

nafn höfundar: **MARIA EDIT ANTAL**

heiti ritgerðar: **MASTERING AWARENESS**

nafn: **Maria Edit Antal**

sérsvið nemanda: **Myndlist**

heiti ritgerðar: **Mastering Awareness**

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## Introduction

I would like you to read this essay as a self portrait. Writing it has been an adventurous process of looking around to see where I connect. Allowing things to come to me by being aware, and open for the suggestions that I have heard or seen or bumped into on my way has given shape to the content. It is similar to how I paint.

Louise Bourgeois has always fascinated me. Visiting her show at Tate Modern in December 2007, and there after reading Mignon Nixons: *Fantastic reality – Louise Bourgeois and a Story of modern Art*, has been of great value.

Kimon Nicolaides, teacher at Art Students Leauge in New York wrote a self-study book: *The Natural Way to Draw*. I have been studying it for over 9 years. Nicolaides died the same year Bourgeois studied at Art Students Leauge in 1938.

The teachings of Nicolaides'es drawing and the coreographer Gabrielle Roth's dancing has a lot in common. Both are interested in the human body, movement, and nature. They are integral parts of my passion.

My dancing practice lead me to Ana Mendieta. She was a landartist inspired by religious rituals from all over the world, seeking comfort and nourishment in earth.

My dancing is greatly influenced by Freud and Jung, so is gestalt therapy, although until now I did not know much about their theories. I took this opportunity to read some of their texts.

Louise Bourgeois and Mignon Nixon inspired me to write about fear. Mastering fear is a process of constant awareness of reaction to fear. Awareness and acceptance enables change of behavior: from being victim of fear, to mastering it. Feminism succeeded in this and especially Louise Bourgeois.

## Connections

The last four years I have been deeply interested in emotional healing. When something interests me I get like a sponge. I suck it all in until I get satisfied and then I move on. As a result of this I have been searching inside, building a strong relationship with myself, my family, art and environment. Now I am searching for connections.

There are especially two artists who supports my work. One of them is Louise Bourgeois. One winter day in my childhood I took out my fathers summer shirts. Thinking that they were not in use and not important I cut a hole in each and one of them to make clothes for dolls. Louise Bourgeois remembers once as a child, she made a model of her father in bread and ate it limb by limb.<sup>1</sup>

Louise Bourgeois (1911-) studied mathematics before she decided to train as an artist 1934 to 1938 in Paris. She also worked as an assistant to Fernand Léger. 1938 she married the American historian Robert Goldwater and moved to New York. They socialized with father figures like André Breton and Marcel Duchamp who did not take women seriously as artists. Joan Miró was different. He and Bourgeois became good friends. During the war she was struggling for recognition, while raising children, in an artworld dominated by european emigrants in a climate of homesickness, anxiety, guilt and loss. In June 1945 she had her first solo exhibition with 12 paintings. Around 1947 Bourgeois started a critical reworking of surrealism in relation to feminism that lasted for 40 years. She meant that feminism created social change in 1970s, while surrealism failed in its liberatory aims. 1949 she turned from painting to “cutting”, her term for sculpture. She needed something that was material, to act in the physical world she says.<sup>2</sup> In 1959 Bourgeois started her psychoanalysis.<sup>3</sup> In the 1960s she made sculptures that were formless connecting to libidnal instincts. In 1970s she was actively involved in feminism and is considered to be the mother of it. 1979 there was a feminist dinnerparty held in her honor, and one of the 15 women surrounding Bourgeois was

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<sup>1</sup> Frances Morris: *Louise Bourgeois*. Tate, 2007, p17

<sup>2</sup> Mignon Nixon: *Fantastic Reality--Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2005, p13-15, 51-52, 91,110

<sup>3</sup> Frances Morris: *Louise Bourgeois*. Tate, 2007,p19

Ana Mendieta.<sup>4</sup> Late in 1980s Bourgeois was beginning to make large installations that developed into her Cells.

## Background

My ongoing interest for drawing the human body and its environment deepened dramatically 1998. There were a couple of times when I was drawing and painting, particularly one female model, that I sensed a kind of communication I had not sensed before and it was not established through spoken language. We were both working hard, me observing and she posing. I became one with her beauty. I inspired her with my attention, interest and passion and she responded with joyous poses that inspired me forth. There was a “fiery dance” between us and I wanted more of it. This experience has followed me ever since and often helped me to make the decisions that led me to where I am today. The same year I decided to study Fine Arts. This was also the year that I got introduced to an amazing self study book called: *The Natural Way to Draw*, by Kimon Nicolaides (1892-1938). Nicolaides was teaching at Art Students League in New York. In *The Natural Way to Draw* he bases his teachings on this “fiery dance” I mentioned before. He says that everything is in movement and invites you to become one with what ever you draw, which, in itself is movement too. For him techniques grows naturally out of this way of seeing. He refused to discuss techniques before his students had got real experience of feeling what they drew in their own bodies.<sup>5</sup> He gives the freedom to find out facts for yourself to be able to: “...discover something of the true nature of artistic creation – of the hidden processes by which inspiration works.”<sup>6</sup> For him the real laws of art, are the laws of nature.<sup>7</sup>

On my way in art schools I have curiously worked with different mediums like: sculpture, ceramics, furniture, photography, performance, video, animation, installation. Meanwhile there was a small voice whispering to paint, carrying the teachings of Nicolaides. It was not until the year 2006 that I decided to open up and focus on

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<sup>4</sup> Mignon Nixon: *Fantastic Reality - Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2005, p169-170, 40, Presentation of Ana Mendieta, in “Earth and the human body”

<sup>5</sup> Kimon Nicolaides: *The Natural Way to Draw – A Working Plan for Art Study*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969, p2-20

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, xiii

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

painting. All this traveling around has been enriching and refreshing for my artistic development.

I remember the first time I saw drawings from Louise Bourgeois in art school, I felt that something was familiar to me. The sensuality and physicality in the drawings drew my attention to them. I did not know then that Louise Bourgeois took painting classes at Art Students League of New York 1938-39. Her teacher was Vaclav Vytlacil (1892-1980) The circle of artists, that would become the future abstract expressionist generation<sup>8</sup>, she met through Arts Students League. They supported her in contrast to the European surrealists.<sup>9</sup>

Painting is the medium that I have the most passion for and it is not the whole truth. The same year I decided to paint I found a dance I had wished for a very long time.

### **Dancing; The 5 Rhythms**

Dancing the 5 Rhythms and Movement Medicine is a spiritual practice. It has a form of a formless dance where you make up your own steps. The dance is practiced within the boundaries of the rhythms which are in themselves natural waves of the body. I have often heard the statement during workshops that “we are re-learning what we already know”.

Gabrielle Roth says: “Energy moves in waves. Waves move in patterns. Patterns move in rhythms. A human being is just that, energy, waves, patterns, rhythms. Nothing more. Nothing less. A dance.”<sup>10</sup>

Dancing the rhythms satisfies, a deep longing to move my body in a natural and ancient way. I have found a lovely way to communicate and be together with other people without words. The tools I learn are connecting me consciously, to my body, heart and

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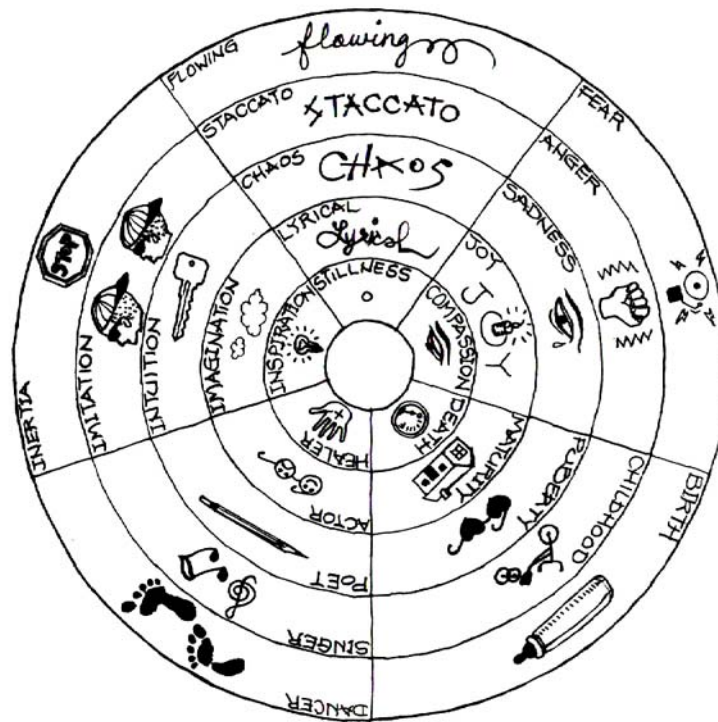
<sup>8</sup>Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko.

<sup>9</sup> Mignon Nixon: *Fantastic Reality - Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2005, p16,18

<sup>10</sup> Gabrielle Roth, <http://www.gabrielleroth.com/>, Feb14th, 2008

mind, to the earth and the fire/sun, to my fellow humans and to the fact that everything is one, that we are part of everything that is.

Gabrielle Roth (1941 -) devised this work of art and she calls it “Maps to Ecstasy; the 5 Rhythms”. Her dream was to become a dancer. Her knee collapsed and the doctors said she could never dance again. From this situation she moved on and discovered these five rhythms which are universal for all human beings she says. They are five because they are the patterns that she found in observing dancing bodies not only in movement but also as physical reality of the body. The feet, hands, and the head are five points connecting all our parts to the whole.<sup>11</sup>



## Cosmology

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<sup>11</sup> Gabrielle Roth, *Maps to ecstasy—a healing journey for the untamed spirit*, 1998, preface xix

<sup>12</sup> Gabrielle Roth, *Maps to ecstasy—a healing journey for the untamed spirit*, 1998, p208



The *flowing* rhythm is a teacher of fluidity and grace  
The *staccato* rhythm is the teacher of definition and refinement  
The rhythm of *chaos* is an announcement of creativity seeking form  
The *lyrical* rhythm is the teacher of synthesis and integration  
The rhythm of *stillness* is the teacher of contentment and peace<sup>13</sup>

“Movement isn’t only meditation; it’s also medicine that heals the split between our minds and hearts, bodies and soul”,<sup>14</sup> Roth mentions C. G. Jung as one of her inspiring sources. Jung said that it is a ”mysterious truth that spirit is the living body seen from within, and the body the outer manifestation of the living spirit. ... to transcend the present level of consciousness must give its due to the body. ...belief in the body cannot tolerate an outlook that denies the body in the name of the spirit.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, preface xvi

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p2

<sup>15</sup> C. G Jung: *Modern man in search of a soul*. Kegan Paul, trench, Trubner & CO. LTD. 1933, p254

## Earth and the human body



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I was born 15th of September 1972 in the valley Csík (Ciuc) of the Carpat mountains of Romania. For the first nine years my home was in a little village called Csíkszent Domokos. When I look back on that time I remember often seeking comfort in nature, in solitude. I followed the natural instinct to be with mother earth for spiritual nourishment. During this time Ana Mendieta (1948-1985) did her performances in nature wanting to become one with the earth. She created *Untitled* (Grass on Woman) 1972. Two friends, Dennis and Diane Swansson glued cut grass onto her body. The effect was to make the artist appear to meld with the lawn. This was the beginning of her earth-body pieces.<sup>17</sup> I have always sought comfort at difficult times in the great mother with similar sensuality as Mendieta executed her work. She was convinced that nature is nurturing and empowering as well as a humbling force from which humanity

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<sup>16</sup> Ana Mendieta, *Untitled* (Grass on Woman), 35mm colour slide, 1972, Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. Gift of Raquelin Mendieta Family Trust in Honor of Olga Viso, 2003

<sup>17</sup> Olga M. Viso. *Ana Mendieta - Earth Body*. Hatje Cantz 2004, p147-148

could learn valuable lessons. Olga M. Viso is Director of Norton Museum of Art in West palm Beach, Florida and writes that Mendieta believed that ancient and many contemporary native civilizations were more in tune with the power of nature than contemporary Western society<sup>18</sup> Guy Brett (1942-) art critic refers to the artist Nancy Spero: “Ana did not rampage the earth to control or dominate or to create grandiose monuments of power or authority. She sought intimate, recessed spaces, protective habitats signaling a temporary respite of comfort and meditation”<sup>19</sup>

Jung said that Ideas come from the most subjective side of life. The subject is an objective fact he said, a piece of the world. Ideas are from the universal soil, supported and nourished by the earth. The most subjective ideas are closest to nature and to the living being and are the truest according to Jung. He gave positive value to all religions because in their symbols he recognised figures that he met in the dreams and phantasies of his patients. Guided by insight or inspiration his patients sought the right way of dealing with the forces of inner life. Ceremonial, ritual, initiation rites interested him because he thought they were bringing proper relation to these forces.

Mendieta was born in Cuba. At the age of 14 her parents sent her and her sister to the US, hoping to come after them shortly. Unfortunately the parents could not leave Cuba. Gloria Feman Orenstein<sup>20</sup> wrote that she transformed the pain of her separation from her homeland into a metaphor about the pain of all women’s exile from the earth; our great mother.<sup>21</sup>

Mendieta described culture as memory of history. She believed that our unconscious urges still animate the world. Therefore she wanted to access and interpret the primal beginning of civilisation; a time where difference of nationality, ideology, race and ethnicity did not yet exist. Her awareness of the individual’s place in time and history

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<sup>18</sup> Olga M. Viso. *Ana Mendieta - Earth Body*. Hatje Cantz 2004, p25

<sup>19</sup> Guy Brett: “One Energy” *Ana Mendieta – Earth Body*. Edited by: Olga M. Viso. Hatje Cantz, 2004, p194. Nancy Spero “Tracing Ana Mendieta” *Artforum* 30 no.8 (April 1992): 77.

<sup>20</sup> University of Southern California, [http://www.usc.edu/dept/comp-lit/biographies/fc\\_bio\\_orenstein.html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/comp-lit/biographies/fc_bio_orenstein.html), Feb 17th, 2008

<sup>21</sup> Gloria Feman Orenstein: “Recovering Her Story: Feminist Artists Reclaim the Great Goddess” *The Power of Feminist Art – The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*. Edited by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard. Harry N. Abrams, 1994



was supported by her wonder and respect for the equalizing forces of nature.<sup>22</sup> For me this means that she wanted to examine and express our universality as human beings through her body. She wrote in the early 1980s: “My art is grounded on the belief in one universal energy which runs through everything: from insect to man, from man to spectre, from spectre to plant, from plant to galaxy,”<sup>23</sup>



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One of the reasons that I find painting so interesting is the possibility to get access to my ancestors through my body. I am curious what they have to tell. Sometimes I use help from listening and dancing to: folk music of Transylvania<sup>25</sup> (my roots), ethnic music in general and Mari Boine especially<sup>26</sup>. I am also interested not only in the individual's place in time and history but also about its future. Painting satisfies and nurtures my curiosity. When I look inside I find universal truths.

<sup>22</sup> Olga M. Viso. *Ana Mendieta - Earth Body*. Hatje Cantz 2004, p35

<sup>23</sup> Ibid: Irit Rogoff, “Gossip as testimony: a postmodern signature” Edited by Giselda Pollock, *Generations and Geographics in the visual arts: Feminist Readings*, Routledge, 1996, p64

<sup>24</sup> Maria Edit Antal, *Back and Forth*, Oil and egg oil tempera on canvas, 2007, Private collection

<sup>25</sup> Muzsikás. (1993). Széki Magyar, a’ Misié’ Mezőség. *Dúdoltam én: Sebestyén Márta*. [CD] Hungary: Hungaroton Records KFT

<sup>26</sup> Mari Boine. (1995) Maid Aiggot Muinna Eallin. *Leahkstin – Unfolding*. [CD]

Mendieta studied painting at the University of Iowa in late 1960s. Her teacher Hans Breder <sup>27</sup> (1935-) recommended the writings of the anthropologist Carlos Castaneda in early 1970s. Castaneda's tales of his apprenticeship with a Yaqui indian sorcerer from the Sonora desert of Mexico, encouraged artists and intellectuals to work outside conventional modes of perception, with old Indian ways to communicate with nature and the spirit worlds.<sup>28</sup>

Earth is a living being, the Mexican Shaman Don Juan said to Castaneda. The old seers saw that the earth has a cocoon of light just as living beings have. The earth is a sentient being subjected to the same force as we are. The earth is the ultimate source of everything that we are.



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Castaneda's description of his connection to earth I relate to when I dance and I am taking this awareness into my painting process. My energetic roots connecting to earth is essential for my paintings. From earth I get the nourishment to relax. By relaxing I am opening up for the fire, to burn through me touching the canvas to merge with it.

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<sup>27</sup> Breder was a German artist and refugee, particularly interested in, ritual-based Viennese Actionists. He founded the Intermedia Program at the University of Iowa.

Olga M. Viso. *Ana Mendieta - Earth Body*. Hatje Cantz 2004, p40-41

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 38-41,49

<sup>29</sup> Ana Mendieta, *Untitled*, Lifetime black-and -white photograph, 1980, Rodale Family Collection, (Amana, Iowa)

Then I am both my body and the canvas, observing both at the same time. What you see as the painting is a work of fire. My dancing is keeping my fire alive. Drawing and painting helps me to receive my environment and deepens my dance.

Ana Mendieta was one of the land artists. She worked with earth, fire and death.

*Untitled* (Silueta Series, Iowa), 1978 represents a volcano. She lit a large tree stump at Old Man's Creek, Iowa. She returned to this site several times that summer adding ribbons and hay to the charred surface of the stump.<sup>30</sup> She sought spirituality and rituals for healing and for inspiration in her art.



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Mendieta often raised her arms upwards in her art; like the classical goddess pose. *Tree of life*, 1976 at Old Man's Creek, Iowa is one of these works. She covered herself with mud appearing Daphne-like in union with the tree. The empowering image of the goddess with arms upraised was embraced by feminist artists in the 1970s.

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<sup>30</sup> Olga M. Viso. *Ana Mendieta - Earth Body*. Hatje Cantz, 2004, p73

<sup>31</sup> Ana Mendieta, *Untitled* (Silueta Series. Iowa), 1978, 35mm colour slide,





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Ana Mendieta also danced. Viso writes in *Earth Body* that she had the opportunity to perform with experimental theater and opera director Robert Wilson in 1970 and to learn dance exercises for performance with Elaine Summers 1971, founder of Experimental Intermedia in New York, in 1973.<sup>33</sup>

### **Gestalt Therapy and the body**

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<sup>32</sup> Ana Mendieta, *Tree of life*, Lifetime colour photograph, 1976, Collection Raquelín Mendieta Family Trust

<sup>33</sup> Olga M. Viso. *Ana Mendieta - Earth Body*. Hatje Cantz 2004, s43

When Gabrielle Roth developed the 5 Rhythms in the 1960s, she met Fritz Perls, one of the founders of gestalt therapy, at Esalen Institute, Big Sur in California. Perls work uprooted therapy from the past and planted it in the now. In her writings Roth says about gestalt therapy: “The past is now; the future is now. Live it.”<sup>34</sup> Fritz Perls, father of gestalt therapy loved dancers, and he invited Roth to teach movement to his gestalt therapy group. Gestalt therapy is influenced by physics, Eastern religion, existential phenomenology, gestalt psychology, psychoanalysis, theatrical performance, systems and field theory. It is part of a continuum moving from the works of Freud. The objective of Gestalt Therapy, is to enable the client to become more fully and creatively alive and to be free from the blocks and unfinished issues that may diminish optimum satisfaction, fulfillment, and growth.<sup>35</sup> Mignon Nixon, professor at Courtauld institute of Art writes in *Fantastic Reality - Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art* that surrealists communicated rigid poses of the woman as fetish where as Bourgeois gives active gestures of the subject who lives in and through her body.<sup>36</sup> For psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1882-1960), Nixon continues, reality is the view of the world that comes with integration. Klein says that a schizophrenic out for a walk is better off than a neurotic lying on the analyst’s couch. Out for a walk connects bodily sensation into the physical world and becomes a part of it. Rather than adapt to reality, the schizophrenic hooks up with it, plugs into reality and from there begins producing it her/himself. Gabrielle Roth describes a period when she worked with schizophrenics in a State Hospital. In U.S. She had around 30 people each in his or her own reality with no contact with each other. “How can I teach these people to dance” she asked. “No one is home in their bodies. Barely breathing, ...slumping sacks of flesh”.<sup>37</sup> She surrendered to the fact that she could not teach them to dance, only to serve them in seducing them into moving, to put their individual realities into motion so that they would make up their own steps. She entered their worlds and began to choreograph their fantasies. Soon they all were moving acting out each others trips.

## Hysteria and mania

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<sup>34</sup> Gabrielle Roth, *Maps to ecstasy—a healing journey for the untamed spirit*, 1998, p16

<sup>35</sup> Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestalt\\_therapy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestalt_therapy), Feb 14th 2008

<sup>36</sup> Mignon Nixon: *Fantastic Reality--Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2005, p67

<sup>37</sup> Gabrielle Roth, *Maps to ecstasy—a healing journey for the untamed spirit*, 1998, p8



Hysteria is a state of mind caused by unmanagable fear. This state of mind characterizes loss of self-control due to overwhelming fear.<sup>38</sup> Historically it is seen as a feminine disorder, a disabling illness of women. In psychoanalysis hysteria comes from infantile psychosexual development in childhood.<sup>39</sup> The child is made responsible of the parent. The parent dominates the child to take care of him which brings insecurity/fear in family life and causes a helpless passivity in the child.<sup>40</sup> The responsibility over parents can also turn into mania, obsessively taking care of the parents needs. The child becomes a victim of the infantile helplessness of the parents. Mania is a sense of omnipotence for controlling objects to prevent them from harm and is commonly characterized as hyperactivity.<sup>41</sup> Hysteria and mania are different sides of the same core and one can replace the other. They are manifestations of dysfunctionality of relationships in family life which is inherited through the ancestral lines.<sup>42</sup>

Hyperactivity can be described in the words of an Indian friend to Jung: “We don’t understand the whites; they are always wanting something – always restless – always looking for something. What is it? We don’t know. We can’t understand them. They have such sharp noses, such thin, cruel lips, such lines in their faces. We think they are all crazy.”<sup>43</sup>

Feminism has seen hysteria as a rebelling disorder against patriarchal oppression towards women throughout history.<sup>44</sup> Artists in the late 1960’s and throughout 1980’s recovered from hysteria as a feministic protest. They accepted hysteria coming from femininity and reconstructed historical oppressive descriptions of women hysterics into heroines rebelling against patriarchy<sup>45</sup>. Feminists in the 1970s stated that our murderous

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<sup>38</sup> Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hysteria>, Feb 14 2008

<sup>39</sup> Elaine Showalter: “Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender” *Hysteria Beyond Freud*. Sander L. Gilman, Helen King, Roy Porter, and G. S. Rousseau University of California Press. 1993, p 286-287

<sup>40</sup> Mignon Nixon: *Fantastic Reality--Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2005, p 31, 48,

<sup>41</sup> Mignon Nixon: *Fantastic Reality - Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2005, p 104, 105

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 43

<sup>43</sup> C. G Jung: *Modern man in search of a soul*. Kegan Paul, trench, Trubner & CO. LTD. 1933, p246

<sup>44</sup> Elaine Showalter: “Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender” *Hysteria Beyond Freud*. Sander L. Gilman, Helen King, Roy Porter, and G. S. Rousseau University of California Press. 1993, p 286

<sup>45</sup> Mignon Nixon: *Fantastic Reality - Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2005, p50

anger at our children is a tragic symptom of patriarchal culture's "mind –body split" a violence that separates culture, history, and politics from the domain of love and the body where the mother carries, and tends her children.<sup>46</sup>

*Maman* 1999, is about the maternal anger. Bourgeois way of seeing maternal anger is not so much caused by the patriarchal pathology. The difficulties lies more in the blindness of patriarchal culture of these feelings which causes distortion of aggressive fantasy into murderous rage and even murder. And then Bourgeois points also out that the patriarchal prohibition of maternal ambivalence is being itself the mother of ambivalence.<sup>47</sup> This is a wonderful way of taking your power back. Instead of choosing to be a victim of oppression we can examine our part in it.



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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p274

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p274-276

Louise Bourgeois, *Maman*, Steel and Marble, 1999, Private collection

Feminism developed in dialogue with psychoanalysis. Surrealism was its beginning and differs from it. Surrealism identified with hysteria as the other sex, looking from a male point of view. Feminism worked hysteria as its own wanting to recover from the patriarchal mother who upholds the law; the instrument of her own oppression, to be the playful mother and not the dutiful daughter who takes on the hysteria of the father, but the one who overcomes the perversions of these responsibilities.<sup>52</sup>

This is my point of view of recovery as a student of the 5 Rhythms. I build movement on a fundamental support from mother earth, nourishing, relaxing, accepting in her fluidity. Without the mother element the movement becomes controlling and oppressive towards the body, which is the shadow element of the father fire. Shadow of the mother is inertia. In order to be playful we need the element of the nurturing father in the discussion above. The father is: clarity, intent, forward or outward movement, the spirit, like fire. And without the mother, the father is helplessly uprooted, lost in fear and restlessness. Without the father the mother doesn't get anywhere. Playfulness comes from a balance between mother and father. The need for this balance is necessary in both men and women for wholeness.<sup>53</sup>

Hysteria and mania are products of feelings damned up or drained. According to Jung the task is to open up the drainage canals by spirituality: connecting to the mother of us all: the earth, and to the father of us all: God, spirit, fire. He said that it is the only way to break the spell that binds us to the original sin of the perpetuation of the family situation.<sup>54</sup> Don Juan Matus says to Castaneda that what is wrong is man's ignorance of and disregard of his magical nature. He says that we are masterful magicians and our magic is fixing ourselves to be stuck on all levels. Infants are fluid and children still have fluidity. We educate fluidity out of them. This is culture and it is chosen by our ancestors. He says that when inner silence is attained we become fluid again. For Jung

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<sup>52</sup> Mignon Nixon: *Fantastic Reality--Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2005, p52, 67

<sup>53</sup> C. G Jung: *Modern man in search of a soul*. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & CO. LTD. 1933, p141.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p140

“to be wholly of the present, means to be fully conscious of one’s existence as a man, it requires the most intensive and extensive consciousness with a minimum of unconsciousness.”<sup>55</sup> Mexican Indian shamans believe that awareness always comes from outside ourselves. The process of awareness is emanations merging with what is inside us. If we let this happen, we become what we really are—fluid, forever in motion, eternal. The degree of awareness of every individual being depends on the degree to which it is capable of letting the pressure of the emanations carry it.<sup>56</sup>

Louise Bourgeois is recovering through her art. *Precious Liquids* is an installation she presented in Documenta IX in Kassel 1992. She uses a cedarwood watertower, from the roofs of New York. The cylinder wood is a room. A cast iron-bed is surrounded by metal upright stands with glass vessels. Opposite the bed there is a large man’s coat enclosing a little girls dress and a cushion embroidered with the words ‘Merci-Merci’ There are two rubber spheres on each side of the coat. On the tower you can read “Art is a Guaranty of Sanity”<sup>57</sup> and she explains:

“Precious Liquids relates to a girl who grows up to discover passion instead of terror. She stops being frightened and experiences passion. Glass becomes a metaphor for muscles. It represents the subtlety of emotions, the organic yet unstable nature of mechanism. When the body’s muscles relax and un-tense, a liquid is produced. Intense emotions become a material liquid, triggering the secretion of precious liquids. Thus when you allow yourself to weep, the tears mark the end of suffering, and when perspiration occurs on your back due to state of apprehension, it indicates mastery and resolution of the fear. The secretion of the fluids can be intensely pleasurable”<sup>58</sup>

I read Bourgeois text above when visiting her show in Tate Modern in December 2007. It was the day after a week-long Movement Medicine workshop in Devon, UK that I

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p227

<sup>56</sup> Carlos Castaneda, *The Fire From Within*, Simon & Schuster, 1984, p132-133

<sup>57</sup> Frances Morris: *Louise Bourgeois*. Tate, 2007, p220

<sup>58</sup> Frances Morris, *Louise Bourgeois*, Tate, 2007, p223, Vincent Honoré: *Pagé and Parent*. 1995, p 197



participated in. Reading these words I shivered. This was a description of my dancing process.



59

## Dancing mania

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<sup>59</sup> Louise Bourgeois. *Precious Liquids*, installation, 1992, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

Looking for relations between hysteria and mania on Google I found “Dancing mania” or dancing madness, the first time recorded in thirteenth century and held on for 400 years in southern Europe. In twentieth century it was described as an epidemic “central nervous system disorder” characterized by irregular jerking movements. Psychiatrists describe this as “mass hysterical reaction” and claim that most of them that got affected were women. This spirited dance was called tarantism in Italy. Early medicine theorized the dance to be an effect of spider bites of the tarantula. (It is interesting to see Louise Bourgeois *Mamal*, 1999 and the maternal ambiguity in this context.) It is said that the dancers performed repetitive fast movements escalating in intensity. These performances allowed the dancers to express social behaviour that was not allowed at other times. The dance kept on for hours and days and sometimes for weeks. The dance was offered to St. Vitus and often ended in chapels and shrines to this saint<sup>60</sup>. Robert E Bartholomew, sociologist at The James Cook University, Queensland, Australia says:

Social scientists typify victims as females who were maladjusted, deviant, irrational, or mentally disturbed. These activities were typically accompanied by symptoms similar to tarantism, including screaming, hallucinations, convulsive movements, chest pains, hyperventilation, crude sexual gestures and outright intercourse.<sup>61</sup>

Psychological writings about dancing mania state, that it occurred spontaneously with participants unable to control their actions, while Bartholomew found out that they were not spontaneous but highly structured religious activities with Greek and Roman ritualistic elements. The dancers were pilgrims seeking out church-yard’s and shrines to end 4 - 5 day rituals in. They were Celts from Bohemia, a part of Czech Republic and also Hungarians, Polish, Austrians, and Germans and women were not overrepresented.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Robert E. Bartholomew: “Rethinking the Dancing Mania.” *Skeptical Inquirer*. 4 vol. 24., 2000, <http://csicop.org/si/2000-07/dancing-mania.html> *Skeptical Inquirer* Magazine, <http://csicop.org/> Feb 14 2008

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

I find it quite interesting that these ritualistic dancing performances were viewed by psychology to be danced by maniacs and hysterics. At some point I agree, and I don't think that these dancers were more manic or hysteric than common people, rather the opposite: more alive and healthy. Medical historians like Henry Sigerist (1891-1957)<sup>63</sup> and George Mora (1923- )<sup>64</sup> wrote about participants working themselves into "...physical and mental disturbance in order to experience cathartic reactions to intolerable social conditions."<sup>65</sup> Catharsis or exorcism is healing and used, by Louise Bourgeois: "Exorcism is healthy...to burn in order to heal. ...That's my art. I'm good at it".<sup>66</sup> It is spiritual rebirth and is allowing you for example to mourn a loss over and over again. Melanie Klein said that when you allow yourself to mourn you realize that the loss is not the end of the world.<sup>67</sup>

Maison Vide is an abandoned house on Staten Island Bourgeois bought 1981 for her son Michael who died in 1990. He never occupied the house. Bourgeois kept it empty and claimed it a sculpture. After her son died she realized its different significances, naming it Maison Vide, a title she had earlier used for one of her personages. She says that it is a beautiful house but without a soul. The soul is gone and your are left with an empty house, which is very painful she says. The house looks beautiful from the outside, right and strong, but inside it is deserted like it has abandoned itself.<sup>68</sup>

## Detachment

I know that it is important to have a grounded, detached part of your self in catharsis or exorcism for it to be healing. Working with my hands, with physical material is grounding because I have the sense of touch. It is easier for me to space out when painting, drawing or writing because then I need to meditate on the sense of touch.

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<sup>63</sup> "medicine is the study and application of biology in a matrix that is at once historical, social, political, economic, and cultural" PubMed Central,

<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1447692>, Feb 14<sup>th</sup> 2008

<sup>64</sup> "Medical Director of the Astor Home and Clinics for Children, Rhinebeck, N.Y., and Research Associate in the Department of the History of Science and Medicine at Yale University. He is the co-editor of *Psychiatry and Its History* (1970)" Vico and Contemporary Thought – 2, <http://www.newschool.edu/centers/socres/vol43/issue434.htm#Mora>, Feb 14<sup>th</sup> 2008

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> Frances Morris: *Louise Bourgeois*. Tate, 2007, p118

<sup>67</sup> Mignon Nixon: *Fantastic Reality--Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. 2005, p148

<sup>68</sup> Frances Morris: *Louise Bourgeois*. Tate, 2007, p 170

Marina Abramović gives a good description of balance between ground and space with Maria Callas, the opera Diva: “When you sing you have to be absolutely sure that you have one part of your brain completely loose and the other part in total control. And you have to balance these two things”<sup>69</sup> To describe this in another way, I would like to share a new relationship with water that I experienced the night before I visited Bourgeois show at Tate Modern in December 2007.

I have always feared water, feared drowning. After a week-long intensive dance workshop I found a warm swimming-pool deep enough that I could not touch the ground. I moved around in the pool fighting to keep my head above water. I felt my fearful stiff movements trying to control me not to drown. I remembered how I was relaxing into the fear when dancing earlier in the week, focusing on connecting with the earth and with the relaxed fire of anger. I applied that knowledge into my movements. I was fire moving water. During the dance workshop we practiced setting boundaries in relaxation, as in martial arts and the way fire burns. Fire is fluid/relaxed and sharp at the same time. My body started to set relaxed and sharp boundaries with water, boundaries of not drowning. I took responsibility for myself in relationship with water in a fluid and non tense way. My fear of drowning transformed from a super controlling panicking stiff victimization into a focused directing loving relationship with water. Fear turned into focused loving anger. I felt that water was my sculpting material which I was relaxingly and continuously moving. I found myself playing with it. I was paying attention to water's qualities which inspired me to play. The freedom made me feel like I was flying in liquid air, air that is thicker than air. I sensed how every movement I made affected the water and my thoughts wandered to my day to day life. The way I affect water must be similar to how my movements affect my environment. It is just more obvious in water. Setting relaxed focused boundaries in my day to day life is a loving relationship with it. It is pure joy and once again earth comes in. It is through earth that I relax. It is on her that I rest. Without conscious connection with her I panic or manic.

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<sup>69</sup> Marina Abramovic: *Marina Abramovic – Cleaning the House*. Academy Editions. 1995, p 67



My relationship with painting is similar to water. I prepare the canvases with care. I see them as my skin; my physical body, moving the paint; like I move water, in all directions back and forth in and out of history and infinity.



70

### **Why is fear a problem?**

Why is fear a problem? Jung said: “The ego is the place of fears but only so long as it has not returned to the “father” and the “mother” I.e, spirit and nature.” and “Human psyche is a whole which embraces consciousness, and is the mother of consciousness. The ego is ill for it is cut off from the whole, and has lost its connection with mankind as well as spirit.”<sup>71</sup> The ego becomes a victim of fear when it is cut off from the spirit.

Fear is a protective force that helps us to survive, therefore we fear death as a condition of living. Somewhere on our ancestral line the ego got disconnected from the whole and thereby attached itself to fear getting obsessed, controlled and trapped by it. The ego gets terrified of having to face pain, it believes that pain will kill it because pain hurts. It can not stand the fact that everything is in movement and of not knowing the unknown, the void, because it forgot the connection with it.

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<sup>70</sup> Maria Edit Antal, *Surrender*, Oil and eggtempera on canvas, 2007, Private collection

<sup>71</sup> C. G Jung: *Modern man in search of a soul*. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & CO. LTD. 1933, p141.

We need to practice courage to die to be able to live.<sup>72</sup> That courage we can gain by re-connecting with something greater than ourselves, a universal love in constant motion. Our sexual instincts, which Freud called libido is a force of connection because libido extends beyond the individual seeking out relationship with an other. The ego does not like this because it threatens its existence and self-respect. It denies the libido but the libido is a moving force that can not be stopped and therefore takes on rebelling forms like hysteria or mania. Libido, Freud said, is all capacity of love, all erotic activity. For complete health it is important for the libido to be in motion; going from the inside to the outside and back again.<sup>73</sup> The way our ego manipulates the libido comes from the perpetual family situation which means that we inherit it from our ancestors. To free the libido, Freud said we need to make friends with the necessity of dying.<sup>74</sup> Jung claimed that we continuously forget the meaning of divine procreation. For thousands of years initiation rites have taught spiritual rebirth. Forgetting this leads to a sterilizing ego and a rebelling libido that takes you on a journey of neurotic decay and embitterment<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> Sigmund Freud: *On Creativity and the Unconscious, Papers on the Psychology of Art, Literature, Love, Religion*. Harper Torchbook. 1958. p75

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p2-8

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p75

<sup>75</sup> C. G Jung: *Modern man in search of a soul*. Kegan Paul, trench, Trubner & CO. LTD. 1933,p142

### **Fear is not a problem**

Fear is not a problem. It is the way we deal with fear that is. It is good to have fear. Fear sharpens our awareness. We get ready for fight or flight. It is an energy that can be used benefiting us when we master it. By not accepting it, not wanting it, we are choosing to become slaves rather than masters of it. In one way it is easier, lazier, and in the other way it brings us great suffering. It is not easy. Somehow we rather choose suffering instead of pain because we know what suffering is and we hardly know what pain is. We take painkillers, drugs, alcohol and engaging ourselves in soft addictions to escape pain. My question is do we afford suffering?



76

“In the face of the unknown, man is adventurous. It is a quality of the unknown to give a sense of hope and happiness... man is at, his best in the face of the unknown”<sup>77</sup>.

Don Juan Matus

### **Painting and movement**

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<sup>76</sup> Louise Bourgeois, *Untitled (I have Been to hell and Back)*, Embroidered Handkerchief, 1996, Private collection

<sup>77</sup> Carlos Castaneda, *The Fire From Within*, Simon & Schuster, 1984. p33

I am interested in the sculptural element of thick oil paint.  
I am interested in the physicality of painting.  
I am interested in the fluidity of tempera.  
I am interested in the human body and extatic dance.  
I am interested in figure and abstraction.  
I am interested in alchemy, the transformative power of art.  
I am interested in emotional healing.  
I am interested in deepening relationships with myself and my environment.  
I am interested in serenity, a calm center.

I paint because I like to. I work with colors, movements and areas of the painting that I feel like working with. When I don't like something, I pay attention to it and accept what is there and instead of trying to "fix" it I focus on what I want to do rather than on what I don't want to. It is as a kind of neutral state of being, being aware with an optimistic mind.

I am a student of Movement Medicine and the 5 Rhythms, I dance as therapy<sup>78</sup>. My dancing practice is closely connected to my painting in its physicality, and improvisation. I am finding out who I am, a constant observer and being aware. For me the main difference between painting and dancing is time. Dancing has a strong quality of here and now. It is affecting both the past and the future and in painting, past and future is much more present in terms of vision of the future and the past. For me dancing and painting is in symbiosis, a kind of give and take relationship. With painting I want to communicate publicly. Dancing is private. Due to the privacy of my dance I found it important to express it in words here.

My paintings are in motion. Time is going back and forth. Some parts are merging and others are disappearing. There is a play between abstraction and figure; visualising a borderline between: past, reality, the virtual and illusion. What is real? Often what feels real can be something different from the experience. What is this? What am I doing? What is next? There is always a way to something else.

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<sup>78</sup>School of Movement Medicine, <http://www.schoolofmovementmedicine.com/>, Gabrielle Roth, <http://www.gabrielleroth.com/>, Feb 14<sup>th</sup> 2008





79

I want to nourish the fire inside.

Maria Edit Antal

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<sup>79</sup> Maria Edit Antal, *Opening*, Oil and egg oiltempera on canvas, 2007, Private collection

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