

Louise Bourgeois, Freud's Daughter

Selected Writings

401. Louise Bourgeois, c. 1962. Handwritten in red, blue, and black ink on off-white paper. LB-0514.

I want to get
I want to keep
I want to say.
I want to tell
I want to see
I want to learn
I want to know
I want to know
I want to control
I want to hold
I want to feel
I want to remember
I want to go
I want to want
I want to find
I want to finish
I want to forget
I want to get rid of
I want to clean
I want to be good
I want to be better
I want to do it
I want to show
I want to out do
I want to top it
I want to accomplish
 mastery
I want the means to get
I want the tools
I want mastery
I want omnipotence
I want to manipulate
I want to be an *acrobat*
I want to be healthy
I want to be strong

I want to be clever
I want to please
I want to be good
I want to be good at
I want it now
I want it this minute
 not tomorrow.
I want to make it
 appear
like a fairy with
a wand
I say: there and there it is
I want to go everywhere
I want to turn around
 the table
I want to turn around
 people
understand them
anticipate them
fool them
show them as fools
I want them to like
me and to tell me
that I am O.K.
I want to climb over the
fence sit on top of the
neighboring roof and
look around and see
everything and
then I want to go
back to my lair and
I want to close my door
then I want to go out
again and look at
everything.

but I know that.
I can not see
I cannot learn
I can never know
I cannot control
I cannot hold
I may not feel
I am unable to remember

I am not supposed to go
It is bad to want
I never find
I will not finish
I can not forget
Do you want to get rid of
You never clean
You do not want to clean
You can not be good
You get worse + worse
You are unable to do it
What do you have to show
You will not out do it
You accomplish nothing

then, of course, you despair

402. Louise Bourgeois, 29 January 1958. Handwritten in pencil on graph paper. LB-0272.

I do not have to live in an empty world
world of vacuum (Marie Bonaparte) I can create
my own artist world of omnipotence + fantasy
I have to control space because I cannot
stand emptiness

emptiness is a space the edge of which you do
not know and you are not sure of – like falling
into space or like being dizzy.

*This question of space is perhaps simply
based on the fear of falling –*

*When Pierre was born Maman said – Louise got
up and she walked. Maybe I was just
afraid to fall at that moment – Vertigo and
great fear on balconies (roof at 18th St)*

Pull yourself together. Do not try several things
just so that one will pull you away from the
one before – Be modest and tight knitted
*Always go back to the work you have on hand –
Perfect and revisit again.*

403. Louise Bourgeois, c. 1958. Handwritten in blue ink on off-white paper. LB-0513.

*I was always conscious of a
possibility of silence falling like the
lid of a tomb and engulfing me
for ever and ever.*

*The silence invaded the room
and I was afraid to hear my heart
beat. this danger was coming from within
and that only this incessant flow of
words could keep it at bay if not
master it*

*to hear chaos, a cascade –
the Marne locks – Beethoven
a river that carries
rocks and trees*

*The thunder rolling
by.*

404. Louise Bourgeois, c. 1958. Handwritten in blue and red ink on graph paper. LB-0110.

How much violence is there in you today –
how should I know, how can I possibly
find out?

there are ways.

Do you feel like cleaning, changing,
improving, repairing things around you
Do you have a strong desire to do some
thing, to go and buy something.

Do you have an interest that you did
not have yesterday, what is new today
what have you abandoned that
interested you yesterday or last week
what loathing do you have today –
what makes today a new day

*method of comparison of check of test
of cross-checking of small things.*

How are you going to dress, in the sadness and
modesty of black, in the youthful and triumphant
white, in your blue and vivid red-orange

*This stream of consciousness, like a
river always itself and always different
such particles, such little colors
a few little pebbles, a few grains of
sand, a few bits of mud, a few branches, a few
flowers, a few fish today warm
yesterday icy and tomorrow fresh
You must recognize what you have already seen
to get used to it, to use it as best you can.*

*Do not fear what you find that is
new do not underestimate it but do
not overestimate it either*

405. Louise Bourgeois, c. 1964. Handwritten in pencil on off-white paper from a "Yale Registry for Nurses" notepad. LB-0479.

floating mattress from an
ad (wonderful feeling
of *comfort*)
Robert + I are in bed
we are floating on the
floating mattress – I
smile to myself and
touch him to see if he
does float – Turning my
head to look at him, I
discover that he does
float lightly but does
not talk or move –
then I suddenly discover
that he is dead –
Instead of calling for
help I think that
I am going to get a
good look at it
I *dive* under water
and am surprised, very
(surprised, almost
shocked to realize that
he is not straight,
that is to say horizontal
like a floating
boat but hanging
down from the
shoulder and upper
torso. very specially
his arms are hanging
down – film
of a murder
the corpse is dumped
in the water but
comes back to the
surface in that position,
probably because
of the air in the lungs –
There is no fear of
being accused.

fear appears after
the dream
 he went dead
 on me
because I don't excite him
 any more
also sad and a little disillusioned.

407. Louise Bourgeois, c. 1964. Handwritten in blue ink in ruled paper. LB-0104.

*To enjoy one's home
(To enjoy oneself in short
I like Robert
I do not like so and so)
enjoy: order*

*the polish of a surface
the polish of a sentence
The form of a piece
of a statue
of a garment
of a hairstyle*

*the resolution of a problem
What do we mean by: transform chaos into order
find sense out of nonsense.
order out of disorder
please out of displeasure, harmony out of suffering
It all comes down to this the artist lives at this level making life out of
death
forgiveness out of rancor and revenge.*

*I awake to revenge, aggression, rage and
chaos. which make me violent and frighten me. It makes me not
know where I am anymore and I attack right and left
just to feel myself "live" and to act (Mrs. Sullivan)
Like at the Grévin museum one goes from one hell
to the other. How many hells do I have in my name
to count them and to differentiate one from the other*

408. Louise Bourgeois, 17 September 1959. Handwritten in blue ink on off-white paper. LB-0124.

*After Maman's death, I started to be afraid
to leave the house especially after lunch
Sometimes I was thinking that if someone were putting
poison in her food she would be out like
a light – Then I started to forbid people to
cook for her, also I mounted guard and I was afraid
that people would hurt her, after she was dead I said
that at least she would not suffer any more. I was definitely
relieved by her death and I put myself in her bed
and forbade people to come in her room after mother's
death I felt lighter too and kept her *memory* alive
in the children's memory as an atonement.*

409. Louise Bourgeois, 15 January 1959. Handwritten in gray-black ink on off-white paper. LB-0257.

*Before falling asleep I read Sartre 10PM
The Wall and The Room
I cannot fall asleep I lie
awake until 2:30. then take
an aspirin. I dream of a family
scene where life is calm The
mother is very tall corseted formidable
but nothing unpleasant ever
occurred –
All of a sudden a person (servant
type asks do you know what
a symbol is – it is something that
pretends to be something else.
You know this woman that you call your
mother – she really is “Death” her
body is like a wicker basket
underneath her dress – I am atrociously
flabbergasted to have lived so long
without knowing and Thank God without
being in conflict with her – I am so
frightened in retrospect the entire next
day that I rush through
all the errands that Robt has asked me
to run pay all the checks I am
afraid to be at fault – I am
also sad and a little disillusioned.*

410. Louise Bourgeois, 3 December 1951. Typewritten in black ink on off-white paper. 11 x 8 ½ in. LB-0454.

Very very tired day because of the dream.

That dream about my mother was a horror I am anxious to pin it down where can it come from and what can it mean,

I dreamt that I was going to find something in a dream that the fight was going to be terrific and that Robert had (at any cost) to get the meaning. there is a secret and I cannot get at it. I want to reach it.

I am out to pry it The *anxiety* is great because I know that I will not succeed. Robert who has constantly let me down (see previous day)

Robert is the only person of which I have the help because the revelation is to come during the night through the dream. I am prepared

facing Robert who is asleep when the dream comes I am going to pound on his chest with my fists and cry : there it is catch it. every

thing is set. the *anxiety* is horrible. and it comes: it is my mother

I call come come and I pound on Robert she is going away. and he does not wake up. Then in a surhuman effort knowing that he fails to answer

I call her and try to reach her again, and suddenly I reach a climax and satisfaction in a long kiss. I am surprised to see that I wanted

it. and she leaves in my mouth an object like an almond. which was in her mouth. I take it out in my fingers and think that is strange, I

notice that it does not move. I notice also that it is hard enough

to resist the pressure of even my thumb nail. "it is harder than soap

I think that marble is harder. Then I want to put it away for examination."

maybe it is not the truth but it may be a form of truth,

you know so little, you have to try everything you can to learn how

to read around you At a level above mother and the almond. I am worried

about R. not hearing and answering the signal. I am going to lose my

truth. now that I hold it, I am going to lose it. I pound again on his

chest howling: *maman. maman.* this time again I am exhausted when I

force myself to hear. my own voice wakes me up. Robert actually

hears it and answers. From then on I talk without control but aloud.

411. Louise Bourgeois, 29 September 1955. Handwritten in pencil on ruled paper. LB-0131.

The wish to look, the wish to kill
the fear to be a killer, the fear to look –
ferry boat pronounced *boite*
boite container have a thing fit in
a container push down a thing to have
fit in a container something is too
big for the container – it needs force
to force it in the container. the salmon
in the can. how neatly and deadly
pressed it is, in that container.
the contained disappears from view, it
has been gotten rid of, it is as safely
out of the way as can be expected, it is
safely dead. a box as the instrument of the
killer because when people are killed they
are put in a box, when you see a box, you
see the dead – the container the contained or
the other way round, one does not go without
the other, the latter without the former
to each their box, to each their place, that
is the way you have order, *everything in*
its place, “*a place for everything, everything*
in its place” that is the way you have
peace, that is the way, you have silence

are not they going to be quiet, if they don't
I would like to put them each in a box
to have peace at last, that is why I like
the middle of the night. *the voices are*
silent, in cemeteries the voices
are silent. when the dead are dead
one can look at them without any fear
they do not spring up at you, *I like that*
the dead be dead, be surely
dead and no nonsense.

I wished death onto those who “threatened
me”

all I wanted was to look but I cannot be left
in peace doing my looking – all I want
at the club is visual material, the listening
is only a substitute for looking, even though

listening is better than nothing –
post no bills under pain of death
I feel better thank you, you know now
what is waiting for you, says the shy
killer (I don't like the word repressed it
smells of medicine cabinet) do say I did not
warn you. I like "understatement" jokes
the kiddie says: "let us play with the toy gun, ma"
the gun is loaded and kills the mother –

412. Louise Bourgeois, 18 April 1958. Handwritten in gray ink on ruled paper. LB-0487.

The dream of the pregnant Rabbit –

*In the hay I find a rabbit lying
on her side, somebody younger than me
maybe Alain accompanies me I tell him
another sick animal just like Champ
fleurette it is better not let yourself be taken
it is always more care and sometimes these
animals just die on you
next to her half hidden in the hay
the rabbit has made small bundles that she tries
in vain to hide. Alain
opens one and says = but it's a small one so
I say: ah hold its hind legs
we are going to help her deliver the others – He
says no I do not like that this disgusts me.
I say to myself: OK do not insist –
she delivers by herself I do not look
Alain says. OK she's empty now
thank god, anyway the last one is dead
before being born I say to myself it is just as well it
will be less complicated – anxiety
following day – same night erotic dreams
where Jacques & Robt are rivals the latter is
definitely more successful –
upon waking up recall of terror, constant and dull
of the fear of being impregnated by B. in the years
of the twenties after Henriette's wedding 1927. Need
to leave the house. Fear of getting closer to
look at him*

*The fear of verdigris dated from several years
before, epoch Suzanne Lamoine in the
beautiful and clean room small copper bed, red
ceramic tiles, golden yellow rug, velvet curtains, the
sunlight seeping through in the afternoon. around 1926.*

*with Sadie Statue with Kiss salon d'automne
The guilt of Oedipus came from Him not from society
It is the guilt toward the mother that torments me. I think
that I do not want to have Catherine Havens here
because she hated her mother – the proof is
that she does not want children.*

*Anxiety today is obnubulating I try
to be indulgent (a good mother to Michel and
to Jean-Louis. I also try to clean
(please the mother, appease her)
cleaning all day in the evening blunders ok. I
monitor anger hatred of the day after that
I cannot explain to myself. Tenacious insomnia. when
I manage to fall back to sleep in the large bed I
dream of the street intense sun traffic workers
accident a man (sickly) is "electrocuted" and
remains sitting + twisted in his body and in his face for
everybody to see – I go back + forth a dozen of
young men, Cannes, unaware of any danger
but not happy just busy The men are
gorgeous but I do not look at them. Suddenly
Jacques Jean a nail in the hand tries to
drive it in the top of my cranium. Very
swift I duck and say to myself "it is a frame up"
they want my hide. next time they will get me = awakening*

413. Louise Bourgeois, 2 January 1961. Handwritten in blue ink on ruled paper. LB-0053.

The Relearning of Dignity:

*I look from my bed at my slip – it is
made of natural black silk, bought at Lord and Taylor
about 2 months ago, it was an item imported
from France, which I liked because I had heard
so much about it, very expensive and the only one left
in this size it was reduced to a high price but reasonable
given its origin and quality.*

*So I bought it, it's an empire shape that
was fashionable when I was young at the time when I
wanted to imitate the ruinous elegance of my
engaged sister whose trousseaux were the object
of my sadness – today after having taken my
clothes off; my back towards the fire in the workshop,
I let my slip drop and I
simply picked it up and put it on a seat,
and then before "climbing" into my bed
I saw my pale blue silk blouse on
the lamp, I took it, looked for the strap
behind the neck to hang it up, I hang it
behind the main door of the workshop, hanging on
the plastic that protects the drawing: Easton 22/28.
this made me proud to have this nail there, at
that precise minute. There was dignity in the action
of putting my dress on the hanger where I hang
my coat as I come home – to place
one's shoes at the door so they get shined – My
mother and Madame Van Brabant had lots of
dignity. Robert also, it's an awareness of
the cleanliness and the order of the physical person
My furious moral dignity compensates for
my "crumpled physical dignity – I will have to
learn dignity to reread these lines
whose object perturbs me "because it is so
insignificant in appearance and so difficult
to treat for me because it is the
topic of some shame. I would like to be able to
love myself somewhat. It seems to me that
it is around this that tolerance of the other
starts. like a dumbo I think
I am going to cry – my garments and*

*especially my under garments always have been a
source of intolerable suffering because they
hide an intolerable wound –*

414. Louise Bourgeois, c. 1958. Handwritten in pencil on off-white paper torn from a pad. LB-0264.

*the phrase crystal clear comes up like a gem:
Perhaps the dead can be robbed
so I only have to kill him
the soldiers rob the boots of the dead.
and the birds eat the hearts and the
entrails of the dead. we eat
dead animals
phallic statues done with the butcher's
cleaver in antony to incorporate by
eating (the bread of Lowenfeld) the P
of the pig – my hunger of the past days
was a desire to castrate – waking up
this morning I have a craving ≠ loathing
for smoked pork tongue –
In a projection I accused Janet + Robert of
wanting to kill their mother because she costs
them too dearly the earlier the better
because we will not be able to pay
4 people per day much longer.
at the same time I identified with mother
victim of a homicidal entourage
the cannibals, the 2 bears who eat each other all up
a crumb children's stories have been
taken at face value ways to achieve my aim
to get a P*

*I act this out the doe at bay
verbally when the maximum of violence
and suffering is reached after Robert has
left the premises and I am out of
temptation – the truth springs up suddenly
the analysis becomes a deciphering after the fact
In the preceding dream:
I steal bread at Lowenfeld's but I
resist the temptation because if he came in
I would take the knife and kill him.
I resist the temptation to steal – or to kill
to steal*

415. Louise Bourgeois, c. 1959. Handwritten in black ink on off-white paper. LB-0230.

weekend: chestnut thorns on the outside
masochism = thorns on the inside.
guilt turned against self
return to the symbolism of the bottle
play at filling up bottles (hot water)
The box shaped like a small coffin.
story of the roasted child = a child
is killed – Finally the bottle
of hot water – The good little girl is
laid down in the small coffin. equivalent
to a masochism brought to
an expiatory suicide. early religious
training – later on For my mother I
will become a prostitute – aggression
against children – Rose's son whom
she had left with me – Because children are
what I love best expiatory victims
too During the weekend
I listen, unalarmed to the owl that
hoots (11am) about – The death which
I feared in the house was mine – I
tell myself but Louise you are not going to kill yourself
it is not necessary, you are strong enough now
to push suicide away –
this thought makes me snap out of a
nightmare. I am convinced
but Louise you don't owe anything to anyone
You no longer have debts, you do not have
debts – You can close the door and chase
claims from your conscience; You made yourself a victim
of your own masochism; You want to expiate
crimes that do not exist – You do not
have to die for Anyone –
This realization is a revelation. I
wished and feared death = why:
dead by poisoning. verdigris. Sex and
death. I always was afraid to die –
identification with a dead sister. Pyramus is
dead. Madam is dying, Madam is
dead by Bossuet – Death and the Woodcutter
Pyramus and Thisbe – Niederberger. it is

my turn

Monuments honoring soldiers dead for their homeland

Sailors in the deep blue sea. Victor Hugo

equation of Sex and Death It is never my

turn. I am afraid that it is my turn

Go on harping about it is never

my turn.

This equation of intercourse and death

should be possible to clarify for

several memories

to eat to kill to devour to come

to kill the mother to incorporate the father to take

his strength and to be killed as a punishment

416. Louise Bourgeois, 10 October 1958. Handwritten in pencil on ruled paper. LB-0449.

Atrocious Dream

travel in Switzerland and by train +
car – a suite of women including
Sadie with a fox fur from head to knee

*a tan fox around her neck sends me
into a rage and I reproach my father for having
made me unfit for married or professional
Life – he is shocked at my
mentioning sex and I realize that he
is unconscious of the harm he has done –
I feel sorry for him and ashamed of my
accusation
I turn to suicide in my need for being loved
at least that way I would make him
care – Champfleurette disguised as a little
very little yellow fox comes in, she is
dying – he says, Poor little animal it's too
bad – I think that maybe, I could obtain
as much sympathy as it does if I died
2 very bad days after this.
irritation painful + exciting at
the same time leads to the realization
of a desire to urinate standing up. The Penis
envy so very difficult to realize is
present. Proof –*

*What is Penis envy
How does one prove it*

417. Louise Bourgeois, September 1957. Handwritten in pencil on ruled paper. LB-0251.

*My life is a succession of
quarters of an hour which are spent
in a succession of square meters.
When I talk about the "midi" and mention
Cannes and Le Cannet, what do I mean
what do I know of Cannes; a thread on
a map. The trip from the Villa Marcel
to the high-school, a ribbon, the ride in
a city bus from the high-school by way of avenue
Carnot – the trip from Villa Marcel
to the top village plaza. Two
walks one along the canal
the other by way of the villa (of the Aga Khan) I cannot
remember its name.
at Cimiez, two or three slopes, and in
Aubusson one street, the slaughterhouse and the school –
You only occupy two soles
of the earth except when you sleep you
occupy – 6 feet – without height – and in
time you propel yourself from one minute to
the next and much slower from one hour
to the next and there are people who relive
all their life in only in a few seconds. I would
rather say that we live more by the intensity of our
affects than by time or by the space
in time or in space we exist above all
by our absence since we can only
be in one place at a time and we
are only in the same hour once*

*but with ourselves we are always
I've schlepped Louise Bourgeois around with me
for more than 40 years. every day brought
its wound and I carried my wounds cease
lessly, without remission like a hide
perforated beyond hope of repair. I am a
collection of wooden pearls never threaded – and
perfectly idiotic –*

418. Louise Bourgeois, c. April–May 1959. Handwritten in black ink on ruled paper. LB-0877.

*The gentle River
The Bièvre (Watteau)
The Deux Bièvres Odilon Redon
The Bièvre and the false Bièvre
The wells and their black water. the sound of a falling pebble
the morbid attraction of the vaulted cellars –
The tunnel full of water, the railroad tracks
La Creuse The deep river full of water
Its sound reverberating against the mountain
the walk in the river almost to the knees
Fear of the water and of descending into the cellar
The cellar full of water
La Marne at Vitry-le-Francois terrifying
Humidity enemy number 1.
The Floods in Sologne
the streets of Paris, wet, at night –
The Beaches in Trouville, Houlgate, Villers, Cabourg
Honfleur
The Beaches in the Midi no tide in Cannes
The trips at night, on the road
The glimmer of the day shephard's hour. dawn
behind the curtain of tulle
The lights of the night, the fire of the gate, the cars
at the Tuileries
The flowers in Deauville, in Antony, in the Luxembourg
The acacias in the woods, the mimosas in Nice, at the
croix des gardes
The Tangos of the post war, the military marches
The songs of Chevalier, Mistinguett, Marie Dubas,
Mignon Werther, tales of Hoffmann. Rip. Faust.
operettas Mme Angot, Philelie Dede Corneville
These recalls of ecstatic moments are always concerned
with physical environments and never with persons

The sound of a pebble falling into the black
and distant water of a well.
the unconscious memories that are reborn*