Leiden, The Netherlands, January 16, 2013

My head leans against the window of my room.The glass is cold, but not half as cold as the temperature outside. It snows. It has snowed for days. Really, it has! It doesn't happen often here. I know. Reality is often too odd for fiction. The Gothic church that I view is covered in white and looks beautiful in the early evening, dark blueish light. Still, I can't find reason to take a photograph. There is no incentive to take a pen, pencil or brush either; to register the space between the historic building and myself, and to replace the stories of the city with new ones. My stillness is as feminist as my action.

I think I uploaded more than 500 photographs of my view of the church on Facebook. I painted and drew the church a hundred times. I wrote a dozen stories about it and made daily walks around it. I've sat on its steps and felt its immense body behind me. For more than ten years my church has (pre)occupied me. It caressed me and called me its Room with a Lesbian View.

One time I attended a workshop about Lesbian Empowerment in Business. I thought I could use that, some lessons in making money with my (pre)occupation. My feminist art had given me my network of friends and my view on art, art history, art critique, art economy, art philosophy, and so on, but never money. Unfortunately, the Lesbian Empowerment I consulted didn't like my feminism. To befriend corporate feminists and make them my readers, I needed other ways.

In the meantime I had started to work as a management assistant. The experience was a brainwash. In a couple of years I learned everything about running an organization. All hours of the week my manager didn't pay me, I analyzed my experience of work through fiction. Money and feminist art went very well together. My beloved friends were my audience. I hated my job.

Oh, how honored I were THAT ONE DAY I could show my art, my view, my politics in a proper museum! I asked the feminist curator for a bit of money. The feminist curator said: “Oh, right, you live from your art, don't you? Well, I don't have any. I'm sorry.” Well, I didn't. But, you know, art wasn't the only thing I did for free. There was always, *always* reason to act.

My full-time activism resulted in the job of part-time executive director of the national advocacy organization for human rights of trans* people. Results after two years were: a) recognition; b) access to governmental and corporate LGBT networks; and c) a burnout. You know, I don't know about gender. Analysis of the phenomenon never gave me my rights, even when I claimed them in an upside-down context. How do you get rid of difference when it's part of your instrument?

My head still leans against the cold window. The world I view is my instrument. This used to worry me, and still does quite a bit, but I change my habits. I have my friends, my stories, my plans, my new job. And if you are intelligent and funny (and above thirty) and you would like to distract me from my (pre)occupation, please do. Ask me to stop my storytelling for a moment and I will, definitely. Thanks!

A Room with a Lesbian View

a facebook re-enactment

Promoting Lesbian Empowerment in Business Lesson 1:
ASK FOR WHAT YOU WANT

19 February at 9:02

Promoting Lesbian Empowerment in Business Lesson 2:
DETERMINE YOUR ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

19 February at 11:13

Promoting Lesbian Empowerment in Business Lesson 3:
GO BEYOND YOUR COMFORT ZONE

19 February at 14:42

Promoting Lesbian Empowerment in Business Lesson 4:
DON'T ARTICULATE BARRIERS OR OBSTACLES, ONLY OPPORTUNITI

19 February at 15:51

Promoting Lesbian Empowerment in Business Lesson 5:
NO SUCCESS WITHOUT FAILURES; FIX THEM QUICKLY

19 February at 16:27

Promoting Lesbian Empowerment in Business Lesson 6:
LIFE IS TOO LONG TO BE UNHAPPY

19 February at 16:59

Promoting Lesbian Empowerment in Business Lesson 7:
FIND COMFORT IN ART

20 February at 13:02

Short story no. 34. April 5, 2004

You are late for our dinner date. You text messaged me. You wrote you had been fined for jumping the lights. What is the chance of that happening to a pedestrian? It's not the first time you're late for our dates. Several times you could not find your keys. One time you dropped your cell phone in the toilet. You dried the inside with a hair-dryer that you borrowed from your neighbour. There was that one day you got into conversation with a street pastel drawer who travelled with his dog through the whole of Europe on his moped. You went for a coffee with him and forgot about me. A couple of weeks ago you were on your way on time, when you realized you forgot to bring the present that you bought for me. You went back for it, but unfortunately it started to rain heavily. Completely soaked you arrived at the restaurant where we were meeting, too late, but I loved the present you got me, *The American Women's Almanac* with hundred of pages of interesting facts about women from the last centuries with black&white photos of women called Sara Winnemucca*, Martha Jane Canary Burke** or Dr. Mae Jamison***.

We met for the first time at a friend's party. That was two years ago. I asked what you did in daily life. You answered: “Nothing.” I asked what you did before you did nothing, and you said: “Pretty much nothing.”
“That's great,” I responded, “I always feel guilty about doing nothing and I come up with the story that I am an artist.”
You answered you had stopped feeling guilty about it. For someone who was doing nothing, you were quite intelligent. Later I found out you were the writer of exceedingly funny stories. This was your daily practice. I remember you warned me about two things that first evening: “Listen, I have to warn you about two things: I am too serious, and I am a storyteller.”

That was true. Whilst overthrowing reality in your stories, you were always sincere in conversations. In the two years I know you, it never crossed my mind to mistrust you. You are the nicest person I know. We only see each other in the weekends. On weekdays you focus on your writing, do your volunteer work and play volleyball. In the weekends you make me fresh orange juice, we go for Sunday walks and drink coffee in town. Well, this is not exactly true, as you know.

You say a writer can make a reader believe anything. Blanc pages are lovely, you say. Readers fill them in themselves. Sometimes it is a bit scary how you temporarily live others people’s lives to write stories. You are a chameleon, or a parasite. You unquestioningly started to live your stories. Your life is exactly the same as other people's. Yet, you seem to have perceiving the world differently since you taught yourself to write down your observations.

Sometimes I feel hurt when you say you don’t feel like going for a Sunday walk with me, because you just have a new idea for a story. You say writing stories costs a lot of time. I wonder if that's really true. The only thing you do is putting daily experiences on paper. Come on, how hard can that be?

“You are doing fine, I would say.”
“Yes, would you?”
“Yes. It's nice to read all these things about myself.”
“I thought, I mirror you for once. Do you think I am a good writer?”
“Well, I don’t know.”
“What do you mean, you don't know?”
“There are no rules for good writing. It changes all the time, and moreover, each reader has her own taste.”
“Yeah right, but what do you think?”
“Like I said earlier, I like your writing.”
“Seriously?”
“Yes. What’s wrong?”
“I suddenly don’t believe you.”
“Well, that's probably because I'm part of your story now.”
“Yes, you are probably right. We should not discuss these things in writing.”

“But hey, I like being in your story.”
“Yes? Well, thank you.”
“You’re welcome. And one last thing.”
“Yes?”
“We do go for Sunday walks and coffees every week.”

To continue my story: When you finally entered the restaurant you told me you had been fined for jumping the lights. A police officer came up to you and told you that he was going to fine you. During the fifteen minutes you were waiting for your fine, around eighty other people jumped these traffic lights close to the railway station. You looked at them and said to the police officer: “I think you will have a busy evening.” He answered he only fined you, ant not the others, because you looked at him, when you jumped the lights. You responded that you honestly hadn't seen him. But, he repeated his line.

I am sorry for this boring paragraph. It made me furious and I had to get rid of it. It actually happened to me today. I think if I were a real storyteller, I would have let you flirt with the officer's woman colleague.

*Paiute writer and activist, photograph taken in 1871
**Calamity Jane, photograph taken in 1895
***NASA astronaut

facebook

THE LESBIAN LIFESTYLE