

Suely Rolnik Interview

When was younger I used to have a notebook, I was writing frequently, but I don't use them anymore, I only use them now for objective things, such as people's addresses and phone numbers because my memory is bad. Even when I read I don't write, I only take notes from books when I'm writing texts. I trust my body memory.

From my body memory I make my decisions. When I was living in Paris in the 70s I decided to come back to Brazil because of a contemporary singing lesson. One day the teacher asked me to sing a song by heart and I started to sing a song from Tropicalism, and then I just decided to come back. I do things like that all the time, I do something I don't know the reason for it and I only elaborate it later. The memory of affects guides me, I am more and more aware of that.

My relationship with theory is not an academic one, I really need to elaborate things, but for me rationality and intuition are not separable. I work with psychoanalysis, and that's pretty much going through things consciously, but usually I trust my body's decisions, I know it's the only thing I can trust, all the mistakes come from other places, from the ego, or from love. When I was young I was totally counter culture, but in a Jewish family, so I was Marxist, but I could never stand the traditional political way of being – all the work I've done is social and that's the link between revolution, and an ethic of life.

Freud was really political because the nineteenth century was the high point of the European objective tradition and he invented a device to confront that, subjectivity was out, and so he had a lot of courage to point to the unconscious, although I prefer body-knowing as a term. I have my own understanding of psychoanalysis, but of course I didn't invent it, and for me it is a very important practice, although its not just about practicing psychoanalysis only, but also about a way of understanding life, its not simply medical stuff, psychoanalysis, it's actually a way of being. It's so difficult to reactivate the experience of the body with words, to make the ego smaller and so it's a privilege to do that in the clinic. It is a very ethical and political tool. But my practice with patients is exactly the same as when I am giving classes or curating something, because everything I do is in the same level.

I want to talk about men. I will talk about my gay husbands, I have seven gay husbands but I'll talk about one, I've been with him since 2006, Marcelo,

he was the first. When we met we fell in love, not sexual love, because he is gay. I didn't feel this way with straight man it was much cooler, there was no sex so there was no confusion in my mind, my ego relaxed, I didn't make such big demands. With Marcelo, we travelled all around the world, it was the first time I felt totally loved. I think that being gay is something people invented in order to find another way of being together, one that excludes the model of the disgusting bourgeois couple. You must invent. In psychoanalysis its not about explaining, explanation has no power, so this is it, a performativity that invents a new way to be with men.

Now Marcello has a boyfriend. At the same time that I met Jose he also started having something with another guy. His boyfriend lives in Rio so we spend time together during the weekends. He's like my husband. We really care for each other, we share everything, if I must make a decision I go to him and he comes to me when he has to make a decision. I like to be with Marcelo having dinner with him as a man, not a friend.

My Colombian gay husband is the same age as I am he's in the theatre, so every year we manage to be together. Last year we met in Paris and we decided to have a honeymoon in Venice and do all those romantic stupid things. I bought a velvet cat in Venice to put in the middle of our bed, we were holding hands and everything but there was no sex.

I like Jose a lot, he's very masculine and he's not coming from a bourgeois background, he's from a poor Indian family, but he can't stand cigarettes, or laziness. We talk everyday, sometimes he comes to Sao Paulo, its great, but not all the time. Sleeping together is great but not all the time. I enjoy sex a lot and I don't say for me it doesn't matter, but sexuality is linked with the ego and I don't want that anymore. When I was really hysterical and I needed to feel wanted I used sex, I had a lot of sex around the world, it was liberating during the 60s but it was also very violent.

For me going to the bed it depends on seduction. When we first met Jose invited me to a symposium, I made a presentation and he picked me up and we spent a week totally enchanted with another but I didn't want to go to bed. That approach is so nice, maybe the old style is not so stupid, right? Then when he came to Sao Paulo we made love. It was like magic.

I have always had younger men. Maybe my generation is very stupid I don't like men my own age. There is this guy, he's 32 years old, we like each other but maybe he doesn't want to have sex with me, so I pay attention, in order not to force it. I'm 64, people of my age become ladies, I don't like that idea, but things are changing. When I was with Paulo, who is 20 years younger than me his mother was only 7 years older than I am but we had such a good relationship, I was part of the family in a totally normal way. The family still talks to me and the only man my father really appreciated was that guy. When I was with Paulo I really enjoyed this safe environment, I like the routine, I need that for my health, my body needs that, but I don't want to lose my freedom. For me it becomes a decision because the two things are impossible to be together.

Now I am becoming aware of the real timing of things. When I feel tired I manage to rest. I try to sleep eight hours. I pay attention to my energy. For me being tired is not something I can overcome anymore, it's a sign I am pushing my body out of reality and it has consequences. I discovered that in the end of 2007 when I decided I wanted to be in Brazil and dedicate my life to being here. I discovered I was totally sick, I couldn't even sit down I had to stay in bed, I had to stay 8 months like that. Afterwards I discovered I had to be very slow in the morning, that I need two hours before starting my day. I stay in my pyjamas I read the newspaper very slowly, and when I don't do that, my day turns out to be a disaster. I don't meditate but I'm always in meditation, I'm always trying to get back to reality and return to myself. This is very important in my life. For me the practice is essential, it is the most political issue for me. I discovered the Jewish tradition has this as its main point, in the Kabala for example, I discovered I was getting a very traditional thing back. For Kabala the first knowledge is to be in touch with body knowing, but its not only that, you must also perform it into daily life.