

Kaleidoscope: A Graduate Journal of Qualitative Communication Research

Volume 19 *Double Volume: 19-20*

Article 2

2020

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Recommended Citation

Panella, AC (2020) "Queering Creativity: Why maximalism matters," *Kaleidoscope: A Graduate Journal of Qualitative Communication Research*: Vol. 19, Article 2.

Available at: <https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/kaleidoscope/vol19/iss1/2>

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Queering Aesthetics: Why Maximalism Matters

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*Since the introduction of minimalism into theatrical performance in the mid-1950s, a lot of discussion has been dedicated to this approach. On one hand, minimalism is a wonderful way to focus, challenge, and critique excess. On the other hand, there is merit to having an overstuffed performance. The transformative elements of lavish and exaggerated performance can help an audience transcend and heal. There has been less discussion of the necessity of maximalism to theatrical and artistic movements. Using a phenomenological approach to analyze performance artist Taylor Mac's *Holiday Sauce*, this article argues that the maximalist approach used by Mac is an example of a queer performance practice that has this ability to connect to audiences in both an intimate and extravagant way.*

Keywords: queer, maximalism, aesthetics, performance

Over the Rainbow: A Case for Queer Maximalism

Maybe it is a kindness that people choose to have so many celebrations in the darkest time of the year. Maybe it is a necessity. When December rolls around, the U.S. becomes a glittery, tinsel showcase, and with this holiday spirit comes a sense of tradition and resistance, connection, and memory. The show *Holiday Sauce* by performance artist Taylor Mac is far from your average holiday showcase. Mac (who uses “judy” as a gender pronoun) uses the holiday as a centering point to honor famous LGBT activist and drag queen, Mother Flawless Sabrina. In doing this, Mac compares the differences in nurturing styles between queer families and families of origin. When the outside world is engaging in rampant consumerism and patriarchal offers, this show takes to task those systems while engaging and moving the audience to rethink their perspectives. This performance takes on...well, everything: race, class, gender, nationalism, the role of art in society, patriarchy in U.S. Christmas practices, both secular and religious. Whether it is a biting aside

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Author's note: Consider listening to Judy Garland Live at Carnegie Hall while reading this essay. Garland's hit comeback performance follows similar themes of home, bodies, and grand gestures.

about oppressive systems in the U.S. or asking the audience to reframe the lyrics to “O Holy Night” to invoke a queer, feminist retelling, Mac can take the original material, repurpose it, and make it grander than it was before. The show does so using a variety of high and low concept structures. It is also one of Mac’s most lauded performances. As Alex Needham noted of Mac’s performance style, “Mac’s show is an unforgettable kaleidoscope of performance art, cabaret, music gig, burlesque, puppetry, pageant, immersive theatre, poetry...it’s hard to think of an art form that it doesn’t somehow encompass (film, maybe?).” It is a maximalist performance that works to use popular music to understand, critique, and challenge what we know about America’s traditions; it is both creative and undoubtedly queer.

I have had the opportunity to see Mac perform both *History of Popular Music in 24 Hours* and *Holiday Sauce*. Both shows are grand spectacles that would make the Rockettes clutch their pearls. They are massive, energetic performances with large casts and even more enormous headdresses—clear examples of what I call queer maximalism, or an aesthetic response to normative and minimalist performance practice. A great deal of attention is paid to Mac for *History of Popular Music*. With a 24-hour set time, a cast of hundreds, and a level of audience engagement, it is an obvious example of queer maximalism. However, *Holiday Sauce* highlights how queer maximalism is performed in public and across the space of the body, the family, and national tradition. Performance scholars and practitioners need an expansion of maximalism at a time when the world rewards minimalism. In this essay, I will first define minimalism and maximalism as they apply to performance. Then, I’ll look at the ways *Holiday Sauce* embraces queer maximalism. Finally, I’ll look at how queer maximalism is a type of phenomenological orientation that exemplifies risk and failure in queer orientations. In doing this, queer maximalism becomes a framework for capturing the queer experience related to family and tradition.

You Go to My Head: Entering into the World of Taylor Mac

“You go to my head, and you linger like a haunting refrain,” Judy Garland croons in her 1938 song, “You Go to My Head.” Garland’s lyrics are reminiscent of the winter holiday season in the US. The expansiveness of Christmas, and all the trappings that come along with it, are hard to ignore in America. As the season approaches, it is not uncommon to see a lingering, haunting tension between queer communities and their families of origins’ traditions. The inclusion and exclusion of queer family members from traditions, or the painful memories attached to those traditions, can change what it means to participate in the holiday season.

For Mac to create a holiday show is not what is particularly novel; it is the framework, connection, and grandeur Mac displays in the show. The show engages generational legacy, recasts holiday tradition, and expands the performance from the stage to the audience. When asked in an interview

for the *Paris Review* about centering queerness in performance, Mac responded with hopes for historians to dig deeper to unearth queer histories and argued that performance has the opportunity to shift one's identity. Mac contends that

There's a lot of pressure for minority artists and for women artists to make 'universal' work, which means for straight white men. Or it's code for making work that the status quo will enjoy and relate to. But you don't go to the theater to experience what you already know. You go to experience something or be reminded about something you didn't know existed in yourself. (Greenwell)

In creating performance work such as *Holiday Sauce*, Mac re-envisioned a world that centers queer experience.

Holiday Sauce is, first of all, a tribute to Mac's drag mother, Mother Flawless Sabrina. Mother Flawless is a queer icon, a subject of the documentary *The Queen*, a mentor to many, and a cutting-edge performer. Upon her death in 2017, Mac felt compelled to pay tribute to her. In this performance, it is clear that her influence on Mac and Judy's relationship to family shifts. The show's title comes from Mother Flawless's catchphrase, "You're the boss, applesauce." Throughout the show, Mac toggles between song and monologue, referencing their nurturing relationship. But the queer intergenerational connections within the show go even further than Mac's relationship with Sabrina. In the production I participated in, a queer Elder Choir sang backup for many of the songs queerly repurposed for holiday anthems. A standout is the carol "O Holy Night," where Mac sings the lyrics but interrupts them by redefining each word to have a radical, feminist, queer interpretation. These intergenerational queer elements are juxtaposed with Mac's narratives about family of origin holiday experiences. By placing these narratives together in *Holiday Sauce*, Mac illustrates the pain that can come from one family while showing the value of chosen or found family.

The show leads us as audience members to question what rituals and practices we bring into our lives, whether at home or in the theater. While this tension regarding what constitutes family is evident in the show, as Pandolfi writes in her review of the show, there is an embrace of Radical Faerie Realness rituals,¹ and the reimagining of holiday traditions abound. Mac is clear about the influence and practice of these Realness rituals from the beginning of the show and encourages audience members to adopt ritualistic behaviors like hissing. Hissing is a Radical Faerie practice to show appreciation. This Radical Faerie critique embedded within the show further challenges traditional US-American capitalist Christmas iconography. The cast of characters is repurposed to signify queerness, from Sexual Consent

¹ Radical Faeries are a loosely affiliated group of, often, queer men who explore sexuality through nature-based spiritual practices. Their values include feminism, respect for the Earth, and individual responsibility (radfae.org).

Santa and Burlesque Baby Jesus to an envisioning of traditional carols to evoke a goddess's spirit. A highlight for me was when the audience was invited on stage to take whiskey shots and sing "Fairy Tale of New York." To call the audience on stage to drink and sing not only broke down the fourth wall between audience and performer but also collapsed the idea of the holidays as a particularly nostalgic time. Reinforcing this breakdown between audience and performance, the show's program was more interactive zine than a thick description of the show and actors. The program contains cut-out paper dolls, a Q&A of the Dandy Minions' (singers/helpers/performers) favorite sauce (which the minions answer with a loose interpretation of the word sauce), and an essay titled, "The Fruitcake Club: What Do You Do When the Holidays Aren't for You?" by Mayukh Sen (Mac 18). This intertextual program sets the tone for the maximalism of Mac's performance.

Mac's set and costume designer, Machine Dazzle, also takes up the challenge of transforming theatrical spaces for maximalist aesthetics. The set design, costume design, and breaking of the fourth wall are all taken to an extreme that produces a magical quality. Glitter, tinsel, lights, and every color of the rainbow appear in *Holiday Sauce*. Audience members in the know followed Mac and Dazzle's lead, donning themselves in sequins and sparkles. Everything in the show is big and bright and loud. Even intimate storytelling is not done on a small scale. For example, in the song "Christmas with Grandma," a retelling of Mac's childhood holiday experiences, Mac takes up center stage and punctuates the dark humor with large gestures. In creating this massive and expansive performance, the whole audience is recognized, invited, and energized as participants of the performance.

"Puttin' on the Ritz": Why Maximalism?

If you're following along with *Judy at Carnegie Hall*, the American standard, "Puttin' on the Ritz" is an excellent accompaniment to our discussion on the necessity of maximalism. The song's description of lavish well-to-dos with their "high hats and narrow collars, white spats and lots of dollars, spending every dime, for a wonderful time" doesn't feel so far off from Mac's performance. If we were to trade the high hats for higher hairdos and double down on the wonderful time, this song would capture some of the features of maximalism and the need to dress up, show off, and get over "feeling blue." In a maximalist performance, the audience must contend with the story being told along with the space and wealth of sensations directed at them. A maximalist production encourages disorientation by allowing audience members to choose whether to let the whole experience wash over them or follow a single wave of the performance act. With her notion of queer phenomenology, Sara Ahmed reminds us that "The concept of 'orientation' allows us then to rethink the phenomenality of space—that is, how space is dependent on bodily inhabitation" (i). Queer maximalism might be thought of as a queer orientation to aesthetics, as it evokes bodies in two ways: first

through the spatial and material, and second, through the show's content.

When it comes to the theatricality of performance, how performers invite audiences in and structure their performances can be communicated not only through the content, but also the form of the work (Sontag). To better attend to the form and structure of performance acts, performance scholars might examine how they engage in minimalist or maximalist aesthetics. Minimalism, as a movement of aesthetic practice, began in post-World War II European and American literary circles and has since found wide usage in architecture, art, music, and theater. Literary minimalist characteristics are often focused on an economy of words; when moved to a theatrical context, that includes the most straightforward set and costume design. As Robert Clark states,

The core idea that differentiates American Minimalism from other movements is that prose and poetry should be extremely efficient, allusive, and implicative. The language in this type of fiction tends to be simple and direct. Narrators do not often use ornate adjectives and rarely offer effusive descriptions of scenery or extensive detail about characters' backgrounds. (1)

This trend of minimalism is often attributed to Samuel Beckett's late work (Brater) and has continued with the growth of staged readings and small theaters. In some cases, minimalism in the theater might be a financial necessity or a result of too few resources. However, taking on the financial burden of large productions like Mac's *History of Popular Music* or *Holiday Sauce* is also a necessity if we are to capture the expansiveness offered by queer identity; it is a risky and overtly political project.

Minimalist aesthetics are interested in nuancing interiority, making the internal external for audience interpretation. Speaking on the historical trajectory of the minimalist movement, Frazer Ward states,

Four decades later, minimalism's stubborn objects sometimes seem overburdened by rhetoric, both the artists' own, widely circulated analyses of what they were doing (statements of intention, after all), and the elaborations of their critical champions and opponents. But in a post- and anti-expressionist context, it was seen as minimalism's strength, that its material straightforwardness and compositional severity disallowed the separation of thought from perception. (29)

In this way, minimalism orients the audience and the content in a particular direction, toward "material straightforwardness and compositional severity." Ward further argues that "understanding is closely bound to the assumed connection between the structure of the interior life of the artist and the structure of the objects he or she makes" (33). In this way, minimalism normalizes and praises the expedient, the succinct, and the linear. When

playwrights and directors employ minimalism, they risk narrowing the interpretation an audience member may make and may emphasize the author or director's evaluation over the audience's ability to interpret on their own.

Maximalism, by contrast, involves the incorporation of the excessive into a performance. This may be done through the sheer mass of cast, set/costume design, theatrical space, or amount of content. By adding layer upon layer to a performance, a director or writer takes a risk with their audience: Will the audience be able to catch everything? Will the intent be understood? Ryan Davis writes of performance artist Miguel Gutierrez, "Excess, incompleteness, and failure are important aesthetic concepts and values for him. Too much to say, too many pet theories to give shrift to, too much personal baggage to sort, so the performer cannot help but fail to manufacture a finished product" (12). The sense of excess and willingness to fail is real for Mac as well. In the performance of *Holiday Sauce* I attended, I watched several mechanical errors that were folded into the performance. When a prop issue arose, Mac seemingly went off-script to share how Judy learned to incorporate these seeming "failures" in the space into the performance. This practice was something Judy learned while doing bathhouse performances.

Additionally, maximalism can be marked by radical inclusion and expression. In Mac's *Holiday Sauce*, we see inclusion from the staging, the language, the connection with audience members directly, and the diversity of bodies on or adjacent to the stage. Inclusion is not just audience participation and ornate set design; by being intentionally big and multifaceted, inclusion is at the heart of Mac's production. Through maximalist performance choices, Mac critiques the ways that capitalism disempowers us from each other and the natural world. Mac's queer maximalist performances, in their risky excessiveness and rejection of linear structures, challenge capitalist notions of artistic exchange between audience and performer. In this way, maximalism can be thought of as a phenomenological orientation to performance acts.

"That's Entertainment": Maximalism as Phenomenological Orientation

"That's Entertainment" is not so much a song as it much as it is a list of tropes of performance. In that vein, what would a theory of maximalism in performance be without a tip of the hat to the all-stars of queer theory? Especially when the center of the discussion is someone whose gender identity is "performer and performing gender" (Greenwell). Queer theory, often, works to break down binarisms. Eve Sedgwick explains,

The instability of the binarism itself, usually couched as the simultaneous interiority and exteriority of a marginalized to a normative term, toward an examination of the resulting definitional incoherence: its functional potential and realization, its power effects, the affordances for its

mobilization within a particular discursive context, and finally the distinctive entanglement with it of the newly crucial issues of homo/heterosexual definition. (92)

This destabilizing of binary categories can allow for identification. Sedgwick writes, “After all, to identify as must always include multiple processes of identification with” (61). Queer theory offers a useful framework for understanding and analyzing social structures that govern bodies. Normativity not only expects cisheteronormative works, but additionally polices any non-normative action or behavior in the form of sanctions or rewards for working with or against the normalizing system. In particular, the concept of heteronormativity is central to understanding the critiques and insight offered by queer theorists. Heteronormativity promotes the notion that a straight and cisgender perspective is not only expected, but preferable in society. For example, in discussing the importance of telling diverse stories, marginalized voices are often told that their stories need “appeals to a general audience”; the assumption is that the general audience is cisgender and heterosexual.

While not explicitly defined as a queer theorist, Foucault’s work remains foundational to understanding both critical and queer theory. One of Foucault’s significant contributions to critical theory is incorporating gender and sexuality into analyses of power structures. Foucault posited that discourse on gender and sexuality is not an essential quality, but rather a mode for understanding the ways power structures operate. Teresa de Lauretis’s work furthered queer theory as we understand it today. From her perspective, queer theory is “a refusal of heterosexuality as the benchmark for all sexual formations; an attentiveness to gender capable of interrogating the frequent assumption that lesbian and gay studies is a single, homogeneous object; and an insistence on the multiple ways in which race crucially shapes sexual subjectivities” (iv). Building on Foucault, de Lauretis expands the epistemic framework for how scholars attend to the construction of identities by and through power structures. While many gender and sexuality scholars built upon Foucault and de Lauretis’s theorizations, I want to focus on Judith Butler’s work on the performativity of gender and sexuality because she expands this critique of gender/sexuality and power while also folding the phenomenological into her analysis. Butler highlights how identity develops discursively, and it is through the act of iteration that identity is challenged, engaged, and subverted.

Mac’s queer maximalist performances, in their risky excessiveness and rejection of linear structures, challenges capitalist notions of artistic exchange between audience and performer. In this way, maximalism can be thought of as a phenomenological orientation to performance acts. However, maximalism requires the engagement of space; it asks performers and audiences to think about being oriented toward not just a single object, but multiple objects in a single performance act. In this way, the audience is oriented towards *more*, and in maximalist work, *more is more*. Ahmed

notes that “phenomenology attends to the tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, and visual character of embodied reality” (86). A queer maximalist performance practice, then, might be thought of as a way to connect the physical to the ideological and a phenomenological orientation toward queer aesthetics. Queer maximalism is “a matter of residence; of how we inhabit spaces as well as ‘who’ or ‘what’ we inhabit spaces with” (Ahmed i). This connection to space and time becomes a phenomenological orientation. As Ahmed goes on to write,

For an object to make this impression is dependent on past histories, which surface as impressions on the skin. At the same time, emotions shape what bodies do in the present, or how they are moved by the objects they approach. The attribution of feeling toward an object (I feel afraid because you are fearsome) moves the subject away from the object, creating distance through the registering of proximity as a threat.” (ii)

In the use of this strategy as a performance aesthetic, the audience and the performer have their bodies shaped and moved by maximalist space. In an interview, Mac exclaims “I like maximalism because minimalism is in it!” (Weiss). Mac’s work, and Judy’s approach to creating performance, offer alternative insights into theatrical storytelling while embodying an overtly queer aesthetic and sensibility. In this way, Mac’s performances act as an example of how queer maximalism can be a tool for understanding the multiplicity of memory and tradition. Speaking to this connection, Sasha Weiss comments in an interview with Mac that

He (sic) finds the trend of stripped-down minimalism that has taken hold—whether in design, in fashion, in tech and especially in a theater—suspect. “Subtlety is a privilege,” he explained... “The trend of subtlety in the theater is one of the people who did not have to shout in the streets and do direct-action protest in order to stay alive because the government was refusing to acknowledge the AIDS epidemic. Like, Larry Kramer is not subtle, right? So that’s what I mean. Subtlety is a privilege. And so, when I go to the theater, and I see people being subtle, I’m like: Oh, great, what do you [expletive] want? What are the stakes? What are you risking?” (n.p.)

While not always explicitly articulated this way, Mac’s performance style and ethic embrace maximalism, have an embodied queerness, and enact a sense of risk that is often not valued in more heteronormative perspectives on performance aesthetics.

Because of the policing of bodies and aesthetics that have been referenced, queer theory may engage an embodiment that is not readily dissociated from physical experience. Reflecting on the experience of creating *History of*

Popular Music, Mac says, “I thought, ‘Oh, that is what I want to do—I want the show to be so long that the audience is falling apart, I’m falling apart, we’re all falling apart, and we’re also building bonds’” (Needham). The idea that someone would create a 24-hour performance is not just exhausting for the performers; the audience is so continuously engaged and challenged that there is hardly the capacity to intellectualize the experience. 24-hour performances such as this have been done in the past, often through Fringe Festivals or cabaret. What makes *Holiday Sauce* of particular interest through a maximalist framework is that Christmas in the U.S. is a very maximalist social production, contrasting with normative minimalist aesthetics. To queer and further maximalize the holiday experience can be therapeutic to folks who have felt excluded in holiday traditions and add a layer of satire to the expansive capitalism made apparent by Christmas consumerism. As Weiss points out of Mac’s maximalist aesthetics, “it’s not just a style but a system of ethics” (n.p.).

Subtlety is a privilege; it is a status that is only extended to a few, and performance must posture against such normativity. Jack Halberstam’s work on the relationship between queerness and failure offers a theoretical framework for understanding subtlety in this way. As Halberstam argues, “The social and symbolic systems that tether queerness to loss and failure cannot be wished away; some would say, nor should they be” (98). Mac’s form of maximalism risks failure in every way possible, not despite its queerness, but because of its queerness. I would further argue that Mac’s work is an example of Halberstam’s camp archives. Halberstam defines a camp archive as “a repertoire of formalized and often formulaic responses to the banality of straight culture and the repetitiveness and unimaginativeness of heteronormativity” (Halberstam). Queer maximalism, as displayed by Mac, both embraces camp and avant-garde traditions by blending elements of the known and normalized (popular songs and traditions) with aspects of the queer (costuming and overt challenges to gender norms). By rejecting subtlety in favor of the excessive, Mac risks failure.

Similar to Halberstam’s discussion on Daphne Brooks’s notion of “embodied insurgency” in African American performance, Mac’s queer performance implicates the performer and audience as bodies within cisheteronormative systems. As Halberstam argues, “For Brooks, the body of the performer becomes an archive of improvised cultural responses to conventional constructions of gender, race, and sexuality, and the performance articulates powerful modes of dissent and resistance” (97). For Mac to ask audiences to take on this grand and intrusive performance style, an audience member must reflect on their own identities and expectations. Gender and sexuality become focal points of the performance not only because genders and sexualities outside of the heteronormative are so rarely represented by comparison, but also because they challenge us to expand our thinking about other identities. As Mac says of judy’s play *Hir*,

There is one line in *Hir*, which is: “Gender isn’t radical, it’s not even progressive, it’s just an everyday occurrence”—so basically, get over it. To me, identity politics are always a subplot; I’m not interested in it enough to ever make it the point, because I want to change my identity! I always say that my gender is performer and performing gender. (Needham n.p.)

For Mac to identify with performing gender may imply a queer maximalist approach at the foreground of any of Judy’s shows. This identification acknowledges that genders are limitless, and the additional layers of complexity, bravado, and even sequins contribute to a *more is more* orientation. In Mac’s case, the more is more quality emphasizes queer joy while also acknowledging queer shame and pain. Judy brings queer joy by celebrating a variety of genders, challenging normative interpretations of holiday iconography, and encouraging audience members to actively engage with the people around them and with the performance itself. Judy brings in themes of family and trauma but demonstrates how finding Mother Sabrina as a new family member and mentor became a healing force.

By addressing identity and challenging identity stability through queer performance, Mac begins to push audiences to grapple with their own identities. As Mac has said, “That’s inspiring to me...that you would use your vulnerability and your imperfection as a way to get to the truth” (Weiss, n.p.). We can see by this that a queer interpretation of maximalism maintains that the audience has to reckon with their embodied experiences and a politics of disorientation. As Ahmed notes, “Queer objects might take us to the very limits of social gathering, even when they still gather us around...Indeed, to live out a politics of disorientation might be to sustain wonder about the very forms of social gathering” (xxiii). In their excessiveness, risk, and critiques of cisheteronormativity, queer maximalist performances disorient audiences not only by destabilizing normative notions of identity, but also of theatrical performances themselves.

In embracing an ethic of maximalism and confronting the concept of a stable and sanctioned identity, Mac offers a queer conceptualization of maximalism intended to disrupt expectations, not just for the sake of disruption, but rather as a method for engagement. As Mac says, “There’s a real emphasis on trying to *prove* things, but we don’t have to prove things, because we’re here, because you and I are queer, which means we didn’t invent it” (Greenwell). Queer aesthetics are not about upholding a standard in a new way, but rather is about being radically inclusive and challenging at once.

By offering abundance, there is an overt challenge to comfort. An audience in a minimalist performance has little choice: the set, the cast, and the gaze are very specific. In a maximalist performance, the audience must make some choices: where the eye should follow, what elements are they

willing to miss, should they participate. There is some risk in attending a maximalist performance. Mac explains, “Everyone expects to be safe in the theater—may be challenged a bit with an idea or two—but I say, well, maybe you’re not going to be safe” (Weiss n.p.). Commenting on this perspective, Weiss argues, “Mac is after something more radical than cozy catharsis: He (sic) won’t allow the audience to settle” (n.p.). By embracing an overtly queer aesthetic, Mac allows for queer audiences to experience a specific type of validation while offering non-queer audiences a chance to reflect on their own experience and perhaps sit in the discomfort of those reflections. As Mac says, “I’m interested in making the room right here queer. It’s an invitation for you to consider something about yourself” (Greenwell). This means that a queer maximalism acknowledges and embraces the creation of self as a radical challenge to normativity, a way to “make the room queer.”

Queer maximalism must wrestle with dominant and ugly power structures. For Mac, we can see this in judy’s critique of racism, sexism, and capitalist heteropatriarchy through queer performance. While theater is often a place that confronts and critiques political ideologies, what makes this type of approach so important is that it is a lavish and radically inclusive space for people who may not always feel seen, represented, or comfortable in theater spaces. Especially with the Disneyfication of musical performance,² grand performance pieces that take on overtly political topics are hard to come by, let alone those which work to maintain an anti-racist, feminist, and queer message throughout. It can be difficult for artists to navigate the impact of this kind of art, but as Ann Pancake encourages artists, “our very business as artists is trafficking between the conscious and unconscious; indeed, we are one of the very last groups in this culture who have a sanctioned day-to-day relationship with our unconscious, with our dreams and intuition” (413). In addition to the queer content of Mac’s performances, Mac does this by using judy’s dandy minions (what might be described as a large Greek chorus of helpers during the show), by encouraging the audience to hiss in support or boo in opposition, and by diversifying the performance via including the audience as active participants. As audiences, we must support and be willing to engage in the process of connecting with the unconscious, or even the imagined. Performers and other artists reimagine the world in both historical and material ways. In doing so, they are creating new worlds within this one.

“After You’ve Gone”

As Pancake says, “I’ve concluded that the only solution to our current mess is a radical transformation of how people think and perceive and value. In other words, we must have a revolution of people’s interiors. And such revolutionizing is exactly what art can do better than anything else at our disposal” (412). Performance studies scholars have long argued

² Disneyfication is the transformation of something into a careful, controlled, and easily palatable experience.

that the process of performance allows performers and audience members to be transformed. Queer maximalism informs this transformation by challenging normative assumptions of performance and, in doing so, expands transformative aesthetic practices through its more is more quality. The work of Taylor Mac (among many others) works to embody maximalism and queerness to remind us how queer world-building is not about limiting predictive choices but questioning and expanding our options. Speaking to this sense of world-building, Mac says,

We don't have rituals that allow us to express the full range of ourselves. I think of the show as a ritual sacrifice, and what you're sacrificing is your obstinate sense of self. We're going through this history together, we've got the onslaught of history, all this weight on our shoulders, and what are we going to do with it? (Needham n.p.)

A maximalist performance orientation may enable performers and audience members to heal and recreate traditions and rituals that are validating of their lived experience. In the example of *Holiday Sauce*, family and religious wounds can be soothed through queering holiday traditions. By embracing a queer maximalist aesthetic, Mac inspires us to do performance work that may make others uncomfortable; Judy inspires us to do more.

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