SPIT IN MY MOUTH: Queer Intimacies, Material Intra-actions, and Sensuous Becoming

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SPIT IN MY MOUTH:
Queer Intimacies, Material Intra-actions, and Sensuous Becoming

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by GM Keaton
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ABSTRACT

This document describes my multidisciplinary art practice as it intersects with New Materialism, queer and affect theory, ecology, and my embodied and experiential knowledge as a queer subject. The writing is divided into two categories. One is more theoretical, thinking through these different discourses. The other realizes them through relationships and intra-actions between my material kin and me. With these two modes of writing, I propose that embodied and felt knowing is as valid and illuminating as more traditional forms of knowledge. These sections are interdependent and resist linear logic, offering relational meanings to each reader as they find their way through a terrain of text and image offering a multiplicity of readings. Renaming difficulties with articulation as a legitimate tension within my own way of thinking and experiencing, this document pushes against such exactitude of ideas. Ultimately the artworks in my thesis exhibition and this outlining document work to reveal queerness, or queering, as a basic tenet for existence.

This text uses Open Dyslexic, an open-source font designed for readers with dyslexia, a learning difference whose wide range of effects alters the way a person takes in, processes, and utilizes language and graphic symbols.
I was stopped in my tracks by feelings surging through my body. I sat in a daze, unable to understand the connection between the two. The very thought of my body and what it could be capable of sent a jolt through me. I felt my future stretching ahead of me, unimagined and untouchable. Yet, I knew I was more than just a body, a physical being with a mind and a soul. I was a person, a living being with feelings and emotions. I was a human child again, but it was around the time my mother's boyfriend, Thomas-Eddy, moved in that I felt this. He seemed continually frustrated with my new feline existence. On our visits, I would meow at him, and he would pet me, saying how much he loved me. I lay on the bed, stretching my paws in the air, and I would feel his hand on my back. I would return the favor, licking his hand and purring. He would laugh, saying how much he loved me. I would giggle, feeling content in his presence.

I don't know when I became a human child again, but it was around the time my mother's boyfriend, Thomas-Eddy, moved in that I felt this. He seemed continually frustrated with my new feline existence. On our visits, I would meow at him, and he would pet me, saying how much he loved me. I lay on the bed, stretching my paws in the air, and I would feel his hand on my back. I would return the favor, licking his hand and purring. He would laugh, saying how much he loved me. I would giggle, feeling content in his presence.

I was unable to name my experience with the change in my body. It was a feeling that was both physical and emotional. The physical changes were noticeable, but the emotional changes were even more profound. I felt a sense of loss, a sense of being different, yet a sense of newfound freedom. I was not just a body, not just a living being, but something more. I was a person, a living being with feelings and emotions. I was a human child again, but it was around the time my mother's boyfriend, Thomas-Eddy, moved in that I felt this. He seemed continually frustrated with my new feline existence. On our visits, I would meow at him, and he would pet me, saying how much he loved me. I lay on the bed, stretching my paws in the air, and I would feel his hand on my back. I would return the favor, licking his hand and purring. He would laugh, saying how much he loved me. I would giggle, feeling content in his presence.

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