

## Flaneur 2016.

Everything about this is something that I felt then and still feel as out of control. It can be that inherently in its own essence, it is like a natural disaster which in itself is innocent even if it causes a lot of damage, charred soil or a new landscape. I could not control what happened, the feelings and thoughts that little by little in a few years took over nor what it was replaced with.

I don't want to compare this time with metamorphosing from chrysalis to a butterfly, yet I sense within me signals of profound change like a rebirth, there in between. I would rather relate it to events I witnessed occurring outside of my studio window one morning. Which seem to illustrate my current mental state.

I saw a cat chase a squirrel over a grass lawn. The squirrel ran up on a garage roof where he stopped and fought the cat. Defending himself fighting until the cat receded. At which point he ran up his tree with his tail swaying to and fro highly agitated. Then a big raven sat on one of the branches and croaked loudly at the little animal. The squirrel took an offensive leap towards the raven which then flew away.

Because of my own response to what was happening, the beginning was difficult. I felt selfish. Believing that I was not allowed to pursue what I desired and felt much constraint. To leave my family for something that was pulling me with great force. No matter the efforts I tried to suppress it the feeling grew ever stronger. Maybe it was exactly this suppression that regenerated the embers I was trying to put out. I often felt like I was drowning stealing the gasp for air. Ultimately I could not help but start decoding the symbols which I felt I saw and sensed around me. At times this helped, yet I could not escape the conviction that I was a hopeless delusional reading into some meaningless bullshit.

Like the time I wanted to start a construction project to create a job for myself. I had asked the bank for a loan and said to myself while waiting for the answer "be what will" but when the bank turned me down I got infuriated and insisted that they find another way. Dressed in red from top to toe walking back and forth in my apartment, waiting for the third answer from the bank, I said to a friend while sitting down in front of my computer "what am I to do with my life if I do not get this loan". At the same moment a message appeared in my mailbox, stating that I had been shortlisted for an art prize.

I did not receive the art prize nor the bank loan, but received that art was what I was supposed to do with my life.

The coming summer I decided to rent out my flat and move to my studio. It came as a nice surprise how good I felt there and realised that I could actually live in small space, in one room.

In the autumn I got a job at a theatre. Shortly after I started to work there a traumatic event happened in my life. Therefore it came in handy that when working backstage you are to be invisible and work in darkness with only a little blue light. I hid in the theatre curtains with tears running down my cheeks without anyone seeing. The blue light and the darkness had a calming effect on me, like an embrace. The time at the theatre had a great influence on me. When I came home late at night I painted blue watercolours, something I had never done before. To be backstage living my own tragedy, while on stage and in the auditorium there was tinkling laughter and music. Life was surrealistic.

Now I can see that the first sign came a few years before when I started to have physical symptoms. I had the recurring sensation like some one held a finger at my flank and poked me incessantly. Initially I thought that my clothes were too tight, but this constant poking became incredibly irritating. Next my feet were restless, a knot developed in my stomach and I had to move constantly while seated. These spells became stronger and stronger, lasted longer each time and arrived with greater frequency. In the end it almost became one continuous unrest that I could hardly tame. I wanted to run away as fast as I could as if I were a wild mare. My psychologist said "next time you get this feeling try to go out jogging". I tried that but did not find any peace, jogging just bored me.

The next sign was that, most undertakings I planned in Iceland inexplicably failed to come to fruition. Giving me the sense that some force was pushing me out of the country.

Something is also significant in the fact that I had for some time been reducing the extent of my belongings and giving away or throwing what I did not need anymore. Now this is also indicative, of my unconscious preparations for some kind of departure.

Then came the symbol that shone the green light. Just after the new year I received a letter stating that I had been granted a stipend for 9 months for my work. An artist salary for a gestation period, art-gestation wage. For me there was a symbolic potent about the duration of that grant. I decided to go away. To devote all my time, to art. To recluse myself from any responsibility apart from

myself and my work. To submit to the urge to run, give into the desire, become a wild mare. The signs kept on pouring in from all directions. I am not going to mention them specifically here because I think that insightful listeners figure out where they come in and how they can be interpreted.

At the end of the summer I moved to London alone. A city in which I had lived 18 years earlier for further education. I had felt good there and made a few nice friends that I was still in contact with up to this time. 18 years ago I was forced to return to Iceland suddenly and unprepared. Since that time, I had been back on my way to London. I thought that this was starting to look like a pilgrimage to finish what I had started 18 years prior. However I was to discover that that was not true. Rather this journey was a whole new experience including new people entering my life with new ideas.

What then happens is probably not strange in any way, maybe even prosaic or banal. I have often heard of people my age that leave to search for themselves and I have found it a little pitiful. Midlife crisis, grey fever, the last aroma of youth, just before the rose pedals drop dead on the cold grey sidewalk. This transition has been described as latter adolescence and I connect strongly with where it says "puberty is a crisis of the soul and is thought to be the most challenging development period. It is a painful explosion where the teenager fights a battle to try to find himself, his own beliefs, personality and the ability to make his own stand in existence. Simultaneously he is being tested to find out what he is made of ." Lost in the vortex of midlife crises as I was, I still found life both electric and arousing. Precisely the sensations I felt as a teenager.

I had already searched for myself in Iceland with little progress. I had also searched in mountains in far flung corners of the world. The only thing I found was a frightened animal with a pocket light in the Andes mountains and with a turban in the Atlas mountains as if life is a masquerade and I am still to find my costume.

On my way down from the last mountain I took a big step off the beaten path, crawled into a bush and found there two conch shells and a pearl. This find was magical. I am still thinking about this sidetracked aptness at finding. Pondering how this set of objects from the bottom of the sea found their way to a mountaintop.

For the first two months in London I lived alone and had to confront the challenge of this new life. It was new to be without responsibility and obligations. Without anybody to speak with. Sleep alone, wake up alone, complete loneliness among

millions of people. I started filling my days with things I liked to do and found interesting. To walk around the city opened me up and filled me with creativity and inspiration. I took photographs and wrote. Walked, stopped, looked and perceived. Often I felt rather alien, incapable of pin pointing my own emotions because this was all new. New surroundings with new feelings and new thoughts. The city called me every day. I was not familiar with it so much because when I was there before I was often so drunk that I did not have the faintest idea where I was, traveled underground and did not find my way around.

I started to look forward to go out and see what I would encounter that day. Many days I walked for hours, covering several miles without talking to anyone often for days. Sometimes I was overwhelmed by feelings of excruciating pain and loneliness which is a bonafide experience and will pass. I asked myself every day what I was doing here and did not feel like I was allowed to be lonely because I had moved here free willingly, got me into this myself, had only myself to blame, joke is on me ha ha.

When asked what I was doing I said that I was aimlessly walking around the city. Someone said "that's what the french call flaneur" I did not remember this word until I heard it again "you're a flaneur" The word made me curious. Reading about it surprised me. It was strange that I had instinctively and unconsciously got into a "state" that artists have been doing for a very long time and still do. That this activity is so well know that it has many appellations, books been written about it, essays and poetry investigating its many facets. I learned that flaneur has its roots to mid nineteenth century Paris even further back to 16-17th century on account of changes in urban planning. For example streets that where covered with a roof and on account of capitalism. To stroll down the boulevard during 1800 with a tortoise on a leash as the apex of pointlessness and a waste of time, as rebellion for the fast tempo of the city and to that everything that people did had to have a purpose. The more I look into it the more weird and marvellous it becomes. Now because I was away from home I kept on traveling on the mainland and shortly after the new year I learned that I did not receive continued artist-salary, instead I received a travel grant.

It has been called aimless walking, purposeless walking, wanderlust, observational walking, psychogeography, urban wandering, dérive, flaneur and there are probably more names for it. This likewise seems to be the greatest resistance and salient argument the right wing of Iceland has against the artist salary, exactly this willed "purposeless" creative state that generates works from artists.

Shortly after I came to London I wandered into a an antiques shop on Brick Lane and saw a neckless that attracted me enormously. It was blue and green a little iridescent, very special and particularly beautiful. I found my immense desire to possess this necklace strange because I hardly ever wear a necklace. I did not want to use my money on it, as I had to use it for daily expenses and art supplies. Two months later, after I continued to fantasise about the necklace I decided to go and see if it was still in the shop and then purchase it. I found the shop but the necklace was not in the glass cabinet it had been in before. I walked out of the shop but as I was leaving I turned around in the door and asked the owner about the necklace. I did not have to describe it in much detail she imminently new which piece I was referring to. To my satisfaction it was in an envelope in a drawer. I bought it and put it around my neck where it remains.

I did not know what it was made of. It looked like a drop of glass with blue and green colours inside. One day I went to a market and there I saw a necklace similar to mine. I asked the seller what it was made from "it is a butterfly wing" he said. Someone said my necklace looked like moonstone, another that it was like mermaid skin. I myself think it is crumpled candy wrappings. Perhaps one day I will find out what it is, but until then I will carry it around my neck as a symbol for the mystique of life.

Shortly before I had got two unpolished moonstones one green and one blue. I learned that butterflies are scaled and have claws like tiny dragons. That the blue butterfly I find the most beautiful of all and sometimes has a little green in it, is the same as the brown one I do not find so beautiful. Each side of the same wing and that in my necklace could be it's wing. I started to notice that I saw these two colours blue and green everywhere every day. These are also the colours of the northern lights, heaven and earth and our planet seen from out of space. Does this matter? I do not know and I have no idea why I wanted to put this in the story.

Often I have picked up feathers and fallen in love shortly after. Fluttering heart and butterflies in the stomach. For this reason I said to myself "I am not going to pick up any feathers. I did not come here to fall in love." I saw plenty of feathers in this big city with lots of birds and weird birds of a different nature. I saw them but said "I will not pick you up because I don't want to fall in love". However one day though I saw such beautiful feather that I had to stop to look at it where it lay on the grey pavement. It was a small spectacularly beautiful and bright feather, bright green, white, yellow and grey. It was to beautiful to be left behind. I thought "this is a gift to me from this day". I picked it up and put it in my left breast pocket,

yet a little uneasy. Consoling my self that I would not fall in love, this was just a beautiful tiny feather. I looked at it many times the next few days and admired it's beauty and brightness and it gave me such joy.

I cannot remember how long it was until I found the next one. Half of it was black and the other half blue and green iridescent. This feather was also so beautiful that I had to stop to study it. I stared at it where it lay in the green grass, dark but beautiful with secret colours. First it appeared to be black but when turned it unfolded blue and green colours where light fell on it. Because I had picked up the green feather I permitted myself to pick up the blue feather. Rationalising that I would not meet anyone because I was alone all the time. I picked it up and put it in my left breast pocket. Shortly after that I saw an amusing grey, black and white striped feather and picked it up without giving it much thought. I had already picked up two other feathers. The feathers were getting bigger each time and this was the largest one. I kept them on my worktable and enjoyed examining them. Turning them to see how the colours changed with how the light fell on them. I thought about it sometimes if I was getting myself into trouble.

In London it is commonplace to have two or more locks on doors. That's how it was in the flat I had rented from a friend of mine. The house stood at Cavendish Road named after Sir Henry Cavendish who had a mansion on the property before this house was built. He was an inventor and the story says he calculated the worlds weight and discovered the composition for water, hydrogen dioxide H<sub>2</sub>O.

One day when I came home from another aimless walk the lower lock on my door was open. I was certain that I had locked it but thought that one can be mistaken about such things. But then it happened again a few days later and that time I was positive that I had locked both locks. I opened the door and stood still for a moment and listened before going inside. No one was there. I felt strange. I went to the toilet and when I opened it I saw that someone had left a piece in it and knew it was not mine. I called the police. While waiting for them I realised that I had likely always locked both locks, and that the cabinets in the front room that I had noticed open two weeks before, and I had not noticed that they where when I came to London, had very likely been opened by some one. Some one was coming into the flat when I was not there.

One of the locks was changed but a few days later still some one attempted to get in. The following week I went out for an hour and left the lights on. When I returned someone had tried once more to open the door. This frightened me, and I felt that now I had had a few warnings.

The signs were indicating, like I was being pushed out of the flat. I considered that London would always be closed to me if I was alone all the time and met no one. I felt like I was exploding and did not want to be alone and locked up inside while life was happening outside. Later the door was kicked in, but at that point I had moved.

With the help of another friend I rented a room and moved into a house with an acquaintance of hers who lived alone in a big house. We got on well from the beginning but for some mysterious reason I did not find any peace in the house and could not be there much. I was nervous and did not want to be in his way so I kept on walking. I had never before lived with anyone that I did not know and did not know how to. He had rented rooms before to various people, some I was acquainted to and they had felt good in the house. He enjoys cooking, is generous and shares his food with me. It happened in the beginning of me staying in the house that he sent me text messages when I was out walking, asking where I was, were he to cook if I would eat too. This was just a few occasions but made me incredibly nervous and I magnified it.

I had physical symptoms, sweat came out on my forehead, got nauseous, felt dizzy, and my heart pumped so hard that I felt I could not breathe. I had to talk to myself and to my friend who had got me the room about this. I found out that I was neurotic, codependent person in rebellion against any demand on me, that I did not know how to be with other people in a relaxed way. A loner that sometimes was social.

Instead of moving and escaping the situation and my own feelings like I wanted to. I decided to accept the challenge to learn to relax and live with others. If I did not do it now I would have to do it later. I was determined to master this difficulty now. I was absolutely not willing to put that bummer in the future and to go through it again, to be with others.

I had my studio at home and I had to work for the exhibition. I started to accept his dinner offers and to come into the kitchen when he was there to talk to him which could be nice. But there remained within me a pervading sense of tension and restlessness. What took hold was beyond my control and what happened next were just the beginnings of my problems.

Wanting to be alone in the house and wishing that he was not at home when I came, transformed little by little to checking if there was light, hoping he was at home and look forward to meeting him. I was glad when he was at home. I started to feel an attachment for him which is not hard because he is a nice

person. But when this changed into becoming an obsessive compulsiveness I started engaging in behaviour that was so perplexing that it mystified me.

I thought about him constantly like a rap in my head and could not in anyway control it no matter what I did. I was an embarrassing individual. What about my husband whom I missed and was in an other country not knowing that I had another man on my mind whether I wanted to or not. This had become a big dilemma, I was tormented. It is not easy to hide when becoming like a idiotic teenager in their fifty's. Giggling at the dinner table and blushing from nothing much. Smiling so wide that I had a hard time talking and must have looked really weird. He was like I said before a nice guy but nothing in his manner indicated that this was a case of mutual attraction no matter how much I read into and translated everything he did.

For instance when he had said he was going to make dinner my last night in London before traveling abroad for Christmas and then he did not show up, in my mind this was an obvious indication that he had difficulties and separation anxiety he must be feeling because I was leaving. When I received a christmas greeting from him, I interpreted that he was obsessed with me. When he came to the train station to help me with my luggage when I came back to London, transformed into that he had missed me so much that he could not wait to see me. When he asked if I was happy to be back in London, I took it that he wanted to make sure that I was happy to be with him etc. Sometimes I could laugh at myself though "Sara what do you think he would do if he was aware of your obsession towards him and how busy you are with translating everything he does and says" Yes I knew he would get the creeps, cold water running down his back, rightly. I had started to see myself as Glenn Close in Fatal attraction.

I hid it, suppressed it, did not let him see it, I resisted it, I put on a pokerface. But likely none of it worked. I kept repeating to myself often that I was lucky to have met such a nice person, and that does not happen everyday. That the landlord as I started to call him to maintain a distance, was fun to talk to bright and nice and we got on. I told my self that he could have been unintelligent and boring. I sometimes thought about the feathers that I had picked up and the green blue mystique I had in a glass around my neck.

I started to avoid him again which became worse because now I missed him when he was not around and had a very hard time to focus on working on this exhibition you my patient listener are currently standing in.

I was confused, desperate and on the run. I made an appointment at a therapist. Like all good therapists she told me what I already knew. One of the things was that I was not attracted to my landlord, nor was he attracted to me. But it was not until a few weeks later on good Friday that I realised that I had let the care and friendship he displayed towards me, fool me. It can be confusing to meet someone of the opposite sex and not to confuse the relationship with something other than friendship.

"Love, I mean platonically" said the poet Jóhannar while the cigarette he held burned his fingers. Expressionless he finished the reading and then snubbed it out.

London is a demanding city to live in, but it gives back if one does not give up. All this time and while I'm writing these words I feel like I'm walking in the dark and that life unravels little by little with each step I take. Like driving in a blizzard and only a few feet ahead are visible to find one's way with an unknown destination. Life can mutate and take a u-turn.....everything changes, nothing lasts forever in the same form.

I have found a new feather. This one has many grey colours that intermix and looks like a small raincloud. When I run my fingers up the back of it, it becomes like rippled water.