

# On Ambivalence: A Manifestish

written by Cole Cohen | October 9, 2014



Two-headed feelings each have their own brains, which is the characteristic that differentiates them from two-faced feelings. The condition of two-headedness in feelings is most often caused by a developmental trauma to the nervous system. One feeling is the weaker one, due to malformation or poor development. Neither physicians nor philosophers have discerned if this sensation is one feeling with two heads or two separate feelings sharing one body. The stronger head of the two-headed feeling will eventually attack and attempt to swallow the weaker one. Sometimes fear is the stronger feeling, sometimes desire. The dictionary describes shock as “an encounter between two hostile forces.”

My etymology book explains “terror is stranger than horror but it lasts for a shorter time.” What makes terror stranger than horror? The following symptoms: paralysis, shortness of breath, a panicked racing in the brain. Horror, in contrast, slows time down, washes over you, which is why it lasts longer. Terror is an ice bath, horror is a blood bath.

The word success originally meant result, either good or bad.

Essay is from the French, meaning an attempt; to try.

I am terrified of writing; I am horrified by not writing. Here comes the axe toward the camera, pan out to the blonde in the bathtub.

When the Pushmi-Pullyou (a two-headed cross between a gazelle and a unicorn) tries to walk it is pulled in opposite directions, ending up nowhere. Due to this inability to get around it has become rather introverted. It spends a lot of time sitting and reading, usually self-help books:

*Writing feels like looking directly at the sun; we can't do it for too long without seeing flares and getting headaches and remembering that Top Chef is on.*

*Sharing our secret doubt was sacred, by which we mean terrifying. Writing is too important; it is not important enough. Neither of us were doing it although it was all we talked and read about. We had agreed to stay standing still together, certain that if one of us moved we would both bleed out.*

*(We never actually agreed to this. It just happened naturally, but every minute that it became later we thought maybe it's too late and we were secretly glad. )*

*The self-help books that we are reading have names like Art & Fear, The Courage to Create, The Wisdom of Insecurity. Some day soon, not writing will no longer be the main thing that we do. It will just*

*be another activity, like not going to the gym.*

If I'm going to tell you about the fear then I have to tell you about the desire.

"I am always ambivalent about relationships." His conviction about his uncertainty was so deep that it nullified my certainty. I was of one mind and he was of two; I was outmatched. I wondered if I'd ever really felt ambivalent about anything before. Then I wondered the opposite, if there was anything that I didn't feel ambivalent about.

I write to be an ally and I write to stand apart I write to be known and I write because I can never be known. I write because when I don't write I don't feel as grounded to the earth; sometimes I don't want to feel grounded to the earth.

I need to be a writer and a reader, a transmitter and a receiver. Without these two heads, I can't think straight. I don't know which I need more, the fear or the desire.