

The Situationist and The Analyst: (Mis)encounter Between Love and Finitude.

Performative Reading. Flamenco Dérive.¹

Hilda Fernandez*



Picture 1: Milagros Palacios, Katia Flores, Farnaz Ohadi, Katalina Cruz.

1 – Second Death

Entrance of all performers.

Midafternoon in Louvain, Belgium. The psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, stage left, makes an entrance. Bathing in the silky awareness of a legacy already built, he meets an adoring crowd, knowing well that he has crossed the second death, “the one that you can still set your sights on once death has occurred.”²

The intellectual heritage that will outlive him emphasizes the radicalism of the Freudian unconscious:

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- a) The human subject is split and determined by an already alienated discourse that often renders her impotent “to meet up anew with [her] own desire”;³
- b) Trapped in his narcissistic ego, the human animal identifies with an image that is outside himself and to which he devotes perpetual adoration and hostility;
- c) She carries a body charged with libido, a psychical energy of sexual nature that asserts life (Eros) but also death (Thanatos).

Lacan’s aim? To demonstrate that “regarding Ethics, Freud has what it takes . . . to measure up to an era like ours.”⁴ He desires to subvert, theoretically and practically, the alienation of the individual’s conscious reason; he aims at dismantling the fiction of the ego and challenging our willing submission to its built-in oppression. This analyst, as a passive insurgent, leads the subject to the battlefield of the ultimate revolution, the one with her very own self.

Lacan also warns us that with Freud we learn that social conditions and relations won’t undergo transformation unless we factor in the individual ways of enjoyment tied to sociocultural and political productions.

And, so, he arrives to his seminar, knowing well what Farnaz Ohadi sings to us from a Sufi poem: “they will put a couple of bricks on our tombs . . . [and] our bodies will turn to dirt so it may be used to make bricks for others' tombs.”⁵

You will die, one day. Universal number zero.

Performance: Procession, all performers.

2 – Beating Heart (Life)

Meanwhile the situationist AA (Anatole Atlas) drifts around and his heart is beating, waiting for the moment in which he will act as an ephemeral rapturous rupture to save the day from its insistent boredom.

He might want-to-be a “professional revolutionary in culture,” aiming no longer for high culture but for high sensations to question everyday life, already alienated and separated by cultural forms. He might be advocating to let freedom and play reign, to create a collective environment that assembles “the quality of a moment” differently to shake those assumptions that enslave us.⁶

Both psychoanalysis and the SI (Situationist International) are radically critical of contemporary subjectivities which they see as being captured by the imaginary: A young utopian meets an old skeptic bourgeois lecturer, an activist against an intellectual.

Independently of what they might have represented to each other, both want to shake the establishment by means of an act, but is dialogue ever possible? I invite you to think of this (mis)encounter, however uneven, brief and insignificant in its consequences, as the epitome of social interactions in which aggressiveness prevails.

The situationist, Debord commands, should overcome timidity. So, AA dares while his heart is beating.

You are alive, for now. Universal number one.

Dance by Katalina Cruz.



Picture 2: Yurie Kaneko, Farnaz Ohadi, Katalina Cruz, Hilda Fernandez and audience.

3 – (Mis)encounter (aggressiveness)

Let us see how the situation evolves:

The situationist claims that the audience will become the future managers of the system, and he demands that “If all the people here now were to join together and freely and authentically wanted to communicate, it’d be on a different basis, on a different perspective.” Lacan, amused, listens patiently until he warmly asks AA to sit peacefully so he can respond to him. Lacan then asks his incendiary question, “what did you want to do?”

The situationist, his heart beating, his voice trembling, is caught in the spectacle of academia.

Can we overcome narcissisms to pursue dialogue, seemingly impossible, to act in solidarity with others for a better possible world? Could we address conflict without denying aggressivity, but also without killing the other in an imaginary, symbolic, or real way?

Aporia⁷ number one.

All performers dance.



Picture 3: Milagros Palacios, Yurie Kaneko, Katia Flores, María Avila.

4 – Utopia (Love)

We locate the situationist on the side of love. But which love? Is AA expressing Eros, the armed love for a tender comrade with whom he wants to make history in a romantic revolution?

Octavio Paz says that “the political ideal of a civilized society—never realized—would be a republic of friends not one of lovers.”⁸ The collective requires a sublimated Eros, not in the form of the “fuck” but rather of the embrace.

I am not sure if it was AA’s reflection at the time of his encounter with Lacan, but according to Lefebvre, the early situationist’s dream of a classless society in a world of unitary urbanism. The land fragmented in districts in which each one decides on every detail, from acoustic environments to food to architecture to films. “Complete automatization of productive work” for a society that will be liberated from the deformed work habit.⁹ The city will only have

situationists, engaged in leisure and creation. This dream, however, is furiously anti-identity and searches for a synchronic history, “a lost . . . disappearing unity” within the whole of the urban landscape,¹⁰ to preserve a singular experience in time and space. Is AA calling for agape, brotherly love for all humanity, aspiring to Lennon’s dream: “Imagine all the people living life in peace . . .”?¹¹

Lacan reads AA’s claim as “love . . . whose supreme aspiration is the totality.” An individual “who fits in with everyone and everything,” identical to the truth he believes in, is nothing but the discourse of the master “with all the horrors we have seen through history.”¹²

Freud emphasizes the impossibility of the altruist command “love thy neighbor as thyself.”¹³ We want to save the global village with the might of our good hearts, “become radical comrade let’s make the revolution,” but we are unable to transform the immediate spaces of alterity we live in. We cannot but render others unlike us invisible, speechless, atemporal: A weird neighbour, a Trump supporter, an obnoxious colleague. “Either be us or do not disrupt us.” Yet we still deny hate.

If, as Lacan asserts, “Psychoanalysis alone recognizes the knot of imaginary servitude that love must always untie anew or sever” what type of love prevails and allows solidarities without recurring to the “illusions of altruism”?¹⁴

Aporia number 2.

Dance by Yurie Kaneko.



Picture 4: Yurie Kaneko.

5 – Finitude

On the side of Lacan, we locate the discourse of finitude. “*Pas tous*” Lacan answers. Not all. To understand the unconscious is to accept that there is no one single truth, not a harmonized whole or homeostasis, and in every balance account there is a residue of sorts.

Finitude appears in myriad forms: It is written in our imminent mortality; but also, in deaths that do not coincide with the end of life: Finitude of a dream, of love or of desire.

Yet finitude also appears as an absolute necessity to move forward with desire, the finitude that psychoanalysis knows as castration. To be able to act one needs to risk; the assertion of oneself comes with an acceptance that one is incomplete, imperfect, and potentially unloved. Debord puts it in a negative way: “One who has renounced using his life can no longer admit his death.”¹⁵

Finitude involves an assumption of your brief historical time, requires letting go of, grieving that which you are not; yielding the paralyzing impossibility of the ideal. You want to be, or to have, the phallus? Well, you won't.

How could you overcome the angst of death to embrace life? How could you assert your being in lack without losing a sense of self-worth?

Aporia number 3.

Dance by Maria Avila.



Picture 5: Maria Avila.

6 – Thought

In this (mis)encounter we also attest the conflict between thoughts and bodies. What thoughts do we allow to emerge in the presence of others? The central endeavor of psychoanalysis consists

in inquiring about the intimate and extimate relation of body and mind, conscious and unconscious, individual and society.

To a potential brilliant thought there opposes a stubborn resistance. Lacan asserts that “The unconscious thinks” anxiously, given the fact that “[t]hought has always been embodied” by the id.¹⁶

In “Sexual theories of children” Freud works on the epistemic drive, linked to the genesis of original thought, stemming from the liberation of truths about our singular *jouissance*.¹⁷ Original thoughts are aware of their origin. Thus, intellectual inquiry and the possible overcoming of identitarian thought requires a disidentification from dominant discourses and the liberation of libido, no longer in serfdom to the repressive forces of the symptom thanks to the articulation of a certain truth.

Psychoanalysis poses a “modest view of the possibility of progress in thought,”¹⁸ given the obstinate resistance we all have to thoughts arising from the unconscious. Yet, paradoxically, civilization demands novel thought.

Did not Zarathustra tell us of dancing as a metaphor to fight the heaviness of thought?¹⁹ How could our thoughts embrace lightness and liberation? Could a thought possess dancing *duende*? *Duende*, for Lorca, referring to the spirit of flamenco, is a struggle: “Seeking the duende, there is neither map nor discipline. We only know it burns the blood like powdered glass, that it exhausts, rejects all the sweet geometry we understand, that it shatters styles.”²⁰

Thought as a dancing metaphor is, for Badiou, the event of an original and genuine thought which, like a bird within the body, affirms its existence because it has lost shame in its nakedness.²¹

How can we think truthful, thus embodied, thoughts without falling into shame or an anxious, intellectual constipation?

Aporia number 5.

Dance by Milagros Palacios



Picture 6: Milagros Palacios.

7 – Embodiment

Every (mis)encounter brings bodies and affects to the forefront. How did the bodies of these two men, Lacan and AA, affect each other?

Spinoza teaches us that we do not know what a body can do. Deleuze and Guattari relaunches the claim to signal that, of the body, we ignore “what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with . . . the affects of another body either to destroy that body or

to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body.”²²

The only affect, Lacan affirms, is anguish, an affect historically built on the memory of separations (se-partitions) from the Other, whose effects shape our drive. Freud and Lacan assert the drive not as a biological entity, but as an incarnated discourse coming first from our ancestors then systematized in cultural institutions.

Confronted with other bodies within a spatial proximity, I face forces and intensities in my own body that connect me to a forgotten discourse, that render me an anxious object seeking a place in the desire of the Other: What does the Other/other want from me? Anguish appears.

I might be captured as an object, trapped in narcissistic jealousy, hostility, or self-idolatry; I might inhibit and submit, self-embarrassed and impotent. Or I might be able to overcome the paranoid fear of the Other and assert my subjectivity.

To avoid such predicament, in the social we count on the spectacle, the “opposite of dialogue,”²³ a social imaginary that concentrates “all [deceived] gazing and all [false] consciousness.”²⁴

If the first battle of the affects takes place in an otherness already inside me: how can I decode such discourse that dwells in my body, this intimate alien, to become a subject? How can one sustain an embodied presence, to exist in the social, without submitting or attacking?

Aporia number 4

Dance by Katia Flores.

8 – Angel of History (Poiesis of Desire)

(Mis)encounter between love and finitude. We want life for us and future generations yet we are finite and often impotent politically.

The situation of our present time appears critical. We face the unassimilated residues of a ruthless capitalism that has pushed humanity towards an increasing state of environmental and socio-political crisis in which social linkage becomes more precarious, trapped in the spectacle of multiplying objects among isolated subjects. What ought to be done?

Freud and Lacan, at some point, inquire death as a promising horizon.

Freud says “what good to us is a long life if it is difficult and barren of joys, and if it is so full of misery that we can only welcome death as a deliverer?”²⁵

Lacan, on his part, furiously states, in the same session of the previously referenced video: “Death belongs to the realm of faith, you are right to believe you will die, it sustains you. If you would not believe it, could you bear the life that you have?”²⁶

Shall we, then, just wait for death?

Could we aspire to a better world, the life-affirming utopian impulse, if we maintain disembodied thoughts, or affects with poor thought? How can we avoid falling into politically sterile positions of nihilism, cynicism, or the romanticization of activism?

How do we erode, as the situationist aspires with his motion and the psychoanalyst with his interventions, the colonization of meaning, the mortification of bodies caught into regimented thoughts or subdued to the spectacle?

If individual history and libidinal rearrangement only occur by articulating ethically the traumatic truth of our singular erotic and destructive desires: How are we going to deal at the social scale with the trauma of past and present atrocities, and their symbolic inscriptions, to embody transformative political desires?

If as Walter Benjamin proposes “there is no document of civilization that is not at the same time a history of barbarism”:²⁷ Could we afford humane progress with the existence of an unconscious which is precisely “the memory [that] forgets”?²⁸

Movement, against the static of an image, cannot start from ex-nihilo. Angelus Novus.

Final Dance by all dancers.



Picture 7: Hilda Fernandez, Milagros Palacios, María Avila, Katia Flores, Yurie Kaneko.



Picture 8: Hilda Fernandez, Milagros Palacios, María Avila.



Picture 9: Hilda Fernandez, Milagros Palacios, María Avila, Katia Flores, Yurie Kaneko.

¹ This work was presented as a *dérive* within the room of the conference “The Spectacle of Fascism,” held in Vancouver, BC from 7-9 April 2017. This performative reading took place on 7 April 2017 and it incorporated critical text, video (Wolff’s film *Jacques Lacan Parle*, 1972) and flamenco live singing and dancing.

While the performers *dérive* the room, the text was read. Each section of the text presented an aporia, interjected with a performance by: singer Farnaz Ohadi, (Death), and dancers Katalina Cruz (Life), Yurie Kaneko (Love), María Avila (Finitude), Milagros Palacios (Thought) and Katia Flores (Embodiment). Find their bios and detailed program in Appendix 1. I am deeply grateful to each of these artists, and dear friends, for generously sharing their talent in this collaborative project. Also, I want to thank Anatole Atlas for his “Temporary Manifest” written specifically for this event (See Appendix 2), to Alessandra Capperdoni for her translation of this manifesto, and to Samir Gandesha and Am Johal for all his support in this event.

A video of this performative reading can be found here:

Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T04LxOIFG68>

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP5oFA34R3A>

All pictures were taken on 7 April 2017. Copyright by photographer Becky Gavigan, courtesy of Goldcorp Vancity Community Engagement Office.

² Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 7:295.

³ Jacques Lacan, “Discourse to Catholics.” In *The Triumph of Religion*, trans. Bruce Fink (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 10.

⁴ Lacan, *Seminar*, 7:3.

⁵ Omar Khayyam, *The Rubáiyát* Accessed 9 June 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzYDibLKXQA>

⁶ Guy Debord, “Theses on Cultural Revolution (1958),” in Tom McDounough, ed., *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 47.

⁷ Aporia, in one of its acceptions, is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “a logical impasse or contradiction especially: a radical contradiction in the import of a text or theory that is seen in deconstruction as inevitable.” “Aporia | Definition for Aporia by Merriam-Webster,” *Merriam-Webster*, accessed 23 April 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/aporia>.

⁸ Octavio Paz, *La llama doble: Amor y erotismo* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1993), 114.

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- ⁹ Kristin Ross, “Lefebvre on the Situationists: An Interview,” in Tom McDougough, ed., *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 274-275.
- ¹⁰ Ross, “Lefebvre on the Situationists: An Interview,” 280.
- ¹¹ John Lennon, comp. *Imagine*, John Lennon and The Plastic Ono Band (with the Flux Fiddlers) Accessed 18 March 2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkgkThdzX-8>.
- ¹² *Lacan Parle*, written and directed by Françoise Wolff (Brussels: RTBF, 1972). 27’.
- ¹³ Sigmund Freud, “Civilization and its Discontents,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and eds. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: Hogart Press, 1973), 21:143.
- ¹⁴ Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, trans and ed. Bruce Fink (NY: Norton, 2006), 80.
- ¹⁵ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Michigan: AK Press. 2016), aphorism 160.
- ¹⁶ Jacques Lacan, *My Teaching*, trans. David Macey (London: Verso, 2008), 16.
- ¹⁷ Sigmund Freud, “Sexual theories of children,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogart Press, 1973), 9: 207.
- ¹⁸ Jacques Lacan, *My Teaching*, 105.
- ¹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Thomas Common (Ianos: Pantianos Classics, 2016).
- ²⁰ Federico Garcia Lorca, *Theory and play of the duende* (1928), trans. A. S. Kline. Accessed 3 October 2017, <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Spanish/LorcaDuende.htm>.
- ²¹ Alain Badiou, “La danza como metáfora del pensamiento” *Fractal* 50 (2008), 15-36, accessed 13 February 2016 <https://www.mxfractal.org/RevistaFractal50AlainBadiou.html>.
- ²² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2016), 257.
- ²³ Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, aphorism 18.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, aphorism 2.
- ²⁵ Freud, “Civilization and its Discontents,” 21:87.
- ²⁶ *Lacan Parle*, written and directed by Françoise Wolff (Brussels: RTBF, 1972). 14.55.
- ²⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 256.
- ²⁸ Lacan, *Seminar*, 7:231.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Program

You are going to die, one day. But you are alive, for now.

From these two universals, we reflect on aporias about aggressiveness, love, finitude, thought, body and creative desire.

Text and concept: Hilda Fernandez

Dancers and choreographers:

Death: Farnaz Ohadi (singer)

Life: Katalina Cruz

(Mis) encounter: All dancers.

Love: Yurie Kaneko

Finitude: Maria Avila

Thought: Milagros Palacios

Body: Katia Flores

Desire: All dancers

Lyrics translated from "Khayam" - Persian Sufi poet of 11th century

So when our spirits leave our bodies
they will put a couple of bricks on our tombs
but then our bodies will turn to dirt
so it may be used to make bricks for
others' tombs

I bought a ceramic bowl from a maker

“The
situationist and
the
psychoanalyst:
(mis) encounter
between love
and finitude”
Flamenco
dérive.



“Angelus Novus,” Paul Klee (1920).

Performers

Hilda Fernandez



Hilda has practiced different types of dancing since early age (Mexican folk, contemporary, belly dancing) as well as participated in diverse theater and dancing community projects. She started practicing flamenco at Centro Flamenco guided by Rosario Ancer, Victor Kolstee, and their team of strong dancers (Afifa Lahbabi, Bonnie Stewart and Melanie Mayers). In Hilda's opinion, flamenco is one of the most challenging dancing forms and she values both its rich aesthetic qualities, as well as the strong anti-oppressive spirit behind it.

Farnaz Ohadi



While growing up in her native land of Iran, Farnaz sang at every available opportunity but longed to find her authentic artist's voice.

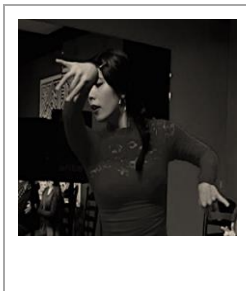
Upon her move to Canada, she studied Operatic vocal training, Persian folk singing, then Flamenco cante through the instruction of Oscar Nieto, Vicente Griego, Naïke Ponce and Lucas Ortega among others. Farnaz's love of music and performance art inspired her to create the collaborative project "Mashregh Ensemble" in 2012, which combine's Persian poetry with Flamenco music.

Katalina Cruz



Katalina Cruz fell under the spell of flamenco back in 2003 and has never looked back. She has been performing with Mozaico Flamenco Dance Academy since 2010 and performing "tablaos" in Vancouver restaurants since 2012. She has studied intensively twice in Spain, in 2010 and in 2015, under the artistic influences of some of Spain's great flamenco artists such as Juana Amaya, Cristina Hall, Manuela Rios, Mercedes Ruiz, Manuela Carpio, Ana María López and Juan de los Reyes. Katalina is grateful for the support of the BC Arts Council and the Canada Council of the Arts.

Yurie Kaneko



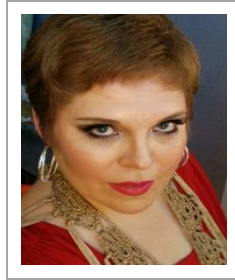
Yurie was born and raised in Japan before moving to Vancouver. It was a live flamenco performance at a local bar that captivated Yurie, inspiring her to move forward with dance training at Centro Flamenco. Under the mentorship of Rosario Ancer, Victor Kolstee, and many other notable instructors and guest artists at Centro, she developed not only technical skills but also a deeper understanding and appreciation of flamenco as a living art form that embodies history and humanity.

Maria Avila



Maria Avila has established herself as an independent dancer, choreographer, and teacher. Recent achievements include being awarded a mentorship to study with Myriam Allard. Receiving professional development grants to study in Sevilla, Spain, as well as performing in the 2016 Coetaní Experimental Flamenco Festival in Athens, Greece. Maria Avila currently performs with Calle Verde, Raises y Alas and La Triana. For classes and performance schedule information visit mariaavilafiamenco.com

Milagros Palacios



Milagros Palacios was born and raised in Lima, Peru. Before moving to Canada in 2002, she trained in classical español, flamenco, and Peruvian dances. In 2010, she continued her training at Centro Flamenco under the guidance of Rosario Ancer and Victor Kolstee, and of outstanding instructors at Centro including Bonnie Stewart, Afifa Lahbabi, Melanie Meyers, and Nanako Aramaki. She performs at various local venues and community events while continuing her training at Centro Flamenco.

Katia Flores



Katia experienced flamenco many years ago when in her hometown in Lima, Peru. She was completely captivated by the energy of the music and dance, and at that moment she knew it was something she wanted to pursue. Once in Canada, she joined Centro Flamenco in 2007 and soon after she was accepted in the Flamenco Rosario's Professional Training Program. Since graduating from the program, Katia has traveled to Spain in numerous occasions, where she has taken courses with renowned flamenco artists such as Andres Peña, Alicia Marquez, Adela Campallo, Angel Atienza, Leonor Leal, among others.

Appendix 2

(TEMPORARY) MANIFEST FOR VANCOUVER

- 1) Kapi-total is an empire where the false sunshines of the Panoptic tower never set.
- 2) Economic exploitation and political domination have produced, on a global scale, processes of ideological alienation without precedent throughout the last half-century.
- 3) To such an extent that one has to consider the human brain as the last continent to be colonized by the imperial logic of the global market.
- 4) It is from such realization that the contemporary confrontation with the critical thought of the past is taking place.
- 5) If the intellectual interventions of Guy Debord and Jacques Lacan still have any pertinence, it is impossible to forget the analysis of the commodity fetishism in Karl Marx' Capital, as well as the analysis of The Culture Industry by Theodor Adorno, of reification by Georg Lukacs, of the alienating spectacle by Bertolt Brecht or of the dialectical image by Walter Benjamin. Or the notion of anticipatory consciousness elaborated by Ernst Bloch in his Principle of Hope.
- 6) I add the couple of the Homeric aoidos (global vision) and Sheherazade (imaginal eye) as necessary instances for the elucidation of the actual mechanisms of manipulation of the masses, of alienation, of reification, of occultation, of derealization of the real.
- 7) No hope of becoming history for humanity, on its axis between divinity and bestiality, without the symbolic of the bird-serpent Quetzalcoatl!

Anatole Atlas, 25 March 2017 (Convulsive Sphere) www.spherisme.be

Translated by Alessandra Capperdoni