with complex queer identities through queer strategies of performance to demonstrate affective approaches to queer historical research. Each performance uses lip-synching as a queer reenactment strategy to explore embodiment. However, the two focused works, *Flash, Bang, Wallop* and *Tickle Your Fancy*, engage with distinct elements of Williams, Grayson and Howerd's repertoire by way of specific markers: the mouth, gesture, and interaction with props, specifically a chair. Constructed at these markers are unique int*ra*animate (Schneider, 2017) moments, which bind cross-historical subjectivity through a complex sense of belonging and affirmation. My body's experience was a central and critical conduit between past/present received knowledge on Williams, Howerd and Grayson. Through a process of lip-synching reenactments, my body was both bound to histories of camp performance, whilst at the same time, my self-reflective approach allowed space for critique and new perspectives.

My reflections on Williams, Grayson and Howerd's work resisted articulating experience through the recirculation of phobic tropes, however, my reflections discovered paradoxical and ambivalent feelings towards being camp that stemmed from many ingrained negative behavioural attributes. Through an examination of Williams's mouth, I located feelings of pleasure and discomfort that shifted as it became a heightened orifice for camp performance,

and in turn, emphasised an impression of a camp Kenneth Williams. Through exploring gesture with Howerd's repertoire, I discovered ambivalent feelings towards the specific action of the limp wrist, as both a positive and negative image of camp embodiment, which I attempted to re-gesture through theatrical display. My exploration of Grayson's interactions with the chair in performance located similar ambivalent feelings around the familiar domesticated, non-threatening brand of Grayson's camp performance, which intertwined with physical and emotional difficulties. Specifically, around re-circulating racist material, histories and bodies of British popular entertainment. Overall, although I attempted to resist negative phobic tropes, my insights into the repertoires and legacies of Williams, Grayson and Howerd has recognised uncomfortable and troubled realities that cannot be disconnected from a comprehensive and well-rounded account.

Queer strategies of historical research have been critical throughout this thesis and enabled ways to work through complex subjectivities and lived-experiences. My application of Schneider's int*ra*animate (2017), as a way to describe how my body is both/and attuned to the past, whilst simultaneously rooted in the present, is a key insight. Although it was not necessarily a question that spurred my process, it is an insight that offers a structure to deal with complex hybrid visions of historiography. The int*ra*animate work done in the process of this thesis emphasises how insights stem from *within* and *through* an embodied experience of the past in the present moment. What emerges from int*ra*animate moments of performance is one way to manage and talk through the complexity of doing ambiguous and knotty queer historical research. How I use int*ra*animate reflections could apply to further complex and challenging histories of lived experience and their resulting subjectivities. As a key insight that arose through its process, this study claims this framework as a replicable strategy that lends itself to other minority subjects using alternative creative practices and self-reflection to undertake historical research.[52]

[52] As a queer performance form, the use of lip-synching in my study lends itself to an exploration of queer histories, however, the interconnected nature of a method practice and its history or subject matter could encompass wider lines of inquiry.

I bring this thesis to a close by re-counting two additional int*ra*animate moments from different archival stages of the research process, outside of the performance space and studio process. Firstly, handling Lady Austin's red silk pyjamas and second, wearing a jacket worn by Kenneth Williams. Like the performance-based study, where this research locates its key findings, these two moments of handling and embodying artefacts from histories of camp performance and lived experience offer similar complex moments of pleasure, belonging and affirmation, alongside uncertainty and ambiguity.

In 2014, during the primary research stage, I visited the National Archives in Kew to view first-hand material relating to Lady Austin's Camp Dance of 1933. Alongside the written police report is a significant pair of red silk pyjamas worn by Austin and collected as evidence (CRIM 1/638). In one sense, the 'Lady Austin's 'Camp Dance Club'' file archives how Austin was camp through their resistance against the brutality of the police and resilience of their conduct in the humiliation of the court. However, the object of the red pyjamas also captures the essence of camp experience. The pyjamas exist within the liminal space between both the archive and repertoire, as Diana Taylor notes, '[m]aterials from the archive shape embodied practice in innumerable ways', but they 'never totally dictate embodiment' (Taylor, 2003: 21). The pyjamas exist as a material fragment that is both costume and criminal evidence and a placeholder for a body that existed. Upon my first-hand experience, the pyjamas take two archival assistants to carry the elaborate large box into the reading room. The assistants ask the reader to wear intricate white protective gloves to undo multiple canvas ribbon ties and layers of acid-free paper before they get to handle the pyjamas. From handling the pyjama bottoms, I gain some knowledge of Austin's petite frame and shape as the vibrant fabric has a free-moving floating quality to it and the design of the top cinches on the wrists and neck. Through touching the pyjamas, there is some sense of Austin's image in my imagination, yet a pained sense of knowing Austin was arrested and humiliated in the garment. However, my experience with this object and the meticulous way it must be handled is a highly theatrical one that cannot be overlooked. This experience is just as symbolic of the historical account itself: a camp encounter with a fragment of queer camp history.

At a later stage of this research process, I encountered similar ambivalent feelings towards an artefact of Kenneth Williams. In 2017, during the second archival research stage, through

a personal connection, I became aware of a jacket worn by Kenneth Williams housed at Angels Costume Hire facility. Not to be confused with Angels Fancy Dress store based in London's West-End, which supplies fancy dress to the general public, the Costumier is found in a warehouse in Hendon, North London that houses an estimated five million pieces for the professional entertainment industry. I corresponded with Jeremy Angel through email, the facility's current owner, who had acquired the recently dissolved BBC costume store. He spoke at length to me about how he was actively seeking celebrity items and pieces that he could feature in displays or exhibitions for additional income-generated activity. After describing my research and study, as well as personal affiliation with Williams, he offered a reduced price to hire the jacket.

In contrast to my handling experience of Lady Austin's pyjamas, my experience of both visiting Angels and the jacket was very different. Opposed to the idyllic setting of the National Archives in Kew, the Angels warehouse had fast-paced energy with people in the television and film industry coming and going, with high-profile displays of recent productions they had supported. I met with Jeremy Angel, who had the costume kept alongside his other celebrity pieces, took hold of the jacket and swiftly paid for one month's hire. I was unexpectedly back on the tube home with Williams's jacket in my bag in little to no time.

Later at home, I examined the simple black blazer that had a name tag on the internal breast pocket with "K. Williams" written in black marker pen. Without the official archival protocol experienced with Austin's pyjamas, the jacket felt humble and unassuming. Without the theatricality or formality of the archive, I started to question whether this was Kenneth Williams. The jacket looked like one he wears in various promotional images on his published diaries and letters and even in the *An Audience With*... footage I use in *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping*. Although hesitant, I decided to try on the jacket, and it fitted perfectly. Through repeating various instances of his routine, I had recently learned for the performance of *Keep Calm and Carry on Camping,* I noticed when wearing it with a white long sleeve shirt that the arms had been cut unusually short and accentuated the wrists. Again, this generated further questions: was this a fashion choice or later alteration made to the jacket, or had it been tailor-made for his performance? From further reviewing Williams's images and performance footage, I noticed the same insight; his jacket sleeves were cut short to reveal his white shirt

cuffs and, as a result, accentuated his wrists. Like my performance-based work on Howerd and the limp wrist, this experience of wearing Williams's jacket created a heightened sense of self-awareness. This int*ra*animate moment with the jacket was both attuned to the past, whilst simultaneously rooted in my present. This unique moment of cross-historical subjectivity both questioned and advanced my understanding of Williams as both a person and a performer. Through my experience of the jacket questions arose around its authenticity, provenance, and customisation, which fed back into viewing Williams as both a product and cultural figure of British camp history, as well as a human being.

Comparing these two contrasting experiences with artefacts of camp histories opens further questions about the legacy and conservation of such items. Austin's red pyjamas are kept in perfect condition for future research, whilst Williams's jacket is held on the celebrity clothing rail for potential monetary gain. Furthermore, a researcher can never afford the experience of wearing Williams's jacket to the red pyjamas due to their object status and fragility. However, without conservation or preservation, there is arguably just as much instability to the legacy of Williams's jacket.

The complexity outlined between these two anecdotes and experiences are an underlying example of the person-centred, and performance-based approach to camp histories and historicity championed throughout this study. Doing performance-based research on queer history enables a somewhat forward/backwards-looking int*ra*animate modality of belonging and becoming. As queer researcher and theatre practitioner, Alyson Campbell writes:

> to 'do' a queer historiography through the mode of live performance […] is potentially one of the most productive sites for an encounter with queer history, as it can enact a 'reparative' mode of queer scholarship (Freeman 2010; Sedgwick 1990) wherein the political and social – possibly even the agency – associated with the 'identity politics' discarded by dominant strands of queer theory can be staged queerly (Campbell, 2017: 224).

In this study, performance has offered not only the creative potential to engage with histories of queerness, but it has also enabled queer strategies and dramaturgical approaches, like practices of lip-synching, to explore these narratives.

This research has used lip-synching as a queer strategy of reenactment and affective approach to historiography to enable my body to act as a tool to encounter history and demonstrate the creative potential for performance to represent histories through the co-presence of bodies. The inter*in*animate (Schneider, 2011) qualities of lip-synching have advanced such complex encounters, narratives, limitations, and uncertainties through multiple states of animation.

Through lip-synching, the present has enlivened and engaged with the past by way of three corporeal indices: the mouth, gesture, and interaction with a chair. As explored in Chapter Three, my body encountered uncertainty and queerness through each bodily marker by way of a/synchronist and fragmentary moments of pleasure/pain. Although Chapter Three addressed each marker individually, there are apparent cross-overs between each one. For example, Grayson's performance with the chair is both a gesture and interaction. However, there is a fleeting ephemerality to these fragmentary moments that Chapter Three attempts to capture through critical reflection. Nevertheless, as Campbell notes, '[t]o take an 'affective approach'' to queer performance historiography,

> means embracing all the options open to us through textual and performance strategies to draw attention to the materiality of the stage: the compositional organisation of the scenography, the corporeality of spoken language and the presence of the performers' bodies (Campbell, 2017: 228).

The relationship between performance, history, embodiment and queerness come together through this mode of performance historiography that recognises bodies as integral constituents for historical authorship. Such as the recorded performances submitted alongside the written element of this thesis, which not only document the practice, but also evidence a body, my body, *doing* research.

The conclusions I draw emphasise a reciprocal, relational and multi-layered approach to performance-based queer historical research. There are complex layers in the performance work submitted for this thesis, such as the digital layers of co-medial construction and the layers of embodied recognition felt through repetition and reiteration. These layers overlap, fade away, emerge, merge and then re-emerge on and through my body. It is worth noting

that throughout various moments of this research, outside the studio and performance realm, I would often unknowingly slip into the bodily movements of Williams, Howerd or Grayson. Even today, when touching or leaning on a chair, I still recall Grayson's repertoire and feel un/familiar sensations. Freeman's work on erotohistoriography eloquently brings together ideas on camp performance, historiography and queerness through a layered and embodied approach. For Freeman, as

> a mode of reparative criticism, erotohistoriography honors the way queer relations complexly exceed the present, insisting that various queer social practices, especially those involving enjoyable bodily sensations, produce forms of time consciousness – even historical consciousness – that can intervene into the material damage done in the name of development, civilization, and so on (Freeman, 2010: 120).

When thinking through the sediments of queer camp histories explored throughout this study, I find the visual analogy of the palimpsest useful to explain my process, journey and camp performance more comprehensively. Traditionally, a palimpsest is a writing surface that has been erased or re-used for new writing and traces of the original text become part of the new document. Like in my work, the writing surface's past exists on top, alongside, and through the body. Performer Lynn Sally conducts a similar reading of the female body in burlesque as she recognises that the 'explicit female body serves as a palimpsest whereby traces of historic renderings of the body remain, but the burlesque performer is able to 'rewrite' her own image on top of those remnants' (Sally in Double, 2017: 168). The palimpsest serves as a metaphor to explain modes of re-writing through bodily re-inscription. Crucial to this archaic term is that the faulty steps from the past are visible behind the new layers in the present, and that the future will always contain an imprint of the predecessors thought and action.

This research advances camp performance as a relational palimpsest of popular culture, history and subjectivity. Moments of camp performance enact a performative moment of delight, humour and belonging, whilst at the same time, they sometimes curtail feelings of loathing, hatred and contempt. Freeman directly refers to camp performance in advancing how a queer approach to historiography might locate understanding through tacit and nascent ways of knowing. She writes:

> Camp performance […] might be seen as a kind of historicist *jouissance*, a *frisson* of dead bodies on live ones, fading constructs on emergent ones. Or, what Annamarie Jagose has called "the figure of 'history' – its energizing of the very tropes of before and after" – might be seen in queer patterns of courtship and cruising, in sexual and more broadly tactile encounters, even in identity formations such as butch/femme […]. Or – and – historicity itself might appear as a structure of *tactile* feeling, a mode of touch, even an erotic pleasure (Freeman, 2010: 120, emphasis in original).

Throughout this study, the previous layers of camp history and its relationship between the past and the present have been paramount as they have continually touched and affected each other. The layers of collective representation are crucial to reiterate, as the cultural sign of "camp" has journeyed from the past to the present – from my culturally authored body growing up as a young camp boy to an academic study on camp performance. This complex relationship between past and present visions of camp men, which enabled viewing Williams, Howerd and Grayson as multi-layered figures, has a redeeming quality. But it must recognise the difficulties and awkward tensions that come along with the territory to move forward.

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