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Worlds Invisible to See

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Worlds Invisible to See

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Worlds Invisible to See

You got to understand the god thing. It's not magic. It's about being you, but the *you* that people believe in. It's about being the concentrated, magnified, essence of you. It's about becoming thunder, or the power of a running horse, or wisdom. You take all the belief and become bigger, cooler, more than human. You crystallize..."

- from Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*

* * *

When I first began this project, I thought that I would try to create works specifically in a "magical realist" vein of literature. I've always been interested in magic, the occult, and the supernatural since before I had words to speak in this life, and this interest was only reified when I took a world literature course offered at Pacific University, the theme of which was magical realism. "Magical realism" is a genre of literature where fantastical, magical things happen in a context explicitly tied to the everyday, so-called "mundane" world. Gabriel García Márquez, famed author of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and possibly the most famous work labeled "magical realist," describes how the genre of magical realism "expands the categorizes of the real so as to encompass myth, magic and other extraordinary phenomena in Nature or experience which European realism excluded" (Van Tillburg and Goodall). Márquez specifically emphasizes the element of exclusion in his definition, marginalization being but one highly-political form of exclusion. During the semester I was in the magical realism class I would speak to others in excited tones about levitating mediums (Isabel Allende's *House of the Spirits*), voodoo priestesses (Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*) and dead girls rising from the grave (Ana Castillo's *So Far From God*). And as I did so an exchange like this often occurred:

Me: Oh my God, I love my class! We're reading such great stories!

Other Person: Oh, really? What class?

M: It's a world lit. class looking at a broad range of works of magical realism.

O: Oh, huh! That's funny.

M: What is?

O: Oh, the term "magical realism."

M: (knowing the punch line) Oh. Really? How so?

O: (not knowing that I believed, and still believe, in magic) Oh, well, you know, it's an oxymoron, because magic isn't real.

And every time this exchange occurred, I would feel some kind of noxious pull, a dread and a rush of tension filling my lungs, making my heart beat in a rhythm syncopated with frustration, fear. I would discover, in the summer of 2010, that my reaction to others' dismissal of magic was nearly exactly the same as my reaction to a truck that slowed down in an intersection one balmy day in the Summer of 2010. Filled with men, seemingly in their mid-20s, the truck slowed to a crawl as I crossed the street after working out, me dressed in possibly the gayest outfit in my entire wardrobe (a bright pink shirt, light blue shorts in the style of the 70s, and gold, Elvis-style glasses). This was the exchange that occurred:

Me: (walking, noticing the brown truck slowing down)

The Men in the Truck: (slowing down, passenger window open, the truck filled with four men, white, leering at me) *whistle* Ooh baby, lookin' good!

M: (knowing the punch line, waving my hand to the truck) Thank you!

Truck: (the passengers looking confused for a moment, as if I was threatening them, then--) FAGGOT! (laughing and rolling away)

I was taken aback. I was shocked, dazed. I knew that people were harassed for being gay. I knew it happened all the time, in secret and in the open. But when it actually happened to me in such an immediate way I could only shake my head in disbelief. And then the noxious pull, the rushing dread and fear, the syncopated beat of hidden angst and desolation. The only difference between my two reactions, the former the discussion of magical realism and the latter from being called a faggot, was that in the latter I feared for my physical safety. Other than that, the feeling of being marginalized, of being looked down upon for something that I felt composed part of my identity, enriched my life and gave meaning to me, was just as present and just as real: the magical, and the sensual.

In his introduction to *Things Invisible to See: Gay and Lesbian Tales of Magical Realism*, Lawrence Schimel explains the reason he chose the title he did for the anthology, taken from the following lines of the metaphysical poet John Donne's piece "Song":

If thou beest borne to strange sights,
things invisible to see— (10)

Schimel goes on to write, "Doesn't that describe our queer existence in so many ways? How is it that we manage to recognize that invisible spark inside us that signals our mutual attraction for our own gender? And despite all the gains lesbians and gay men have made in recent decades, our lives are still invisible in so many ways in this world." (10) Schimel connects the invisible (or, perhaps magical?) and the "tangible" to the felt reality of queer sexuality, showing how it is those who participate in an "invisible" reality who recognize the spark of attraction, desire, in subtle, profound ways. Perhaps, paradoxically, the invisibility reifies the conviction of this reality most deeply? The consideration of my own marginalized, "invisible" sexuality and gender identity has certainly left its imprint on my creative work. In "Select Documents..." I use a fictional mode to illustrate how matters of sexuality and identity can be expressed and hidden, accepted and rejected, and "Pt.IV, Spit" from "Meditation No.1" in this collection illustrates how my sexuality, and sensitivity to sex and desire, has left its imprint on my own identity. It is through my focus on the sensual nature of sexuality, and how this sensual nature belies the natural and artistic worlds, which has influenced how I attempt to focus on visceral, sensual details throughout my own writing. It is the invisible, yet aching, pull of desire, which helps me find continuous, sensuous joy in life.

However, what seems to have left even more of an imprint on my writing, and the stories which I seem compelled write, are other "things invisible to see," realities of spirit, magic and

mysticism which have also, perhaps even more so, been heavily marginalized and tread upon throughout my life, and furthermore, throughout the world we find ourselves in today. Only a few days ago a friend of mine explained the frustration she feels every time a parent comes to her in a children's book and toy store she works at. They'll ask my friend, "Could you recommend any books for our children that don't have any magic in them? We prefer to read them things that are real, and not evil." My friend explained that every time she deals with this situation she can only see red, and must ask another employee to help the parent in their anti-magical request. This is a frustration I empathize with deeply: how can our world be in such a state where people don't even believe in magic anymore, especially when all of us experience (and live) in a world which is permeated with its lunar pull so deeply? Or, if they allow its existence at all, they fear it?

Through consideration of this conviction, my own artistic meditations on the way such a reality manifests around and within us have bloomed: my aesthetic contemplation of how a spirit may enter (and possibly help create) the body that it would be born into for a life ("Mend! Merge! Emerge!"); writing a poem honoring the animate spirit that lies within a dear pet (or, friend) ("Mostly Always a Fat Cat"); and recanting personally-experienced moments of psychic perception and the experience of my own spirit body ("Pt. I, Spirit"). And yet, I have realized at the end of this project, and in my time at this university, how my work and my aims are beyond that of just trying to emulate works of a magical realist nature. Anna Deavere Smith, acclaimed actress and playwright, can illumine what my realized, essential goal now is: "Do you want to be an artist so the whole world would look at you, or do you want to be an artist because you want to use your ability to attract attention, to have the world see itself through you differently?"

(Biography for...)

I claim that my goal with my creative work, now and into the future, is to not only illuminate the subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) realities of the spirit and magic, but to do so in a way which honors these realities in the context of the marginalized, the disenfranchised, and the hidden. I own this goal, and aim to never feel like my sexuality, or my belief and practice of my own magic and soul-making, will ever be something that needs to be marginalized again, in myself or others. When we marginalize any of these realities, these embodiments of the spirit in its revelry of identity, joy, and creativity within the worlds of the physical, the beyond, the permeating, and within, we harm and malign others, and we harm and disinherit birthrights of the soul, gifts with which we have been endowed, and which in living we endow to ourselves and each other. In owning these truths and these experiences it is possible for us to see beyond the physical, and into the shimmering realities of the divine. It is in recognizing this that I, and others, I hope, may travel far beyond syncopated fear and hatred of myself, ourselves, and into something greater: sacred, even.

Having always had a heart and mind prone to wonder, joy, and sheer bliss at the possibilities the world offers, I hope to not attract attention simply for the sake of attention. I hope, rather, to aid others in seeing the worlds lying within our bodies, our sexualities, and the magic present in the connections each spirit weaves with all others: worlds, sometimes invisible to see, but always felt in the deep recesses of the heart.

MEDITATION No. 1

TRANSPARENT
SUBSTANCES

Pt. I, SPIRIT

To my recollection, I have seen physical manifestations of spirits three times. Once was when I was six or so, asleep in my bed. I woke up with the door opened, the light from downstairs shining up the white arc of the wall in a faint gold and orange. There was a slight amount of moonlight that came in through my window, and so my room was alight in a deep, ink blue. And there was a shadow standing above my bed in the shape of a tall person. But this wasn't a regular person. Even as a child I had the understanding that you can't see through regular people because they are solid. But this shadow standing above me wasn't. He (for it was a masculine, overwhelming presence I felt) was looming, and dark, but I could still see light through him, and he was lurching over me, his presence of shadow darkening more and more. I was paralyzed, my limbs rigid, my eyes opened wide in terror, in abject, silent fear. Then I closed my eyes, asking him to go away in my mind, the words forming daggers as the thought ringed through me, and a lightening occurred. I wasn't pressed down so much any longer, and I could breathe more easily. Images of angels bloomed behind my eyes, the moonlight of these visions emanating from their ephemerality. I breathed deeply, and then pushed myself up to look around the room properly, and the shadow person was no longer there. He had vanished, with not even a smell to impress the memory of this event; most ghosts, I've heard, leave a scent. It will symbolize a memory so strong that even the absence of the brain and body it was supposedly inscribed in could not take it away.

The second and third times occurred in college, once in the Spring semester of 2009, and once in the Fall semester of 2009. I had started taking a semi-active interest in learning how to astral project, and part of what you need to tell yourself when you want to do this is to remember your dreams. As you gain more ability in this, the likelihood of you lucid dreaming (“waking up” within the dream, realizing you’re dreaming, and controlling what happens within it) increases. Learning this ability teaches you how to recognize your conscious self in a non-physical realm, which then leads to you intuiting how to step out of your physical body using visualized intention. This enables you to “leap” from inside the body to outside of it.

But before achieving this, you need to be able to dream, and remember those dreams.

My ability to adopt the beliefs necessary to experience this were a long time coming, stemming from my original belief that all manner of things have spirit residing in them. This translated to viewing ideas and thoughts as having a separate reality as well, and from this it seemed obvious that we ourselves could travel the same way as thoughts and emotions do. It is the detritus of our feelings, which molds locations into “places” resonant with the psychic pull of our desires. When we act out our feelings and cause excitement in any form, part of that may leave us and imprint itself into that space. Living rooms filled with a history of laughter glow with implied brightness, while dorm rooms where someone hanged himself suggest a gloom of shadow. The mechanics of this belief system come quite easily to those who are artistic, or prone to magic. Poets are often open to this realm, those who are comfortable speaking in symbol and metaphor the way alchemists do, achieving the same mystic kind of wonder which could be approached through science, but only if there is allowance enough of some personality in nature, some kind of playfulness and dangerous emotionality which should only be reduced to itself, and nothing else.

With this kind of philosophy embedded in me over a period of knitting and fierce believing, I told myself over and over, *I can leave my body at will. I can throw myself into the wild ocean of spirit. I am capable of miracle.* And I remembered my dreams, and I started waking in my dreams, albeit sparingly, and then I breached. There was a night where I woke in the middle realm of waking and sleep. Dream clung to me like sheets of a wet sheen, the slick of perception smeared thinly the way you're buzzed on one drink. I felt like I was stretching outside the bounds of my skin, and I was tossing and turning as if in a shifting ocean current, the ship of my body cresting and dipping along my bed in the cold, pre-dawn air wafting through my crack-opened window. My vision turned around, my body still in place, my focus looking through the back of my head and through my window. I looked to the side and saw figures, in multiple, made of light shadows. They conferred (about what, I don't remember), and I spoke with one in a kind of odd, dreamy and sexual way before I fully woke up, the rocking of my spirit and the sex streaming from that spirit's words hovering around me like the faint memory of dreaming. And then, maybe a few nights later, I "rolled around" in my body again, and I heard a voice say, *I need to push through my forehead*, in MY voice: this seemed all very odd. And then there I was, actually doing it: I was pushing myself through my forehead. It felt, as best as I could describe it, as shimmering light. My face felt round as a bell, and I felt myself push through that shimmering mask, and all of a sudden everything was black, floating, disorienting. I then opened my eyes forcefully, the way you do when you think you're going to pass out. I then looked below me, expecting to see my legs and feet as normal on the bed whenever I wake up, expecting that the odd episode was simply a dream. But there were my legs and feet, twice as far from me as usual, and in a straight line. I was viewing them from above. I was viewing them from outside of myself.

And then I thought rapidly, *Oh shit, oh shit, I gotta tell my friend about this*. I wanted to travel to her room across the hallway in our dorm. I wanted to leave some sign in her room or her dreams, for I remembered reading somewhere that one can enter another's dreams while astral travelling. I wanted to show her, one of the only people in the world who I felt comfortable talking about my spiritual endeavors with, that I had succeeded. But this goal, apparently, was a chimera, retreating away the more desperately I tried to attain it, as I tried to rush my floating self to the door (was it more like flying, or more like swimming?). Almost instantly I felt something pull me back, and I struggled against its pull. But the more I struggled the more I was pulled back, until I fell back and downward, slamming into my body and feeling as if I had been pummeled by stone and wind. I do not understand how my journey into the immaterial could have had such a physical effect on me. The physics of spirithood is beyond me, but the push of its lunar pull is undeniable.

The same way it was undeniable when, at a funeral for a 23-year-old-girl I hardly knew in college, I received a bobbing, thrumming message inside of me while on the stairs of the college house where the service was held. The message was a prodding from that same friend I tried to reach in my astral body: I recognized her thought in a similar way to how I recognize my own mother's voice. But, logically, who else besides this friend would try to send her thoughts to me when we had spent nights practicing telepathy games of sending color, shape and sound across the invisible threads supposedly connecting us, threads which speak of the non-physical, the spiritual? I looked around, feeling a bobbing and popping of something invisible. Something going along in some kind of current. In this telepathic recognition I noted down the time of 4:23 with a spare piece of paper while at the funeral service, and then put my paper away. I paid attention to the ceremony, where I saw a literature professor move a musical shaker in the prim,

white room of the college house. Austere and classical the room was, while this professor was not. She was emotional, raw, and magical. She shook the shaker and spoke in the house, spilling alms from her lips for the 23-year-old-girl I hardly knew, in a style joyous, loving and reverent. She was crying when done, and I felt a pull on me at that moment, a pull strong as ocean tide, yet invisible. Unable to disprove, even. And later on that evening, away from grief and mystery, when I saw my friend I asked her, You send anything to me this afternoon? as I pulled out the scrap of paper I had handy with me in the funeral house.

Yeah, I did. I sent you popcorn. You get something like that?

Something like that, I said, laughter bubbling up from me. Popcorn was too sudden a movement for what I felt. I took out the paper. My friend's thoughts and image, traveling from her place to mine, perhaps bending time to get to me instantly, bobbed within me the same as a moon jelly, a shining orb of spit and moonlight as it dances along the edge of my periphery. The clear shadow of dusk grading everything into quickening, night-filled darkness of connection buzzing invisible and bright.

Pt. II, LIGHT

I often stared straight into the sun when I was a child, its magnificent brightness never something which precluded curiosity, but only enhanced it. I remember the exact moment when I looked at the sun for the first time, at La Petite Academie, a pre-school/day care Mom sent my twin sister and I to whenever she was out of town for work. We learned the geography, physical and social, of that place pretty quickly. I learned how to tie my shoelaces there, using the "bunny

ears” method. While there I learned why noon is referred to as 12:00pm, and not 12:00am, that what I thought as night was actually day.

One day I was with some other kids, and someone had said something about how it was dangerous to look at the sun because your eyes would burn out of your sockets if you did, man, I swear it! So, what else could a bunch of five-year-olds do? We were slave to our desires, and right then we desired to look at the sun for a bit. We all laid ourselves on the floor near the South wall of the school, and we looked up through the tall window which let in the high sun to beam grandly onto the floor. We could make out the edges of its prism light because of the dust in the air, moving constantly, if almost imperceptibly, from the thrum of children running and adults running after them, all like Energizer Bunnies.

We sidled on our backs into that prism, our eyes lit up from the glare of the sun. I cannot speak for the others, but what I saw was the blaring sun as a white hole in the sky, spilling light like a running faucet. It seemed to buzz, humming around in a shifting kind of blazing, and then a light pink, light purple, bright blue, throbbing circle would eclipse the white of the sun, dancing around the circle like a spinning coin, one which never fell from its toss into the sky. I was mesmerized. After a minute or two my eyes would hurt, though, and I would look away with the imprint of that blue-purple dogging at my vision wherever I turned, even when I closed my eyes. I stopped doing it after a short while, though, because I was caught by some adult from the preschool, who told me in tones as harsh as the sun, but dark as shadow, that I was doing something dangerous. From then on I looked at the sun a different way, with more respect perhaps.

I remember when I was four or five, sitting in the car with my mom as she was driving me to school or something. I looked up and watched the sun stay perfectly in the same part of the

window, following our car wherever we traveled. It then occurred to me that I am probably not the only one looking at the sun, and that there might be others who the sun “follows around” all day. This thought took me back: how could one thing follow so many people around, yet seem to stay absolutely still, hung in the sky like a great eye which spilled light and warmth all over the world? I imagined what it would look like if there were as many suns crawling around and above Earth as there are people, as well as plants and animals that move fast enough (and smart enough) to notice the illusion of the following sun. Then, I received the image in my head of billions of bright, tiny suns swarming around Earth, engulfing it in light. Now, of course, I realize that this is exactly what happens. The air is full of light, as well as many other energies of varying wavelengths, energies which can go through physical things like stone and bodies. Everything is teeming, penetrated with light.

Of course, it's easy to forget this when one is so used to physical light; I feel like we forget that the only reason we are able to see anything is because the air is swarming with light, unseen until it has something to strike: the breadth of wave, the precision of particle, something so small that it's hard to believe it really exists. Does it happen often that others, as I do, simply assume that we ourselves glow with visibility, that we are somehow visible without help of the invisible striking the solid? And perhaps others also sometimes forget this omnipresent nature of light, how even in the depths of our rib-sheltered hearts there is clear light teeming among blood.

Perhaps this is why swarms of fireflies, sparks from fireworks and bonfires, and falling snow appeal to so many people. Whether the light is generated from the point (firefly and spark) or falls onto points gently and presently (snowflakes), these things appear in a profusion of brightness, swarming and threading the air with points of curving, dashing, gently falling pieces of ember and glow. Looking at light from direct sources like a light bulb or computer screen

doesn't seem to have much enchantment, perhaps because we think of light in blocks and manageable shapes, rather than as the celestial liquid that it is. Oceans of fireflies, sparks and snowflakes enchant us the way sylphs enchant those who can see them, flying and gliding points of light which marry the energetic with the tangible. Another great example is the bubble, especially when blown in copious amounts during a bright Spring or Summer day, the sun reflected in the iridescent, shifting surface of soap slick which contains human breath, carrying it away in pockets and whispers.

Perhaps the one other manmade source of light which comes even close to such an experience is the use of candles in miniature boats or within paper lanterns. The form I'm familiar with is the paper lantern, which I especially saw during February and March of 2010 while I studied abroad in China. I remember one particular night at the building where my friends Paul, Aina and Clint's shared apartment was in. We had drunk some Chinese beers like Snow, Blue Sword and Tsing Tao, and baijiu (a bottle of 112 proof rice liquor) with chasers. We each brought a bottle of beer and went to the rooftop, and there we sat above twelve stories, looking through the southern part of the city towards East, taking note of the noise and the light which would occasionally rise from the sky. The clouds of the night had the orange and red glow of city lights, with a dark shade of night to filter everything.

The four of us laughed and joked, discussed, informed, questioned each other:

Why do we find ourselves all the way out here?

What kind of order is there in the world?

What kinds of things are there to see?

What boundaries should be dissolved?

What can explain such happiness we find in each other's company? (To be honest, though, this was a question I did not speak out loud, the answer to this pointed light not needing to be spoken to be felt.) I was laughing, listening to the three of them discuss something political, and I was smiling and the edges of my vision were blurring, because that's the nature of alcohol and having eyes which are half-covered when I smile. And while I had this semi-blurred vision, I saw a floating light above the horizon, small and orange-red and bright. I pointed it out to the others, and Paul pointed with his hands as he saw more. Slowly and surely, as the four of us pointed our heads toward the sky, the murky glow of the night-red dark filled with inching, gliding points of orange-red light.

"They're spirit lanterns, yeah?"

"Yeah, they are. I've heard that people will make wishes on them."

"But they're really meant for remembering the dead, too. They light one for people that have died during tragedies. Apparently there were so many for victims of that big earthquake here that some candles actually got into some building windows and set a few places on fire."

"Awesome."

Paper lanterns are still used for ancestor worship and spirit petitioning in China. I actually had firsthand experience seeing a family set a lantern going from a street overlooking the river in Nanning during the first official night of celebration for the Spring Festival. A group of us traveling, four foreigners and a Chinese 19-year-old who named himself "Sonny," watched as a family of an older man, an older woman and their daughter and grandchild attempted to make a lantern go into the sky. It was much larger than I thought it'd be, about three feet in diameter and a little taller. As they set it up it caught on a streetlamp, and was in danger of burning or turning over. Seeing a situation to resolve, Paul leaped in with his 6'2" frame, standing on the ledge of

road barrier to nudge the lantern from the grip of the streetlamp. Free from its hindrance, the lantern floated into the sky, rising away from the smiles and “Xie xie!”s which were pressing towards us. We all called Paul a hero, which followed with some of us drinking more beer.

I believe that the gesture is elegant enough that if there are spirits around then they would take notice, come and observe the gesture which the living give them. In sensuous, physical form, man extends a symbol which flies into the sky, lit by fire and good intentions which seems all the more powerful for their capacity to destroy. An ocean of light that spreads through the sky in points of orange-red, like a school of golden carp, with the aim to give light to the invisible, ever-present spirit world. Lanterns in sky, boats in the water, drifting towards the heavens or the ocean, wide expanses of mystery, invisible light overlooked in favor of candles for the dead.

However beautiful, though, these lanterns will never replace my first love of dust motes. When it comes to betraying the presence of light in the utmost delicate nature, dust cannot be matched. On several occasions as a young child (and sometimes still to this day) I stopped and took notice, for several minutes if I could, the way dust moves through a bar of sunlight. And still, generally in a quiet, wooden room, I will sit alone and look at the point in the air where the shadows of walls and dark spaces recedes from focus, the bar of light holding a physical shape from the window to the floor in the shape of a prism. Instead of looking through the window directly at the sun, though, I look away from it, catching with my vision as delicately as I can the jittering, swooping, scooting movements of dust particles. Detritus of human skin, hair and breath, these motes create stars and galaxies which appear and disappear in flashes of instance, giving weight to light here, then there, here, then over there. Sometimes the room gets so quiet that I can swear I hear the footsteps of ghosts, only slightly louder than the humming of light, tasted more than heard, in the stale, musty room.

Pt. III, SPACE

Pt. IV, SPIT

When I arrived in Shanghai on January 5th, 2010 to study abroad, I was taken aback by how far the airport was from the city proper. Then I was impressed by all the lights, the smells, the pollution, the Chinese characters blazing in Technicolor lightning above our bus from the airport through the grime of night-plastered city air hanging in curtains of black and smog. Then I realized how often people were spitting around me. I heard more “hawks” of people prepping their throat to spit in one night than I had in the past six months of my time at home.

The first time I can ever remember paying attention to my spit was when I learned how to use it to my advantage. I thought it was a special kind of magic that could make a Cheeto mine before I had eaten it, or to keep a certain Barbie doll to dress her up how I saw fit. I remember vague memories of cooties, of the word and the yelling of it and the discussions girls would have that sometimes I could listen to because some girls understood I wasn't really a boy that much either. Gender was a line I thought I had no problem traversing, dancing from one invisible point of meaning to the next; little boy on the playground, little girl at my friend's house in her Norwegian Santa Lucia Festival costume, little boy shedding little girl as he ran home to show his mom how pretty he looked, miles and years away from the man who would realize soon enough the limits and bounds his heart would yearn beyond.

So, whenever I licked a cookie or a doll or a candy it turned mine. It was my thing. And, aside from the faint, odd smell that comes from wet spit on hand, there's nothing really to suggest that it's all that unhealthy or bad for you. Spit, I mean. Because of the enzymes present in it, spit helps digestion begin from the very moment a piece of food touches your tongue, the chemicals eating away at the food as the spit breathes upon it. Spit aids the body in breaking things down so they can be consumed, absorbed into ourselves, the way jellyfish drift and chance upon prey who are guided into their mouths by long, stinging arms. Spit must sting in some way, too, because when I told my sister to touch something and she did, and when I told her I licked it, she jumped back like she touched an electric fence. Also, whenever you give someone a wet willy (when you lick your finger and put it in the other person's ear) they jerk away as if your finger was made of lightning. They often have a look on their face as if they'd just seen a ghost. But I never thought that spit was actually made of lightning. It's made of spit, which is mostly water; like, 99.999% water, and it just stays on the ground all splattered in the shape it makes when it hits on smattered impact. I had spit a few times in my life before China, but not that often. It wasn't a fascination for me the way it was for some other kids. Besides the occasional licking I did for cookies, I never thought about my spit that much.

Mind you, I wasn't really irked or grossed out by people's spitting. I came to view spitting in China much the same way an artist would evaluate the smearing of a painted line in a landscape, or the way a composer would listen for the balance offered by the spray of woodwind instruments in an orchestral piece. The sound of hawks and spit became part of the texture of China for me, especially in the city of Chengdu, capital of the Sichuan Province and home to thousands upon thousands of hot pot restaurants, the panda research and breeding center, and approximately twelve million people. As I was getting acclimated to the large, foreign city, I

noticed that a newly-made friend embraced the locals' habit of spitting much more easily than I did. I asked her how she could bring herself to spit so easily, and she responded, "I don't know. Go with the flow, man, you know?"

I don't understand what my aversion to spitting was. I think it was because it seemed like an act which drew attention to itself, being so loud and phlegmy, and I didn't want any more attention brought to myself as a foreigner. But then again, that doesn't seem right, because no one paid attention to people spitting when anyone else did it, whether they were child, beautiful woman, blue-collar man, hunched elder or a young professional. Everybody spit. It was surprising that you didn't see more marks on the ground. It was as if the streets absorbed the spit like people's lungs absorbed the smog in the air. I remember learning a while ago that many people view saliva as having magical potency the same way urine or blood does. Secreting from a human, these fluids hold the power of our spiritual and physical intent, as well as the ability to cast away malevolence if done so correctly. Another belief is that each spat of saliva holds an essential part of yourself, that you are a fountain of being spitting infinite spiritual fragments of you away into the dust and the road.

As time progressed and I found myself dealing with unbelievable sinus congestion from the pollution in Chengdu, I discovered that my resolve against spitting was faltering. After seeing enough tiny shop girls send stone-sized lobs over their bikes as they pedaled to deliver food, I thought that I might as well have the right to spit. The first time I hawked was a pathetic attempt to send my congestion out of me. My spit formed a thread which dangled from my lip, almost landing on my clothing. But I shook it off, took a deep breath as I did squared my feet to my shoulders, and spit again with verve, this time sending it three feet away from me. And I was doing all of this in front of strangers! Sichuanese strangers with their scowls and wood-colored

teeth and the smell of tea, prickly ash and oil surrounding them. I was a success in my friend's eye, giving way to the culture around me and accepting my body's need to expel pollution and poison. I would tell a friend, after my return to America, that the only reality which could tie nearly two billion people together wasn't Maoist ideology, Communism, or even interest in Lady Gaga's newest single: It was the need to spit, to draw the gold clumps of mucus and sickness and pollution deep from within the twin inkblots of lungs, through the smoke stack windpipe, and out through the tea house cavern of the mouth into the wild, bustling, grey world.

Shortly after I returned to America from China, however, events transpired which caused me to remember that spit can be offered to the world in ways much more languid than hawking. I still spit in public, mind you, because I have had occasional bouts of sinus congestion. But I related myself to the substance of spit, the clear slick of it, differently after kissing two different men during the Summer of 2010, one named Kenny and one named Anthony. For a while (before, after and now) I have doubted whether I am capable of attraction, falling in love with so many men who prefer the company of women over the company of me, me feeling as if something is warped inside myself, in my body and my being and the curvature of my sex. I have felt as if only a miracle, or a well-placed blade, could cut the distance between me and them, expelling impossibility into the grey void of the world.

But, in the stubbled, hairy-handed, hard body of Kenny's embrace and his lips of San Francisco, and in the dark, bulking, handsy and fervent nature of Anthony's embrace and his lips of Seattle, I discovered the way in which spit can coat our lips, our tongues and our expressions, an ocean away from where I learned how to spit. I've learned that the collection and separation of spit can smack in reverberation, offering a drum beat to the "mmm"s which resonate the varying bass in pleasure and satisfaction which kisses, hands and bodies can offer, which the

staring of strangers and ourselves can never hope to quench. It was in this sliding and negotiation of tongue and teeth and hands that I floated out of myself, feeling even more intensely the brushing of skin, the lunging of wet things, and thrusting of flesh against flesh as conscious thought drifted away on the current of a need finally being met. Spit eased my journeying into my own sexuality, affirming my sensations in crowns of velvet lush and liquid hush, the seaming of air to flesh by means of that clear substance in my eddying along the waves of desire. Spit did not alienate any longer, as if it had to be something which was casted out of me, a carrier of some foul thing. Instead, I grew to learn how it can languish through the coaxing of another's longing for body and touch. In this melting there was grace, the essence of my spirit transmuted into the liquid which coated Kenny's and Anthony's lips, and their spit on my lips as well: We claimed each other, children playing a primal, wild game, where no boundaries needed to be drawn any longer.

I could see the beauty, once again, of the way light smears in pinpricks along kiss-moistened lips, in dew drops which form on blades of grass, or the petals of hydrangea flowers. I could see in that wetness a power to heal wounds. No grey or void. Only moisture, color, and the promise of new, wild life beyond anything a boy who licked Barbie dolls could have dreamed.

Pt. V, JELLYFISH

During my childhood my family often went to Cannon Beach to see the Pacific Ocean, the flying kites with their long, acid-colored tails, and Haystack Rock, with its tide pools of starfish, anemones, and hermit crabs. We would pile into the car early in the morning, then get onto the road which carried us to the plunge-black river of I-5, along the cloud current of the Fremont Bridge and to the westward flow of Highway 26. The Willamette Valley, home to the

Columbia and Willamette Rivers, held ribbons of mist that would inevitably bloom in the mornings of the Spring, then melt away by noon from soon-coming Summer light. My twin sister would always sit in the front seat because she would get motion sickness, so I would sit in the back, legs stretched along the seat as I leaned towards the window above, the glass cold and buzzing with the wind and the highway, laced with rivulets of rainwater. I would fall asleep with images of boats, sails, and dragons in my eyes as our car coursed its way to the ocean.

When we arrived we would get out, running around anxiously, ready to feel the sand tingle under our feet. As we walked towards the coast the wind would buffet us, and sometimes when we ran we would be pushed along by the Zephyr giant's hands, currents of ancient strength. We never gave a thought as to whether we had free will or not, but simply ran for the ocean in abandon, channeled, guided by our desire for the sea.

Not more than three blocks away from where we parked we would cross a small stream winding its way to the ocean by means of large rocks standing among the waters. We would lunge along the climbing hill of sand, emerging at the top with grins as we satisfied our need to see the ocean make its steel-grey slide along the horizon, the fluid gap connecting the wild head of sky and the languid roots of sandy earth. Flying kites of yellow, orange, pink, green and purple slips of silk would whip in the ocean air, long tails showing the contours of the wind. We would set our towels and our shoes and our clothing on the dry sand thrumming along that coast in a smooth rhythm of stretches and dips. Wearing flopping rubber soles and strips of material for swimwear, we would boom to the shifting, cloud-covered tide. We would throw water at each other, do the dance of push and pull as we felt the numbing coldness of Oregon's cragged shores. We would scream and yell and laugh as we found broken sand dollar discs. We didn't know, at the time, that those were skeletons of animals. They were merely moons, cookies, and mini-

frisbees that could be thrown far, dancing along the wind's invisible body, the way all of those kites above us did.

One time, though, I heard a scream that was not from playing in the water. I whipped my head towards the direction of land, seeing my sister jumping around on the sand, pointing and yelling like she was accusing the sand. I ran over to her, looking at the ground she pointed at, and there it was. Sitting there. Or lying there. It looked like snot, like someone hawked up a loogie, but pale white, the color of the moon amongst folds of ice-clear glob. The sun glinted off of it in small, pinprick smears of light, and the wind caused it to shake, quiver even.

What *is* that?

It's a jellyfish, stupid!

Oh. Oh! Really?

Yeah. It's dead, though, cuz it's out of the water.

We grabbed a stick and poked at it until my mom came over and told us to stop.

We then ran away from it, but I yanked myself to a stop. I stood still for a moment and looked back at it. It seemed to move, almost as if it was breathing.

Newport, OR is home to the Oregon Coast Aquarium, a site composed of artificial cliffs and pools set into a stone walking path, all formed around tanks, cages and enclosures of coast and sea wildlife. Further into the complex is a tank where people can ride a conveyor belt through, seeing rays and sharks and great fish swim around and over you. On the other side of the complex are the smaller galleries of creatures such as starfish, anemones, sea urchins, lionfish, flounders, sea horses, squid, shark pups, sea dragons, crabs, and jellyfish. When I was only seven or so there was one tank, though, that particularly fascinated me; a tank filled with jellyfish, a

variety called “moon jelly.” A creature made of 95% water, it is as delicate as it is beautiful, with no brain, heart, or branching nervous system of spine to support it. It glides through water, pushed along by ocean current and transparent will, reminiscent of the legends of ghosts people tell one another in the dark.

Each moon jelly was round, with a soft, curving roof of a head called a “bell”, four glowing rings visible inside of it. Their bells looked like the crystal ball my mom gave to me. It thrums with suspended bubbles, teal-purple-green sparkling thread and purple luminosity when light is shined through it, light which could show one the future, if one knows where to look within. Each moon jelly had a delicate fringe of tentacles flipping from the bell brim, forming a slight mist trail as it was pushed along by the currents in the glass-encased ocean water. The moon jellies would glow from white to pink to purple to blue to gold to white again, lights within the tank making the jellies seem like bending, shuddering loaves of light, solid as bread made of flour and photon. I wondered, then, if jellyfish could dream. If they could think without brains, or feel without hearts. They seemed so powerful, as if I could hear each push of their bells deep and strong as earthquakes. But they were quiet. I could only hear the humming of the water being pushed through the tank, my hands and face seemingly enmeshed in the thick glass. Even when I closed my eyes I could still see the light reflected through the moon jellies.

Humans are made of 75% water. I’ve wondered how much water we would need to be made of until we became transparent and we could see lungs, heart and brain. Would we be able to better understand each other, then? If we were exposed like that?

Mostly Always a Fat Cat

He was first fat as a cannonball,
thick, stout and deadly.
You wouldn't expect he could run that fast
with a name like Marigold
and his bowlegged trot.
At the slightest sound he would boom away,
flying through the yard as if
safety were an echo
he had to chase after.

He could also be burly like a tourist,
finally coming to venture into our yard, foreign land,
with a curious waddle.
He would take the food
set out for other visitors,
not bothering to ask
whether we cared for him or not.

He was always rotund as a king.
He would sit up, supported by stubby legs
while he jauntily licked at what was left of his manhood,
an air of sophistication and pride about him.
Then, as he would turn to chew at a side,
one would hear a little trumpet toot escape,
and we knew then that he was here to stay.

And he was always squat like a pumpkin,
his bright cream-orange exterior
and vine-green eyes indication enough
of a life which had seen many falls.
And yet he was so warm, always
humming in the breeze.

And we cherished him when he was
plump as a bumblebee,
buzzing around the house to search for
hands like open flowers.
We would croon softly as
he nuzzled them
with tender and diligent affection.

(stanza break)

And then he would be bloated like
a watermelon, wobbling around
until someone would push him over.
He would topple over to his side,
shifting his weight to expose his underbelly
which made a thum-tum-tum
when patted repeatedly.

And I treasured it when he was
fleshy as a pillow,
lounging on his side in
the warm-butter sun.
I would lower myself and gently place
my head in the dip of his side,
closing my eyes to listen to
the warm rumble of his contentment.

It was later that he became stiff and ploppish,
like a gumdrop on the family room couch
where no one ever sat.
His movements became stiff, if any were made,
crystallized in memory.
He became a decoration, no longer
offering the sustenance he did
as in the vigor of his youth.

And finally he was round as a balloon
at the end of a party,
the skin stretched for so long that the absence of
buoyancy after time caused it
to wilt and shrivel.
And it would often happen where he would
search with slow, wandering movements
for a silent corner, waiting patiently as the balloon would
until the last whisper of air had left its form.
All that would be left then to pick up
was a limp husk.

*Select Documents from the "Diversity Month Controversy" Study
Present at Ames High School, Taken from Mid-March to June 2007,*
As collected by student anthropologist Adam McGillivray of Central Oregon University
(with parenthetical annotations for documents, as well as personal commentary about issue)
(all names will be removed and/or altered when published)

Document # 05, Collected April 09th, 2007
Mass Letter sent to Parents of Students by Principal Burrs of Ames HS, Copy

Dear Parents,

I am very pleased to announce that the month of June will now be known and celebrated throughout the Clark School District as Diversity Month! In response to requests from the wonderful students of our very own "Gay-Straight Alliance" to celebrate those among us who are part of various marginalized groups (such as African-Americans, women and Latin-Americans), the Superintendent of the Clark School District, Dr. Alexander McMaster, has decreed that all high schools in the district will be celebrating this very respectful and wonderful time. Thusly, we shall have presenters from various minorities discuss their rich and diverse histories this upcoming June so that we may all learn about different cultures and lifestyles. In doing this Dr. McMaster, as well as every staff and faculty member in the district, hopes to spread acceptance and tolerance to every student, parent and community member in our Clark School District. Updates will be mailed for various events which will be held this June, as well as other activities happening on campus. Go Ames Antlers!

Sincerely,
Principal Jacob Burrs

Document # 01, Collected March 15th, 2007
Excerpt from notes of Adam McGillivray, copy

Spending time observing various Gay-Straight Alliances throughout high schools in the Central Oregon area for my thesis (in regards to observing how such a group could mediate relations of sexual minorities and other groups who might find their lifestyles strange and unusual), I came to hear by word of mouth (from one of my informants at a GSA I frequently visit) about a situation at Ames HS. I decided to ask permission of Principal Burrs to observe the GSA, and now plan going there as well for my study. In doing so I'll research what the issue is, but still observe how GSAs function. My focus might shift over time, but I will still be able to learn about the "drama" that is supposedly ensuing.

Goals for researching the "Diversity Month Controversy" at Ames HS:

1) see the multitude of opinions surrounding the controversy itself (remain as objective as possible, Adam!)

- 2) observe how people represent themselves within the written word, esp. within the context of discussing such a controversy
- 3) the realms of power which control what is deemed as the “norm”, especially in terms of sexuality and gender expression, and how it relates to the whole “norm” (hegemony)

I want to stay objective, but I fear my biases might show through (based on my knowledge of gender and sexuality). I’ll try to make sure I understand as fully as possible all the nuances of this situation which is happening at Ames.

Document # 11, Collected April 16th, 2007
Graffiti on Men’s Restroom Stall, Picture Taken on Scene
(text reads as follows)

Fags are Gay

Document # 17, Collected April 18th, 2007
Letter to Principal Burrs from Parent Carly Merce, copy, with permission of sender

Dear Principal Burrs,

My name is Carly Merce, mother to John and Linda Merce (he’s a senior and she’s a freshman). I have wanted to write to you about how excited I am that there are people in power who are focusing their efforts on erasing hate in our schools! As a friend to a woman of color, I cannot begin to explain how awful I feel whenever people throw derogatory language her way. Really, I feel sometimes as if so many people cannot understand each other’s differences. How can others be so ignorant about the effects of hate on people? Truly you and Superintendent McMaster are a blessing to this school district, as well as those kids in that Gay Alliance. I must say I don’t necessarily agree with the lifestyles that those types of kids choose, but it is comforting to know that they can think about others besides themselves every once in a while. They seem to have hit a key point with this Diversity Month business! Again Principal Burrs, I just want to say thank you. You have my full support as a parent of Ames High School students. I can guarantee you that I will be keeping a close eye on any events that Ames will be holding soon, especially having to do in regards to Diversity Month. It’s great! Thank you again so much, Principal Burrs.

Sincerely, Carly Merce

Document # 20, Collected April 24th, 2007
Graffiti on Men’s Restroom Stall, Picture Taken on Scene
(text reads as follows)

Fags are Gay (text is crossed out)

(written above previous statement)

Duh, douchebag.

(written further down, same ink has most likely crossed out first statement)

Hate is "gay" asshole!

(smudges can be seen across all comments, suggesting someone tried to erase messages, perhaps janitor or other cleaning staff)

Document # 02, Compiled March 16th, 2007

Excerpt from notes of Adam McGillivray, copy

(observations from first meeting with GSA at Ames)

- * Jessica Couron (president of GSA, my informant for the Ames HS culture and scene) kindly introduced me to group, I told them I was interested in observing how their GSA operates and that I was thankful for them letting me be here
- * Group first talked about plans for Day of Silence, esp. supplies and rides for Night of Noise celebration at the Universalist Church closer to downtown
- * Group of about 10 or so split into sections to work on such things as advertisements, buttons, shirts, and bands to wear on the Day of Silence
- * Helped make buttons for Day of Silence
- * Started asking about supposed controversy (mentioned contact from other high school)
- * Kayla (bleach blonde, treasurer) talked about how group had held a meeting (just the officers) with the administrators to propose the idea of June being called Gay Pride Month
- * Derrick (anime nerd, ASB coordinator) said that the meeting went somewhat well, officers felt confident they had "made a dent in the bureaucracy" (Derrick says this with smug)
- * Kayla then states, however, situation not so good
- * Rumors from kids have been cropping up that the superintendent had no intention of "letting gay month fly"
- * Ms. Outcalt (German teacher, GSA advisor) chimed in that there was some discomfort, but that Principal Burrs was making sure that the administrators would approve it
- * Out of Outcalt's earshot, Derrick said that Principal Burrs is somewhat of a "pansy", though, when it came to "actually doing anything of use" besides what the administrators wanted
- * Jessica Couron steps in, saying that "we might as well hope for the best", then stated that "even if the administrators deny us Gay Pride Month, we still got buttons, right?"
- * Amidst conversation and various other interactions with the members of the GSA, the most interesting person by far calls himself "Darling"
- * Darling is a drag teen, a homosexual male who wears women's clothing and make-up "just to shake things up", says "Besides, nobody at this damn school can pull off high heels like me, baby!", very flamboyant
- * Darling approached me at the end of GSA meeting, and asked me directly, "Why are you really here?", told him for my thesis

- * Said “No, why gay studies or whatever? You gay yourself?”, told him no, I’m not
- * “Then why do this? Why be interested in us? You some spy?” looked at me very suspiciously
- * Told him of Andrew, my gay brother who was bashed into a coma, felt need to study GLBTQ issues to inform others how sexuality is so complicated and valid in all forms, wanted to also investigate the issue of the Diversity Month
- * Darling replied, “Oh that shit? That ain’t gonna pan out well, I know it won’t.”
- * Asked him to elaborate (both on this stance, as well as why he goes to GSA, and perhaps dresses the way he does really)
- * Told me to “just wait and see” on the Diversity issue, told me that he goes to GSA because he likes the people, and dresses because he wants to, “and fuck anybody if they judge me”
- * Talked to Outcalt a little bit after meeting, sensed from her that though she wishes Gay Pride Month to happen, it might not turn out so well, “But we’ll see” she said

Document # 24, Collected April 27th, 2007

Email to Principal Burrs from Parent Jeremy Moffett, copy, with permission of sender

Dear Principal Burrs,

My name’s Jeremy Moffett, parent of Max Moffett, junior (he writes for the school paper). I wanted to write to you concerning the topic of the Diversity Month. To clarify myself, I am glad that you took the route that you did. My son Max has told me how the members of that Gay Club have complained quite a bit because June wouldn’t be called Gay Month. However, I’m glad you didn’t give in to their unfounded complaints. It’s bad enough you as a man of education have to allow such a club to actually exist, otherwise the ACLU would be on you like white on rice. I also understand from my son that you had to give them some kind of month, otherwise that club and their supporters would try to get you fired or worse. But, it’s still too bad you had to do such a thing at all. Really, schools have enough months to talk about different minorities, like Blacks and Hispanics and such, so why does this month have to be there, too? At any rate I’m glad you found an alternative to naming June the “gay month”. I am in full support of the way you run your school, even if there are characters there I don’t particularly agree with.

With Respect, Jeremy Moffett

Document # 27, Collected May 1st, 2007

Graffiti on Men’s Restroom Stall, Picture Taken on Scene
(text reads as follows)

Who the fuck cares, its highschool get over it

(line is drawn to comment seen in document # 20, “Hate is ‘gay’ asshole!”, suggesting commentary to this statement)

(further smudging is apparent, showing consistent attempts at moving all graffiti)

Document # 35, Collected May 9th, 2007
Resignation Letter of Ms. Rebecca Outcalt, teacher of German at Ames High School,
With permission of sender and recipient

To Principal Burrs,

It is with the most sincere regret that I must resign from Ames High School as a teacher of German. I will plan to finish my term of contract until the 17th of June, and I have attached a sheet of possible candidates who would be able to replace my position here. As per my reasons, I feel that I can no longer teach in the environment present at Ames, as well as the Clark School District. When I speak of the environment, I speak mainly of the very dangerous and lurking presence of hypocrisy and discrimination, evidenced by the issue of the Diversity Month issue which has been taking place at Ames.

When I applied to teach here at Ames, it was with the recognition that the area as a whole is somewhat conservative in its views, both in terms of political and social issues. And yet, I found the faculty here to be of the highest quality, being both extremely knowledgeable in their fields of study as well as how to teach to teenagers. However, as I began to actually hold a position here, I noticed the biases and hidden prejudices of many of the faculty, and especially the administrators which went beyond a little bit of conservatism. I did not think these would pose much of a problem, but in light of the attitudes towards the Diversity Month issue at Ames, I have witnessed the true character of many of the faculty here, especially the prejudices of Superintendent McMaster.

I understand that you tried your hardest to make Gay Pride Month a reality, and that you wish to uphold diversity and the celebration of all types of people and lifestyles. In saying this, I understand the situation you have found yourself in, being pushed between the ideals and beliefs of parents, faculty, and the administration, and that your job has been at risk. Your decision was very understandable under the circumstances you were in. However, I cannot understand why people here are so attached to their prejudices, their bigotry and their hate. How the word "gay" arouses so much fear and disgust that it cannot ever be uttered without the feeling of disdain.

Thus, I resign not because I hate my job. I really do love it, Mr. Burrs. I love teaching the kids here and seeing a fostering of cultural interest and the spread of language. However, I can no longer be involved with a district which is so apathetic towards intolerance. I cannot allow myself to be associated with such ignorant individuals as found in this district.

With all respect,
Rebecca Outcalt

Document # 07, Collected April 12th, 2007
Statistics on Poster (advertising the Day of Silence, a national anti-homophobic event) next to
Rm. 143, Meeting Place of GSA, Picture Taken on Scene

(text reads as follows)

- * Students who describe themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered are five times more likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe. 28% are forced to drop out.
- * The vast majority of victims of anti-lesbian/gay violence - possibly more than 80% - never report the incident, often due to fear of being "outed."
- * 85% of teachers oppose integrating lesbian, gay and bisexual themes in their curricula.
- * 75% of people committing hate crimes are under age 30 - one in three are under 18 - and some of the most pervasive anti-gay violence occurs in schools.
- * Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are at a four times higher risk for suicide than their straight peers.

- from <http://www.now.org/issues/lgbi/stats.html>

(verified source and facts as true, and researched original sources and studies for such facts)

Document # 18, Collected April 23rd, 2007

Copy of *The Ames Arrow*, Student Newspaper of Ames High School,
Opinion Article by Max Moffett (junior), with permission of author

WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT?

By Max Moffett

Recently here at Ames Principal Burrs announced that June will be designated as Diversity Month. Apparently as we leave school for the summer we can have some sort of warm, cheesy sensation in our hearts about goodness towards those different from us and all that. However, the debate has been raised from those at the GSA claiming that it was never supposed to be called Diversity Month, but Gay Pride Month instead. Many have stated that June should be known as Gay Pride Month because that is the month all major Gay Pride Festivals in America are held, and a month is needed to recognize those who are part of a "sexual minority." But really, why should these guys complain? Isn't Diversity Month enough? Sure, Burrs might not have mentioned gays or lesbians in his letter, and as far as we know there are no gay speakers on the list of events which will be happening in June. However, everyone in school knows about the GSA and what they're all about. Frankly some of us are fed up with their self-serving events and acts. We've started letting in gay couples to the dances, that Day of Silence thing happened at the end of March, and we even have a cross-dressing student on campus! Isn't this enough for them? Honestly, some students (as well as teachers) have wondered whether the Principal has been too lenient considering we are in a conservative part of town. Many people don't even really like seeing gay people out in the open. Nothing has happened so far like gay bashing or anything like that, so aren't people allowed to have their own opinions about what's right and wrong? Really guys, Diversity Month should be enough. We don't have to say it loud and proud to know the queers are here, and they don't seem to be going any time soon.

Document # 29, Collected May 3rd, 2007

Excerpt from Recorded Conversation with Jessica Couron, unexpected meeting at bus stop,
recorded with permission

...

Jessica Couron (JC): So we never really had that meeting we wanted to with the principal and all the people who decided against Gay Pride Month.

Myself (AM): Oh, you're talking about the letter the GSA wrote...

JC: Yeah, but it doesn't surprise me, unfortunately. I know Outcalt wanted us to hope that it would turn out better than it did, but I don't see it going anywhere.

AM: But do you think her optimism was unfounded?

JC: Well... *(pause)* Yes and no. No, cuz it's good to believe others will care about us, yes cuz she thought we've made more progress as a GSA then we really have.

AM: What do you mean? Wasn't Day of Silence a success? I was there, and many people seemed to show support.

JC: They do when they can be noticed, but we didn't really change anything that much on a deeper level. The people who showed their support were great and nice and everything, but I think most did it because they thought it's good to *look* concerned.

AM: What do you mean?

JC: Okay. *(sighs)* I told you at one of the meetings that I had gone to Winter Formal with my ex-girlfriend, right? We were allowed to and all that...

AM: Yeah, it sounded great. This has been the first high school I've seen that has actually allowed gay couples to register for dances and be labeled as "couples".

JC: Well, on paper it seems nice. And nobody did anything to us like bash us or stuff. But as we danced together or got a little "too close for comfort", there were a bunch of dicks who said "dykes" and "rug-munchers" and all that stupid crap. Usually I don't face harassment on a day-to-day basis like Darling does, but at the dance I did. I decided then that I would still go to Prom, just so that I can stand against those assholes. Still need a date, though.

AM: So... you're saying that there's really no acceptance at all at the school.

JC: Not really. There are people who honestly accept gays, even in this town *(looks around her, motions)*. But that's not the majority. The majority will say it's enough we have a club, but they'll write bullshit on our posters. The majority will say that it's enough we can go to dances, but not actually be socially accepted at them *(bus shows in distance, different from my route, Jessica gets ready to get on)*. However, that's why we need that month. We need to show that majority that we're still valid. That was the aim for the Gay Pride Month.

AM: Do you think there's a chance it will happen soon?

JC: Not before I graduate, but we can always hope yeah?

(gets on, then leaves on bus)...

Document # 08, Collected April 13th, 2007

Letter from Ames High School's Gay-Straight Alliance to Principal Burrs,
With permission from senders

Dear Principal Burrs,

The Gay-Straight Alliance as a whole would wish to speak with you at a time most convenient for you regarding the plans for June. We as a whole feel that you might have misinterpreted the plans that we (the GSA, you and the Superintendent) all agreed upon regarding the meeting we had on the 2nd of April, last Monday. Our only real complaint as a group is that you have decided along with the Superintendent to call June “Diversity Month” when we clearly decided that June would be devoted to Gay Pride and History, as well as other Sexual Minorities. We do not wish to offend you in any way or form, but the GSA feels that you misunderstood our intentions for June, being meant solely for spreading GLBTQ awareness and understanding, especially considering there are months devoted to other oppressed groups such as African-Americans and women. We hope that we can agree on how to handle this confusion, and see if we can also settle what events will be held in accordance with the School Board and the plans of our GSA. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely, The Members of the Gay-Straight Alliance

Document # 39, Collected May 18th, 2007
Graffiti on Men’s Restroom Stall, Picture Taken on Scene
(text reads as follows)
If we don’t start caring now who will?
(most likely in response to statement seen in document # 27)

Document # 31, Collected May 3rd, 2007
Excerpt from Recorded Interview with Ames HS Janitor Luis Marco

...

Myself (AM): So what exactly are your thoughts on this whole debate in the school? I assume you know what’s been happening...

Luis Marco (MC): (*short pause, cough*) Well yes, I’ve heard, but not so much from the faculty and the Superintendent and all those people.

MC: Well then, who from?

LM: I’m a janitor, I’m around all the kids, you know. I listen to what they say, and I see the shit they put everywhere.

MC: Pardon? What do you –

LM: I mean the way they talk, what they do, how they write on the stalls. If it’s not curse words they’re saying, it’s... you know, “You’re a faggot!” or “He’s a cocksucker!”, and I especially see how they bully that kid who wears make-up and high heels and the whole works. Have you seen him around?

MC: Oh yeah, that guy named Darling, right?

LM: Yeah. I don't really like or get it either, but I like him because I always see how he picks up after himself when he's finished with his lunch. I respect him for that, even though I don't really understand what he's all about. (*short pause*)

MC: What else have you seen though? I think I might be familiar with the writings on the wall.

LM: Oh yes, those damn kids with their pens! (*shows aggravation as he speaks through hand gestures and exaggerated movement*) You think that you're licensed to write every thought when you have to take a shit? I don't think so. But they write things like "Fags are Gay", and "Death to the Niggers" and all this stupid stuff. And have you ever tried to wipe off sharpie markers? It's damn difficult is what it is. But it all really gets back to that Diversity Month thing, though...

MC: What do you mean?

LM: All I mean is this: people are different, right? I mean, we all like long walks on the beach and drinking beer and watching TV, but there are all kinds out there, right? I should know, what with being half German and Mexican and all. People have different beliefs and stuff, but why do we need to flaunt it? (*looks at me with curious expression*)

MC: I wouldn't say flaunting... Don't you think learning about minorities is good?

LM: Yes, but dammit why do we need months to do so? Shouldn't we be open and curious all the time, and stop all the racist, sexist, homophobic, weightist whatever bullshit? We shouldn't need months to realize MLK did great things, or months to show that gays are people too. But then again, I guess people who have been raised thinking something is bad their whole lives, you know, like gays and blacks, can't be blamed entirely, either, since it's their beliefs...

MC: Huh. I guess you have a point, there.

LM: (*sighs*) At any rate, though, I'm just the janitor. There's only so much I'm capable of. Really, all I can do is keep things tidy around here. Others will have to clean up the real mess...

(further discussion regarding instances of peer-to-peer harassment on campus)

...

Document # 46, Collected May 29th, 2007
Spray-Paint on Locker in Hallway next to Commons, Picture Taken at Scene
(text reads as follows)

DYKE

(on further investigation the locker belonged to Jessica Couron, president of the GSA at Ames)

Document # 55, Collected June 23rd, 2007
Letter from Darling addressed to Adam McGillivray, copy w/permission of both parties

Hey Adam! I know we've seen each other countless times now at the meetings and that I could've said then what I'll say now, but I thought a letter would be a cute little memento for you to remember your time here at Ames when you're finishing your thesis. ;) Really, I have thought over and over about the questions you posed to me the first time we met at the meeting, you

asking why I didn't believe the Gay Pride Month would go through, why I come to the GSA, and why I dress the way I do.

I believed that Gay Pride Month would never go through because people are really ignorant assholes. "Gay" is too big of a concept outside their little breeder lives, and it's all icky and nasty and scary, and to put that word (and that concept) so out in the open and noticeable would be terrifying for them. Plus, no matter how many times Outcalt (and didn't she turn out to be such a coward?) told us Burrs was for our cause, I still think he's a chickenshit.

I came to the GSA (and will still do so) because my friends are there and there's free food. I don't go there to learn more about spreading the homosexual agenda to the masses. I can do that perfectly on my own, which leads me to your third question.

I dress up the way I do because I feel good doing it, and I must say I look like the total cat's meow when I do so. I've even been checked out by fellas left and right, and you cannot even imagine how burst their bubble was when I told them I got the same thing they do dangling between my legs (I've gotten beat up a couple of times for that, especially that Moffett boy, but it comes with the job)! But really, I dress the way I do, act the way I do, *be* the way I do because it's me. I don't want to be a woman, but I feel a kindredness with them when I dress so garishly in the femme mystique and crazy-ass make-up as I do so frequently. I express myself this way, too, so that I don't have to conform to others, and in showing myself in their face as only I can do I hope to spread this message: I'm not like you, but get the fuck over it cuz I look amazing. And really, what kind of a stick does everyone have up their patoots?

I really hope, though, that you do well on your project. I know we don't know each other very well, but after I found out what you're all about, trying to further my (our?) people with such vigor and shake I decided that I really liked you. I know you say you ain't gay, which is a real pity cuz you're such a catch. ;) But regardless my dear, I think you'll make somebody happy.

But I swear to god if you paraphrase this letter in your research I'll smack your shit up.

With all my love,
Darling

Document # 53, Collected June 4th, 2007
Quote on Poster next to Rm. 143, Meeting Place of GSA, Picture Taken on Scene
(text reads as follows)

Jimmy Buffett once said,
"Is it ignorance or apathy? I don't know, and I don't care."

Do you?

("faggot" is written in red on poster, with "breeder" and an arrow pointing to it, with a lipstick kiss as a kind of signature next to the seemingly retaliatory remark)

Mend! Merge! Emerge!
a short play

CHARACTER

THE INSTRUCTOR : could be played by anyone, but definitely needs verve

TIME: out of time

PLACE: a realm between this life and others

SETTING: Simple stage with nothing on the floor. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Christmas lights should be hung throughout the ceiling and air above the stage, none of which are connected so that they may be turned on separately. Lights with many different gels should be used as well, all of which are warm colors, except for perhaps a few which are blues, teals and greens.

MUSIC

“Movement III: Linear Tableau with Intersecting Surprise”

The BQE

Sufjan Stevens

NOTE

One may also utilize a video projection which would employ images (picture and video) so that as the monologue is performed there will be synchronous moments between the word and actions being expressed, and imagery which floods the stage.

One may also employ dancers who represent fetuses, the movements described in the development of the fetus, and/or the emotions/images being expressed. As a suggestion, movements should grow more boisterous, visceral, and large as the piece propels toward the conclusion, ending with true symbolic birth.

[these lines are said in darkness]

THE INSTRUCTOR

You have already connected the cell from one and the cell from the other. The Mend is complete. Let us commence the Merge.

[The music track starts now, as a single light comes onto THE INSTRUCTOR. The time you must reach for the following line will be indicated to the left in parentheses.

Throughout the piece and up to the climax, THE INSTRUCTOR must use his/her/its body, arms, hands to convey the motion and the building. The lights should also similarly be used to convey the crescendo of the Merge. Decisions of movement, tone, and expression are left entirely to the discretion of the actor. However, the last yell should be glorious. However you get there is your business.]

THE INSTRUCTOR

(0:00) Work from that initial touch. Work from a new beginning of everything. Work from the knowledge of life that you had, that you now have in where we are, and will have again. Start to separate yourself from the ocean above, and focus yourself into a stream as thin as breath, as thin as desire. As thin as certainty.

(0:22) There! Build each cell to form, to connect with each other, building upon the foundation that has been set by the union of two, like pebbles and raindrops set into earth, into clay, into mud. Within the warm and dark void you shall work the body from the size of a pin head to the size of a child. Your body is now merging as shape, as organ, as blood, as ooze and substance. There! There! Guide those cells, little spirits and workers! Send them along the invisible river of your intent into that shape! And notice as they start to clump, to entangle themselves, tight and delicate as spider webs, as those spider webs you knitted many lives ago. There! There is the cord! Connecting you and your Conduit, the body which feeds you, the body which nurtures you. Respect her as you merge. Respect her as she guides you to become an individual body

once again. You have been a mother before, too, so help her in your empathy and your grace. And now you will feel your jaw form, your soon-to-be arms emerging from your sides as petals from a bud, the space where your eyes will be starting to thin into a little, dark spot. And there, feel your heart begin to grow as a rose seed, your lungs as twin ink blots, and your spine as a plume of smoke from the volcano, the pulse of the earth rising within you. Guide, now, the cells and the earth to become fingers, slightly-webbed, slightly moving. And guide the cells to become skin, guide with thoughts of leaf and branch, feather and knit cloth, guide them to skin and fingerprints and containment, separation, the thrill of sex that will only be gained through the future, small unity again of separate bodies. Your body is larger now, and now can kick. (2:00 "arch") Kick to let them know you're here, that you're coming! Ha ha! Right. Now throughout all of this you should feel the sable thread of nerves and vessels, of electricity and surging blooming through you as roots, as lightning unfurling, as the rivulets of a great river. Lives ago you were a river, lives ago you were a cloud, lives ago you were the breathing of animals. Invoke that, now. Become the breath and the blood that will form the bone. Feel your lips form as wings opening and closing, the salt of ocean passing along your nubby tongue and into the thimble cavern that is your body, your hands opening and closing into fists like fleshy stones, like plums.

(2:38 "bells") And now, begin to extend the intangible you into this wrinkled, moist body. Feel the bones start to harden into wood, into dense fiber and framework, the birdcage of your fluttering soulfire. Feel the opening of pain, and struggle, and constriction. Embrace this! Embrace feeling!

(2:51 "more bells") And Light! The body can see it now! Enter the body now fully, you fool! It is then that you can feel the tension between the infinite and the unique, the transient and the dense, the ethereal and the material. Hear the sound travel through your mother's water, the pulse of touch and blood pump! You are one with this body now. And if you emerge from the flood the stars will brand you with design!

(3:13 "doo-doo dah") The racing of thought, the anticipation of emergence! Kick again, and again. And there, you can hear voices! The rumbling of fear.

(3:23 horns) Lungs as cocoons. Fingers as wriggling worms. Feet as pea pods. Muscle. Sinew. Guts. Jerking shudder and thrust!

(3:34, quickening) And now it's happening. The leak! The rains have come! You are the flesh and the cloud! Rage, storm, rage on out! Shatter the realm of the living with yourself!

(3:45) YYYYYEEAAAAGGGHHHH!!!! She's screaming, the waters have broken! The flood into life has commenced! You must go! Go, child of spirit and flesh! Child of life chain and compounded pain and memory! You shall forget all, but remember once you die again!

(3:59) Go!!!! YEEEEAAAAGGGGGHHHH! You're there! The crown of light! The precipice! The infinite dawn! Emergence!

[Close to the end, all lights will be on, pulsing with everything, and climaxing with "Emergence!" Then all lights are shut off immediately, to the sound of a baby crying.

OPTIONAL

You can decide to continue the scene a little into the next track on the same album, entitled "Movement IV: Traffic Shock" so that the ending will not be so abrupt. However, the tracks MUST be tied together with no pause at all. Or, if you are gifted with an excellent sound designer, see how you can extend the final cord or sound so that with "Emergence!" you may have a sound which befits such an event.]

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