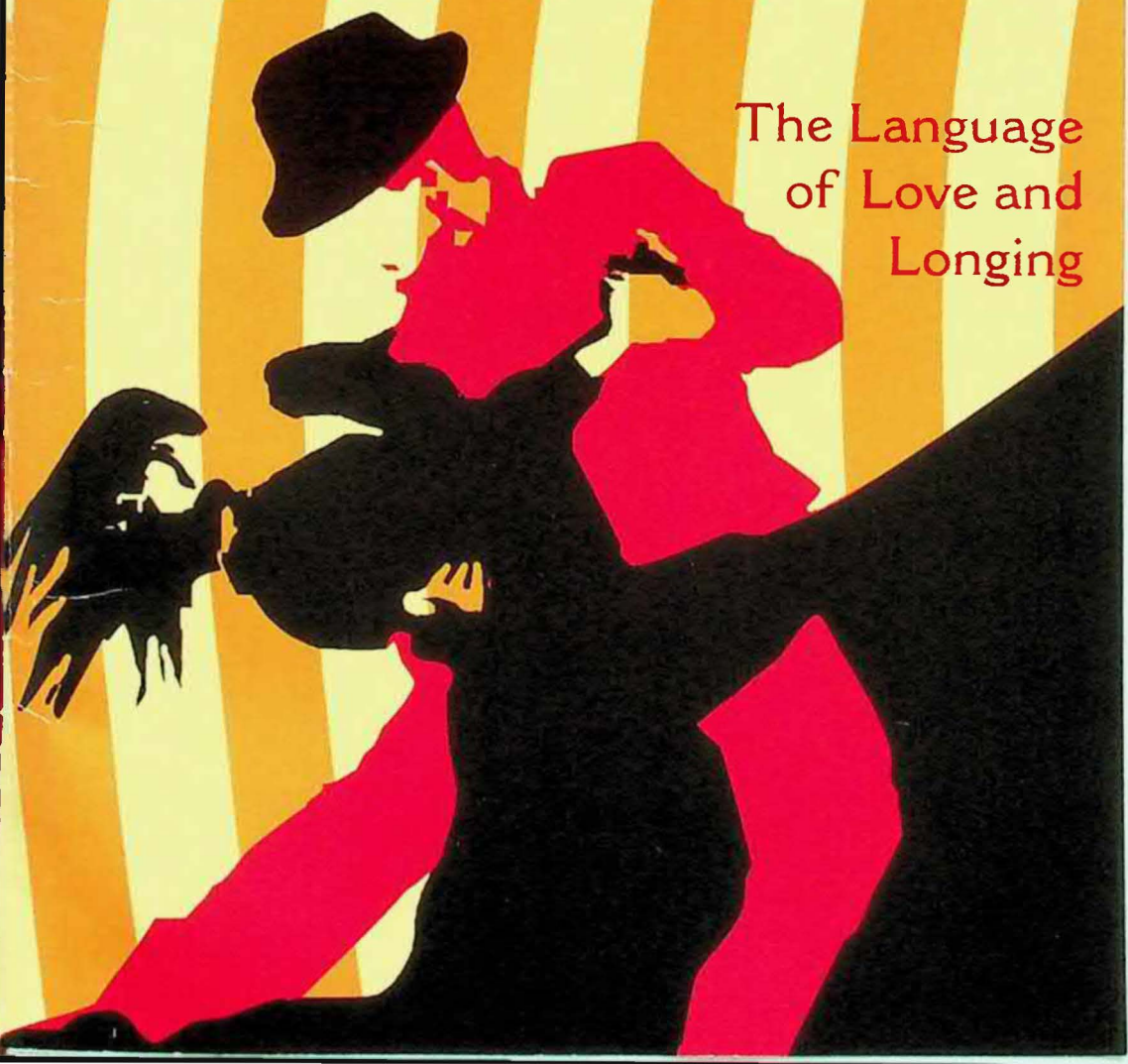


Pirjo Kukkonen

# Tango

## Nostalgia

The Language  
of Love and  
Longing



# Tango

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of Love and  
Longing

*Dedicated to the Finnish composer and musician Jaakko Salo (1930–2002)  
for his lifelong work in Finnish popular music,  
and especially for his promotion of  
the Argentinean tango culture in Finland.*

*... Malena canta el tango con voz quebrada.  
Malena tiene pena de bandoneón.  
Lucio Demare & Homero Manzi (1942)*





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## Nostalgia

The Language  
of Love and  
Longing

*Finnish Culture in Tango Lyrics Discourses  
A Contrastive  
Semiotic and Cultural Approach to the Tango*



YLIOPISTOPAINO  
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## Prologue

¡*Tango!* It is the music, the song, and the dance of life and death. Many etymological explanations have been offered for this evocative word. It is said, for example, to come from the Latin verb *tangere*, 'to touch'. The tango possesses not only concrete dimensions, i.e. in its function as music and dance, but also abstract dimensions as its lyrics represent psychological, philosophical and socio-cultural factors in South America, and Europe. It is a universal language of passions, a language of love and longing – and a language of *nostalgia*, especially relating to the original meaning of *nostalgia* in Greek, where *nóstos* means 'a longing to return' and *algos* 'pain'. Hence, *nostalgia* can be defined as 'longing for the past', representing painful but also joyful memories linked to the present and the future. While *nostalgia* can also have an optimistic side, *melancholy* actualises 'the black', the dark, the negative, the anxious and the depressive states of man; it deals with sadness, sorrow, grief and a feeling of hopelessness. These two aspects form the major part of my study of the tango as a cultural sign, i.e. the semiotics of culture as a language with the central semantic features: *désir* 'passion' and *dolor* 'pain'.

According to A. J. Greimas, we can talk about mental states, passions or feelings as representations of different *modalities*, including ways of being (*être*), doing (*faire*), desiring, wanting (*désir*), knowing (*savoir*), willing (*vouloir*), and being able (*pouvoir*), etc. These tell us how a human being sees reality and life, and what his/her relation is to essential states, or actions in life: to be, to love, to have something. These abstract dimensions of the human mind are universal. Love, hate, betrayal, freedom, dreams, memory, longing and anguish are all expressed deeply, for instance, in the Argentinean *tango*, in the Portuguese *fado*, or in the Spanish *flamenco*; these themes are also repeated in myths and fairy-tales. While the range of events for storytelling in man's life is limited and built on the same themes, the stories are given various forms and interpretations in different cultures. Semiotically speaking, the tango is a performance as dance, communicating both through music and lyrics. The spirit of the tango can be expressed in the words of Enrique Santos Discépolo, the great Argentinean tango composer and writer of tango lyrics: *El tango es un pensamiento triste que se puede bailar*, 'The tango is a sad thought that is danced'. This is my point of departure. Sadness can be expressed in many ways, such as sorrow, anguish, anxiety, grief, distress, longing and memories. As Marcel Proust revealed in his novel *A la recherche du temps perdu*, memory can produce both joy and sorrow, 'a huge construction of memories' produced by eating a madeleine cake, or even experiencing a familiar scent. The role in life of dreams, illusions or delusions can be represented by the familiar example of Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño* (1636), 'Life is a dream'. Life itself is a dream, or an illusion, or delusion. Life is a lie – this idea is crucial to tango lyrics.

The tango arrived in Finland in 1913, after its journey through France, Germany, England, Greece, Denmark, Sweden and the East. Although it is imported, we Finns have developed our own variation, a unique genre both musically and lyrically. It is my aim, both as a linguist and a literary scholar, to search for the soul of the tango in its lyrics in the Argentinean form, the international form, i.e. the European tango, and, lastly, in the Finnish form, the latter defining the most important focus of my study. The principal idea of this book is thus that tango lyrics are a specific genre of literature representing a *cultural text*, in accordance with Juri Lotman's ideas about the semiotics of culture. Tango lyrics can also be seen as *intertexts*, i.e. allusions to former texts, a phenomenon called *intertextuality* by Mikhail Bakhtin. Texts are engaged in a continuous dialogue with each other; they refer to other themes in each particular culture and between different cultures. The purpose of this study is therefore, to discuss this particular type of lyric, not as a banal and trivial form of text or discourse between so-called high and low culture, e.g. the hit song or evergreen lyrics, but as one important form of literary communication for the masses. This has its very roots and soul in national traditions, in low culture and folk poetry, especially in the Finnish tradition. A culture generates its own lyrical texts and imbues them with the spirit of the culture in question. Language and culture – and the dialogue between language and culture – represent a key element in intercultural relations today. Contrastive analysis, i.e. a comparison of two or more cultures and their languages, is therefore an active branch of research. An essential aspect of this is to get at the roots of the language and the soul of the culture, to the texts which the culture generates.

In discussing the cultural themes or popular culture reflected by the Finnish tango, previous studies have often been based on stereotypes. Finns have described themselves with the time-honoured words: *sisu*, *sauna* and *Sibelius*. The representation of *Finnishness*, in other words, the most typical signs of Finnish national culture. However, Finnish society has gone through a structural change. For instance, Morley Safer's 12-minute television programme *Tango Finlandia* (1993) which was meant as an ironic presentation of Finns, relied on the key stereotypes used to describe Finns in general in accordance with places, people, attributes and more subtle descriptions: Lapland, sauna, Sibelius, the silent Finn and his/her shyness and difficulties in communicating and expressing feelings. The programme emphasised the myth of the slow Finn and "his need for melancholy", a good example of how mass media superficially present a foreign culture and its character or *signs* of *Finnishness*. The programme also gave an introduction to the Finnish tango.

The study presented here aims to discuss *Finnishness*, i.e. the most typical features of Finnish culture by adopting a contrastive cultural perspective. This means that Finnish tango lyrics and their themes are discussed in the light of the tango born in the area of Río de la Plata, i.e. the Uruguayan, and the Argentinean tango, and the international, and European tangos, presented with Finnish lyrics, or translations. From a cultural point of view, a central aspect of this is the amalgamation of various influences.

A nation's culture can be found in its literature and other texts. Culture can be broadly viewed as everything a nation produces, including all cultural signs, old and new. In national culture, it is essential that new cultural signs achieve an indexical force, i.e. that the people in that culture recognise these signs as parts of the culture in question and that the signs become a part of their lives. Cultural texts are repetitive, in a way. They afford a kind of security; people recognise themselves in them. The acculturation process of the imported tango in Finland is therefore very important. In order to get to the soul of the Finnish tango lyrics and their themes, they can also be compared with texts from other cultures. What are the cultural attributes reflecting a specific culture? This perspective can illuminate the soul of Finnish culture and improve the understanding of it. The indexical force of national icons, as Eero Tarasti (1990) has noted, is of particular interest. The tango has produced new representations in Finnish culture, the latest example being in architecture: the President of Finland's residence has been called *Tango Mäntyniemi* by Roger Connah (1994). This metaphor for the Mäntyniemi architecture expressly demonstrates how the Finnish tango has become a sign to describe the soul of the Finnish people, their mentality and architecture. Even though the tango is not a Finnish invention, the Finnish tango has its own Finnish signs and meanings representing a particular genre. In Argentinean culture especially, the tango is reflected in various fields of art: theatre, film, music, and literature.

From its foreign roots, the Finnish tango has created its own tempo, dynamics, musical genre and lyrics. It has been criticised and parodied. Toivo Kärki (1915–1992), the great Finnish tango composer, has said that he prefers the Argentinean tango to the Finnish, but that the particular melancholy sound of the Finnish tango is, nonetheless, essential to him. Olli Hämäläinen (1924–1984), the producer of tango programmes for Finnish radio and television focusing on Argentinean tango, said, 'Dissatisfaction with the Finnish tango was the reason for making the Finnish radio and TV programme *El Tango*'. But, among Finnish people, the Finnish tango has remained strong, especially since the 1950s and 1960s when it developed its national character. The Swedish tango researcher Carl-Gunnar Åhlén (1987) refers to Finnish tango as a genre of its own with an important social and cultural function. The spirit of Finnish tango is the same as in Finnish folk poetry; the sorrows and joys of human existence come and go as does the lightness and darkness of life. The light of *Pohjola*, 'the North', the territory of Louhi in Finnish mythology and the opposition of nature's spring, summer, autumn and winter all provide the essential spirit of Finnish tango lyrics. As Zacharias Topelius (1875) put it, writing about the Finnish light in his *Boken om vårt land/Maamme kirja* 'The Book of Our Land', 'It is like an eternal joy in the perishable spring of the earth'. It is this special Nordic light and darkness and the celestial aspects – the sky, the moon, the sun and the stars – which are central in Finnish mythology and poetry.

The tango can be seen as a huge metaphor for that part of our cultural history which touches important, universal themes. Certain stories, narratives and myths are basically the same everywhere. They only alter in their forms and



combinations. The analysis of the *semiosis* of tango lyrics concentrates on the different "stories", the dramatic episodes, themes and ideas told via Argentinean, European and especially Finnish tango lyrics. I will discuss the themes as signs with specific culture-bound meanings and signification. The material for this study consists mainly of Helsinki University Library's national collections of popular music songbooks, booklets and Finnish, and international notes.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Finnish popular music lyricists in honour of their valuable contribution to the culture of ordinary people, "the masses". They have given people an opportunity to experience the touch of poetry that deals with life's great themes: love and longing, as seen through Finnish eyes and within the context of Finnish or Finland-Swedish culture, and, not least, through the Finnish and Swedish languages, in the bilingual Finland, so essential to the national identity. The work of popular music lyricists is seldom honoured with grants, even though they have been interpreters of the deepest states of the human mind. The names include Kerttu Mustonen, Dagmar Parmas, Georg and Eugen Malmstén, R. R. Ryyänen, Lauri Jauhiainen, Kauko Käyhkö, Tatu Pekkarinen, Arvo Koskimaa, Eine Laine, Kyllikki Solanterä, Aune Ala-Tuuhonen, Reino Helismaa, Sauvo Puhtila, Kullervo, Aimo Viherluoto, Unto Mononen, Juha Vainio, Joel Rundt, Thure Wahlroos, Lars Huldén, and many others. In the imported cultural phenomenon tango they have created lyrics which reflect the Finnish soul, identity, and mentality.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Finnish composer and musician Jaakko Salo (1930–2002) by dedicating this edition to him. I would like to extend special thanks to him and Mr Raimo Henriksson at Warner/Chappell Music Finland Ltd, Espoo for fruitful discussions about the tango, and for the permission to use the Finnish lyrics of the tangos in my academic analysis. Special thanks go to Alfonso Padilla, PhD at the Department of Musicology, University of Helsinki, Mr Harri Hirvi at the Helsinki University Library, and PhD, Docent, Pekka Gronow, at the Finnish Broadcasting Company, Helsinki, for creative and inspiring views on the tango; he has also written the *Epilogue*. I am also grateful to Mrs María Susana Azzi, Buenos Aires, for information on Argentinean tango research.

A central element in describing the dialogue between language and culture is language actualising itself very clearly in the process of writing. In this book I have dealt with tango lyrics in Spanish, English, French, German, Greek, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Finnish. My special thanks to Rod McConchie, PhD at the Department of English Philology, University of Helsinki, who has checked my English and made a culturally-bound English text of this polylingual material.

The present second revised edition 2003 of the 1996 edition has been provided with three indexes, made by MA Hanna Lukkari for whom I am grateful. Finally, I thank the Finnish Association of Non-fiction Writers for the scholarship given to this second revised edition, the work on the popular culture theme, the world music the tango, the *tango nomade*, and its language, culture, and communication, manifestations of the encounter of various cultural themes.

## *I Theory and method in tango lyrics semiosis*

The myth is a story or narrative about how the world, various things and phenomena got their beginning. It is the ultimate states in life, such as birth and death which have shaped these myths. While myths have a serious magical and ritual function, fairy-tales are meant to entertain. In Finnish culture the myths are nature-centred; for instance, Pohjola, the Northern realm, and Kalevala have their stories. Song and music, and especially the instrument, the *kantele*, are also central entities forming Finnish mythology. The mythological dimension in man takes different forms, including the need for stories of the very beginning. Hence, myths, histories, ballads, legends, and fairy-tales are central entities in man's life. One form of the mythical and entertaining dimensions are mass culture, music and song, telling myths or stories about the central concepts in man's life. For instance, the romantic love song is actually a fairy-tale for adults; a continuation of the themes in children's books with their struggle between good and evil.<sup>1</sup> The tango can thus be seen as a dramatic episode, a story, a myth, a fairy-tale, i.e. a narrative about life.

In her review of the Swedish tango researcher Carl-Gunnar Åhlén's doctoral dissertation *Tangon i Europa – en pyrrusseger?* 'The Tango in Europe – A Pyrrhic Victory?' (1987), Pirkko Kotirinta (1987) states that the very peculiar story of the Finnish tango awaits its researcher. My study aims to provide an approach which focuses on the themes of the tango. The tango has been the object of musicological, anthropological, sociological, psychological, linguistic, folkloristic and literary research, especially in Argentina and Germany.<sup>2</sup> In Finland tango research has been modest, but during the last two or three years interest in Finnish tangos has been awakened in ethnomusicians, anthropologists, and folklorists as well as linguists and literary researchers.<sup>3</sup> The Finnish tango appeared for the first time in Finland in 1913 as a performed dance, and in 1915 with parodic Finnish lyrics, but was developed mainly during the 1930s and the 1940s. During the war, it became a genre of its own. After the war, in the 1950s and the 1960s especially, it triumphed compared with the other European countries. Åhlén (1987) points out that the European tango has lacked the capacity to create identity and has only served the purpose of romantic escapism, claiming that the tango in Europe has survived mainly as a repetitive rhythmic model.

In my study I consider the semiotics of tango lyrics as short theatrical pieces. We can talk about the drama of the tango as a narratological entity, with actors (actants) in place and time, a manifestation of the term *chronotopos*. It is inter-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. mythology Apo (1986); Honko (1993a: 63-114; 1993b-c); Timonen (1993a-b); Simonsuuri (1994: passim).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Taylor (1976); Padilla (1986); Reichardt (1987: passim); Åhlén (1987: passim); Azzi (1991: passim); Castro (1991: passim).

<sup>3</sup> Gronow & Bruun (1968: 113-118); Kukkonen (1992a-e; 1993a; 1993d; 1995a-c; 1997; 2000; 2002); Jalkanen (1993a; 1993b); Ammond (1994); Koivusalo (1994); Sjöblom (1994a, 1994b); Sautari (1994).

esting to see how the drama of a tango is built up, and especially what the texts tell us about its main theme the philosophy of love, as well as other concerns. As Åhlén<sup>4</sup> points out, in a culture like the Finnish, where communicative silence is thought of as a characteristic national feature,<sup>5</sup> the text of the tango is important; the concept of *love* ('rakkaus', 'lempi') particularly seems to be taboo in Finnish communication. Even the consonants in the Finnish nominal *rakkaus* 'love', and the verb *rakastaa* 'to love' make them hard-sounding words. The Swedish linguist Ulf Teleman agrees in discussing the sentence *Jag älskar dig* ('I love you'), claiming that it is too solemn and binding to use in everyday speech acts. Popular music and poetry however are used as a communication form in which love and other feelings can be expressed.<sup>6</sup> Many repetitive metaphors and paraphrases exist for the concept of love, and music and song are a sort of communication between people. It is a joint code. Hence many silent Finns resort to popular music, especially the tango, as a substitute for communicating the difficult questions of love, joy, sorrow and longing. Analysis of the themes and the contents of the Finnish and European tangos, as well as those of the Argentinean tangos, will therefore prove to be particularly revealing.

In this study the themes of tango lyrics consisting of 285 Argentinean, 140 European, and 865 original Finnish tango texts, have been analysed with semiotics as the theoretical framework. The corpus consists of popular music texts in Helsinki University Library's unique national collections consisting of notes, songbooks and booklets, a "low culture" which has not been investigated to the same extent as is done in present-day research. Semiotics, which forms the theoretical basis of my study, is the general science and methodology of signs, a theoretical or empirical study of signs, symbolic systems and communicative processes. The semiotics of culture deals with the analysis of signs and their meanings and signification in the cultural context. The *semiosis* of tango lyrics thus forms linguistic and cultural discourses where different signs actualise meanings in the context of their respective culture. The term *text* can denote a written or an oral product, a text, but it can also mean the culture as a whole, or the *discourse* which, according to Greimas & Courtés, can be defined as a semiotic process within the totality of semiotic facts (relations, units, operations). A semiotic domain can also be called *discourse* (e.g. literary discourse, philosophical, tango lyrics discourse) because of its social connotation in a given cultural context. The semiotics of culture deals with all human activity concerned with the processing, exchange and storage of information, and with culture and its various sign systems.<sup>7</sup> When I deal with the lyrics of the tango texts, I especially mean the lyrics as language, literature and culture. They are seen as reflecting culture, and since language is always a part of its culture and an important identity factor.<sup>8</sup> Hence people recognize themselves in the lyrics of

<sup>4</sup> Åhlén (1987: 69).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Lehtonen & Sajavaara (1985); Oksaar (1988); Kukkonen (1991a-b; 1992a-c; 1993a-c; 1993d-e).

<sup>6</sup> Teleman (1991: 285-293).

<sup>7</sup> Greimas & Courtés (1979: 81-85); Lotman (1989).

<sup>8</sup> Castro (1991: 15).

the tango texts; the texts are mirrors of their lives, their thoughts and their mental states. As Åhlén states in his tango research, the lyrics constitute a security factor in which people find a repetitive function.<sup>9</sup> Hence tango lyrics reflect the mental spirit of time and place: this is my life, my history, my tradition, my feelings. With popular music texts people go through different phases in their lives; the past, childhood, and youth in relation to the present and the future. The music and its lyrics are the interpreters of our mental states; the dreams, memories, hopes and thoughts through which we are in a constant dialogue with ourselves. Not only are the semiotic and semantic functions revealing in a study of the tango; lyrics are also an interesting subject pragmatically. What is communicated through a tango text, and how? How are the phenomenological states of love and longing, joy and sorrow expressed through it? Love, joy and sorrow are, of course, universal themes in the history of man. The national aspect of these central concepts can be studied, as mentioned above, in the representations of a national culture. Love is a universal passion, but its verbal forms and themes can be supposed to have culture-bound manifestations. Joy is temporary, while joy of life expresses an existential state of man. Joy can be seen as a short-lived phenomenon, a sudden joy or laughter. In the idea of *carnivalism*, the term used by Mihail Bahtin,<sup>10</sup> joy can also be seen as the world upside down, as in carnival, which, as a metaphor reflects a serious view of life. Another Bahtinian term is *intertextuality* which means that texts allude to other texts, being in a constant dialogue with each other.

In the Finnish song culture nostalgia, a longing for the past, is one of the important themes expressing both joy and sorrow. Joy and laughter are found especially in Finnish comic songs and revues (*kupletti*) since the beginning of the 20th century, but also in folk poetry, and in the so-called *rillumarei* culture (joyful song and film culture) in Finnish films and songs in the 1950s, a carnivalistic way of criticising high culture.<sup>11</sup> However, the joyful character of Finnish culture and its music and songs is unfortunately seldom discussed. The most important representatives of the themes of both joy and sorrow are the song and tango writer Reino Helismaa (1913–1968) and the composer Toivo Kärki (1915–1992). The oppositions in life go hand in hand, even in such a melancholic culture as the Finnish, to use a cliché.

### *I The semiotics of passion*

In recent years popular music lyrics have been an object of increasing scholarly interest,<sup>12</sup> while in the 1970s, as Apo states, studies on popular music texts did

<sup>9</sup> Åhlén (1987: 69–80).

<sup>10</sup> Bahtin ([1965] 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Jauhiainen (1985); Pennanen & Mutkala (1994); cf. Kukkonen (1995a: 117–130).

<sup>12</sup> Kukkonen (1992a–d; 1993a; 1993d–e; 1995b–c); Jalkanen (1993); Kukkola (1994); Rytönen (1994); Sjöblom (1994a; 1994b); Ammond (1994); Häggman (1994).



not belong among frequent research issues.<sup>13</sup> The reason is that low culture texts have not been considered as valuable research material, even though hit lyrics have been a part of the Finnish culture since the 1920s. In fact, poplore texts, which are the only contact with lyrics for a great number of people, are representations of national culture and its signs.<sup>14</sup> In 1965, however, Gronow, who was one of the few researchers who studied popular music texts, discussed the changing hit lyrics from a sociological point of view, asking why social and global themes are not handled in Finnish hits or pop music lyrics.<sup>15</sup> In fact, during the 1960s a change appears in the texts, the changes in the sociocultural context being reflected in popular music texts also.<sup>16</sup>

In the light of the Finnish tango lyrics the central questions are now what the semiotic signs of *Finnishness* are? How are the nostalgia and the melancholy, the Finnish joy and sorrow presented in tango lyrics? What are the specific themes which lyrics generate, and why is the tango so important in Finnish culture as a social and cultural phenomenon? In order to find solutions to these questions, I use a semiotic analysis based mainly on theoretical structures such as Charles Sanders Peirce's three ontological categories of *Firstness*, *Secondness*, and *Thirdness*, i.e. how conscious the relation between man and reality is. I discuss the actors (actants) and their modalities according to A. J. Greimas' semiotics, while Mihail Bahtin's *dialogism* and idea of *polyphony* form the setting of the text. In Juri Lotman's semiotics of culture, the concept of *semiosphere* is essential, i.e. how one national culture differs from another. Martin Heidegger's philosophy is the point of reference for discussing man, i.e. *das Man*, somebody, anybody, and his/her *dasein*, or *In-der-Welt-sein*. How man experiences his/her existence through an analysis of the central concepts of life such as love, sorrow, betrayal, etc. is essential. The structural idea of dichotomies is also crucial: love–betrayal, joy–sorrow, delight–pain, etc. The central themes and their concepts are analysed through semantic and semiotic dichotomies mainly based on Greimas' and Fontanille's (1991) research into the semiotics of passions. The linguistic analysis follows Charles Morris' semiotics (1938) which includes phonological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects. The literary analysis concentrates on tango lyrics as cultural texts. The term *text* denotes the lyrics as written text but also as a representation of the broader corresponding cultural context (cf. Lotman). My intention of catching the soul of the Finnish tango involves a diachronic view giving a historical and sociological perspective on the phenomenon of the tango. In order to understand the present we have to go through the past.

The Finnish tango lyrics from the 1930s to the 1990s have been analysed using A. J. Greimas' model involving actants and modalities,<sup>17</sup> as for instance by

<sup>13</sup> Apo (1974: 167-168).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Kuusi (1974: 11-23) discusses the terms *poplore* and *folklore*.

<sup>15</sup> Gronow (1965: 156-161).

<sup>16</sup> For instance, Chydenius composed a tango with the title *Hiroshima Tango* in the 1960s, cf. Gronow & Bruun (1968: 122).

<sup>17</sup> Greimas (1966: 180-181; 1970: passim).

Sivuoja-Gunaratnam<sup>18</sup> in her analysis of the Finnish opera. Greimas' model seems natural; my investigation consists of the theme of love in tango lyrics, which are like dramatic episodes lasting 2–4 minutes, whose predicates represent states and actions, while the other syntactic phrases are actants with different roles. This simple model is based on the *object of desire*, after which the *subject* aspires. The *subject* is placed between the *helper* and the *opponent*. Hence, the actants are: *subject (sujet)*, *object (objet)*, *sender (destinateur)*, *receiver (destinaire)*, *helper (adjuvant)* and *opponent (opposant)*:

*sender (destinateur)* → *object (objet)* → *receiver (destinaire)*

↑

*helper (adjuvant)* → *subject (sujet)* ← *opponent (opposant)*

Greimas subordinates the persons to action by calling them actants, and the relations actualised between them are described in different modalities. The *subject's* relation to the *object* expresses the modality of will (*vouloir*), and in the stories and episodes the *subject* desires the *object*. The modality of desire (*désir*) initiates the action, i.e. doing (*faire*). The *object* can be seen as a message between the *sender* and the *receiver* when it then manifests itself in the modality of knowing (*savoir*). In his/her action the *subject* can have a *helper* or an *opponent* reflecting the modality of being able (*pouvoir*), so that it promotes or prevents the *subject's* ability to fulfil his/her will. The basic modalities are being (*être*) and doing (*faire*). The so-called exotactic modalities presuppose two subjects manifesting the modalities of must (*devoir*), being able (*pouvoir*) and doing (*faire*), and endotactic modalities presuppose one subject, manifesting will (*vouloir*), knowing (*savoir*) and being (*être*).<sup>19</sup>

When Greimas talks about emotions, he notes that they are easily listed but difficult to classify. Being culturally bound, they can remain implicit or be subject only to coarse analysis. This is the conclusion of Finnish semiotician Kari Salosaari, in commenting on the semiotics of theatre.<sup>20</sup> The only way to study the structure of emotions is, as Salosaari writes, to employ a modal analysis, as Greimas and Fontanille have done in their discussion of emotions.<sup>21</sup>

In tango texts, which in the present study are seen as short dramatic episodes, the *subject's* relation to the *object* is *love*; it is mostly a one-way communication. The *sender* is Eros, Love, God, Destiny or Fate, a force actualising "the emotional attraction, the effects in man of a power which 'possesses him', a physiological, psychological or mythical force".<sup>22</sup> The *receiver* is the beloved (a woman/a man/nature). The *subject* is usually alone, as the texts very rarely have two actors with communication in both directions where the love is mutual. The

<sup>18</sup> Sivuoja-Gunaratnam (1989; 1991).

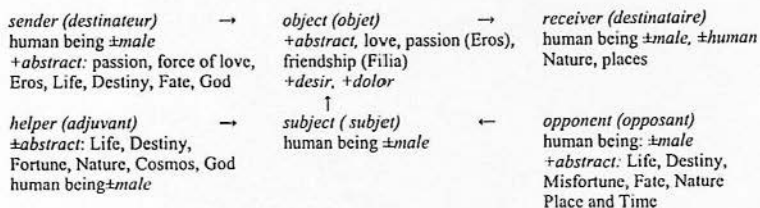
<sup>19</sup> Greimas (1966; 1970); Salosaari (1989: 78-80, 98-101); Tarasti (1990: 73-74); Niiniluoto (1993: 16-17).

<sup>20</sup> Salosaari (1989: 96-101).

<sup>21</sup> Greimas & Fontanille (1991: passim).

<sup>22</sup> *Dictionary of the History of Ideas III* (1973: 98).

*subject* is typically 'I', sometimes 'we'. In tango texts the semantic component, or seme, 'love' is expressed as the desire for love, *désir*,<sup>23</sup> i.e. the *object*. The *subject's* loving and the tango discourse have the following actors:



Love is the central theme in popular song lyrics<sup>24</sup> and is also crucial in tango lyrics. The *subject* directs his/her love (*object*) to a human being or, as in the Finnish tango lyrics, to nature and its beauty or harshness (*receiver*). In this discourse of love or non-love, the *helper* in the *subject's* desire for love can be Life, Destiny, Fortune, Nature, Cosmos or God, while the role of *opponent* is played by Life, Fate, Misfortune, Place ("If the sea takes you") or Time, the circumstances (e.g. war separating people). Hence, nature can act as a mediator, a communicator of love, i.e. the *subject* can beg nature or the heavens (the moon, the stars, the birds) to bring the message of love to the beloved. Life and God can function as *helpers* or *senders*; i.e. "Life/God gave you to me".

*Passion* is a concept which can cover various emotions, sensations and feelings. It can be a strong feeling of love, hate or anger; it can also mean an intense love, especially sexual love (*passion for somebody*); or it can refer to a strong liking or enthusiasm for something. In addition, the *Passion* has a religious meaning in the suffering and death of Christ.<sup>25</sup> The concept of *passion* is, therefore, associated with a polarity: on the one hand, the *passion of love* and, on the other hand, the *passion of pain*. In Swedish the verb *lida* 'suffer' is actually the root for both *lidelse* 'passion of love' and *lidande* 'suffering'. This shows very clearly that everyday love really is both desire (*désir*) and pain (*dolor*), representing a strong, erotic or sexual longing for the object of love, and pain caused by nostalgia and longing for love which has been rejected or is impossible.

The main theme in the Argentinean tango, the European, and the Finnish tango is love. The essence of Plato's ideas in *The Symposium* is that man is searching for beauty and love, for what he does not possess.<sup>26</sup> Love has many definitions and categories. It can be called *Eros*, *Agapé* or *Filia*. *Eros* is the erotic, sexual or possessive love called jealousy; *Filia* means friendship; and *Agapé* is divine love, God's love or spiritual love.<sup>27</sup> The two main semantic

<sup>23</sup> Greimas (1966: 34-36).

<sup>24</sup> Apo (1974: 170); Asplund (1994: passim).

<sup>25</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989: 309-311).

<sup>26</sup> Plato, *The Symposium* (200e, 205c-206a).

<sup>27</sup> Kukkonen (1993a: passim); Ollila (1993: 148-150).

features in the concept of love are *désir* 'to want or desire' and *dolor* 'to suffer'. Love can also be described using Peirce's three ontological categories:<sup>28</sup> *Firstness* is a spontaneous feeling of love, i.e. falling in love; *Secondness* is a state where one asks, for instance, "Why am I in love?"; at the *Thirdness* stage love is a deeper state, an insight into the essence of love, a metaphysical state or a philosophical insight.

The themes of the Argentinean and Finnish tango focus on love. The human states of nostalgia and melancholy are brought about by this emotion and by sensation or passion. Love is a relation where *x* loves *y*, the object being human, a place, nature as a whole or nature with its various entities.

The Argentinean tango can be defined as 'a sad thought which is danced', the European as 'a romantic and sentimental passion which is danced', and the Finnish tango as 'a nostalgic thought which can be danced'. For the Argentinean tango *tristeza*, sadness, is an inherent feature, while for the Finnish tango it is nostalgia, a longing to return or a yearning for something in the future. For the European 'entertainment' tango it offers escapism.

The word *nostalgia* has two fundamental dimensions which help us to capture the deeper meaning of the tango lyrics, namely the Greek *nóstos*, 'a longing to return', and *algos*, 'pain'.<sup>29</sup> *Nostalgia* can mean 'a yearning for the return of past circumstances, events, etc.', 'the evocation of this emotion, as in a book, film, etc.', and a 'longing for home or family', or homesickness (cf. German *Heimweh*, 'homesickness', *Sehnsucht*, *Wehmut*).<sup>30</sup> The whole idea behind the *fado*, the *flamenco* and the *tango* is expressed by these senses of the word. *Nostalgia* expresses the modality of *faire*, i.e. a mental, active action where a place, a concrete or abstract home, a beloved person, time, childhood, youth and the past exist alongside each other. This is the phenomenon which Bakhtin calls *chronotopos*.<sup>31</sup> *Nostalgia* thus combines place, time and action in the human mind. This forms a new definition of the concept of *nostalgia* and is used in the present study.

The word *melancholy*, in Latin *melancholia*, in Greek *melankholia*, incorporates the elements *melas* 'black' and *kholé* 'bile'. Melancholy has been defined as 'a constitutional tendency to gloominess or depression' and 'a sad, thoughtful state of mind; pensiveness'. A further definition, now archaic, is 'a gloomy character, thought to be caused by too much black bile (one of the four bodily humours), 'characterised by causing, or expressing sadness, dejection'. In German, *Melancholie* means 'Schwermut' and 'Trübsinn', i.e. its semantic meaning is negative.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Peirce (1940).

<sup>29</sup> *Étymologique de la langue Grecque. Histoire de mots* (1968).

<sup>30</sup> *Collins English Dictionary* ([1979] 1991: 1067); *Wörterbuch der Spanischen und Deutschen Sprache* (1932: 476).

<sup>31</sup> Bakhtin (1988; 1991); Bakhtin ([1965] 1991); Bakhtin ([1981] 1988).

<sup>32</sup> *Collins English Dictionary* ([1979] 1991: 973); *Wörterbuch der Spanischen und Deutschen Sprache* (1932: 447). Cf. also *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (1973–1974, s.v. *melancholy*), Volumes II, III, and IV on the philosophical ideas of melancholy; Burton (1989–1994), Kristeva ([1987] 1989: passim).



A comparison of the two key concepts *nostalgia* and *melancholy* shows that *nostalgia* expresses the modality of doing (*faire*), and has an active and positive semantic feature, while *melancholy* is being (*être*), a state consisting of, for instance, grief, sorrow and anxiety. *Grief* means 'deep or intense sorrow or distress, especially at the death of someone', or something that causes keen distress or suffering. *Sorrow* is 'the characteristic feeling of sadness, grief, or regret associated with loss, bereavement, sympathy for another's suffering'. *Anxiety* means 'a state of uneasiness or tension caused by apprehension of possible future misfortune, danger, etc.; worry, or intense desire; eagerness'. Psychologically it means a state of intense apprehension or worry often accompanied by physical symptoms. The German nominal *Angst* is 'an acute but non-specific sense of anxiety or remorse'. In existentialist philosophy this means the dread caused by man's awareness that his future is not determined but must be freely chosen. *Anguish* means 'extreme pain or misery; mental or physical torture; agony', or 'to afflict or be afflicted with anguish' (from Latin *angustia* 'narrowness', from *angustus* 'narrow'). *Agony* is 'acute physical or mental pain; anguish', 'the suffering or struggle preceding death' (from Late Latin; ultimately from Greek *agonia* 'struggle', *agon* 'contest'). *Pain* means 'the sensation of acute physical hurt or discomfort caused by injury, illness, etc.', 'emotional suffering or mental distress' (from Latin *poena* 'punishment', 'grief', from Greek *poine* 'penalty').<sup>33</sup> Hence, the following semantic fields of actual concepts can be set out.

In Spanish the semantic field of *tristeza* covers the following words and expressions meaning 'sadness', 'sorrow', 'grief', 'pain', 'distress', 'anxiety', 'anguish': *melancolía*, *pena*, *pesar*, *dolor*, *disgusto*, *angustia*, and *aflicción*.<sup>34</sup> The English words for these can also mean *sadness*, *grief*, *tedium*, *tediousness*, *trouble*, *difficulty*, *boredom*, *regret*, *longing*, *pain*, *agony*, *distress*, *anguish*, *torment*, *oppression*, *anxiety* and *vexation*. An overview of these meanings shows clearly that the word *melancholy* has negative connotations, suggesting a state of depression. It is a psychological condition and state of man in psychiatry, a pathological state of despair. It has been defined as "a state of melancholia accompanied by lowered mental and psychical responsiveness to external stimuli. It may be symptomatic of a serious mental disorder (e.g. manic-depressive psychosis), but normal depression is also known to be widespread."<sup>35</sup>

The word *nostalgia* focuses on 'coming back' or 'a longing for the return of something remembered'. Nostalgia can also mean a painful return to past memories, the memory being good or bad. It can also be a paradox of longing for the return of a joyful sadness. In Spanish, longing and yearning can be expressed by words like *nostalgias*, *añoranza*, *anhelo*, *sentimiento*, and *ansia*.<sup>36</sup> In Argentinean tango lyrics, man deals with his/her mental state, knowledge, beliefs, emotions and feelings through the tango itself. The tango imparts nostalgia

<sup>33</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989: 309-311, 535; 572-574), *Collins English Dictionary* ([1979] 1991: 29: 59: 68; 681; 973; 1121; 1475).

<sup>34</sup> *The Oxford Spanish-English-Spanish Dictionary* (1994: 529, 760, 1051, 1305, 1330, 1597, 1784).

<sup>35</sup> *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* ([1977] 1982: 164).

<sup>36</sup> *The Oxford Spanish-English-Spanish Dictionary* (1994: 529, 1305, 1784).

to its setting not through the nature metaphors or descriptions found in Finnish tango lyrics, but through a *Thirdness* awareness of life and existence.<sup>37</sup> Whereas the Finnish tango deals very often with questions such as "Why?", "Why did you leave me, why, why?", i.e. the *Secondness* awareness, the Argentinean tango lyrics have captured a deeper understanding of life, *Firstness* and *Secondness* being included in *Thirdness*. This means that a thesis such as "things happen this way" is expressed through a state of *Firstness*, and then the subject reflects on his existence in *Secondness*, which is an antithesis. Finally, at the *Thirdness* stage, he is rewarded with a deeper insight into his existence. At this *Thirdness* stage the existential and ontological aspects of life are dealt with as a synthesis, even though desperation can lead to suicide, crime or murder, all being possible themes in Argentinean tango lyrics. The state of *tristeza* has therefore led to an action, the modality of *faire*.

## 2 The semantics of passion

One may ask why love is such an interesting subject in tango texts? The Finnish composer Kaj Chydenius, who has also composed tango music, describes the lyrics of popular music as small masterpieces, modest, simple stories. Simplicity, however, is not always a low aesthetic category. He talks about the phenomenon of love as well, echoing the thoughts of many leading theoreticians: love is a very progressive phenomenon; without it our lives would be unfulfilled.<sup>38</sup> In his own songs Chydenius tries to construct a concept of love which, although it can be tragic, is described optimistically. The poetic quality of the text is therefore high, allowing sufficient challenge for the composer.<sup>39</sup> This progressive idea of love is found in the Italian sociologist Francesco Alberoni's work entitled *Innamoramento e amore* (1979). Falling in love is seen as the birth of a mutual movement in two people, releasing the same forces and feelings of solidarity, joy of life and rebirth found in mass movements. Seen in this light, the lyrics of love in the tango actually have a serious function and vital importance for people, because love is almost a taboo word, difficult to express verbally. The Finnish philosopher Oiva Ketonen notes that love is perhaps too great a thing to analyse or talk about.<sup>40</sup>

However, alongside hate, revenge, betrayal and freedom, love is a phenomenon in the history of mankind which has occupied a leading position in poetry, literature and song. Love has also been studied scientifically.<sup>41</sup> Love is a personal emotion, a perception and a sensation that can be named but is difficult to investigate and analyse. The *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (1973) gives

<sup>37</sup> Peirce (1940).

<sup>38</sup> Alberoni (1979: passim).

<sup>39</sup> Chydenius in von Bagh & Hakasalo (1986: 394-395).

<sup>40</sup> Ketonen (1984: 13).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Saarinen & Alanen & Niiniluoto (1984); Ketonen (1984); Jallinoja (1984); Kukkonen (1986; 1992a-d; 1993a); Ollila (1993).

definitions of love from Voltaire's *Encyclopédie*, dated 1751–1777 (s.v. "Amour"). In referring to western civilisation and the phenomenon which was and still is called love, Denis de Rougemont, the compiler of the dictionary's section on love defines the concept of *love* in five sub-sections:<sup>42</sup>

- (1) the generative principle of the Cosmos, hence the very being of God (creativity);
- (2) friendship, the attachment to other creatures, the yearning for others (benevolent, educative, transformative, admiring, and exalting) or for concrete or ideal things (an active attitude);
- (3) the emotional attraction, the effects in man of a power which "possesses him", a physiological, psychological, or mythical force (a passive attitude);
- (4) the torment of a passion wilfully chosen, the artificial devices and "perversions" of eroticism, desire cultivated for its own sake (culture);
- (5) sexual relations, procreative and generic desire (instinct).

Definition (1) can also be called *Agapé*, divine love, definition (2) *Filia*, or friendship and definitions (3)–(5) *Eros*, sexual love and passion. The following discussion will cover some sociological aspects of love in order to understand the function of love in man's life. The Finnish sociologist Riitta Jallinoja talks about the three faces of love: (1) marital love based on Puritanism; (2) the free love of Donjuanism; and (3) the mystical, sought-after romantic love, as in the myth of *Tristan and Isolde*.<sup>43</sup> In 1975 the Finnish professor of sociology Erik Allardt published a study of welfare in the Nordic countries, focusing on the dimensions of *having, loving and being*. The *loving* dimension showed that love is expressed in relationship to other people; it is love, solidarity and companionship. According to Allardt, love is not what one possesses, but a relationship in which one is able to be both giver and receiver. Love is a powerful concept, but it becomes even more so when it is genuine and spontaneous. Love does not require the possession of material wealth. Love can become possessive (jealousy),<sup>44</sup> although this is seen as a pathological state in which love has died. The concept of happiness is temporary in character and can be found in various situations, for example, in contemplation and rest, while others find happiness in hard work. Attitudes to happiness are also ambivalent: in Allardt's research some participants say that they seek happiness, while others emphatically do not. In sociological analyses, happiness is connected with wishes and satisfaction, both highly subjective entities, though they can be studied by empirical sociological research into people's attitudes and subjective perceptions. Happiness is undeniably associated with something temporary.<sup>45</sup> Siri Naess talks about the concept of *inner life quality*, which is a more stable state than happiness. Naess mentions the following aspects as being typical of a rich inner life: the person (1) is active; (2) has self-esteem; (3) has a reciprocal and warm relationship with other people and a feeling of solidarity, loyalty and companionship and, (4) has a fundamental feeling of joy.<sup>46</sup> Allardt's research shows that in the Nordic countries the Finns are the most dissatisfied people and have relatively few

<sup>42</sup> *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (1973: 94–107 s.v. *love*), Vol. III.

<sup>43</sup> Jallinoja (1984: 105).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. the phenomenon *jealousy*, Greimas & Fontanille (1991: 189–322).

<sup>45</sup> Allardt (1975: 24–25), cf. also Allardt (1989: 212–226).

<sup>46</sup> Naess (1974: 2–3).

friends.<sup>47</sup> This means that the inner quality of life of Finns is generally weak in Naess' terms.<sup>48</sup> The assumption is that people as individuals have a need for solidarity and companionship and a desire to be part of a network of social relations in which personal feelings can be expressed. In its fulfilled form, love is a symmetrical relation, an expression of unity and companionship.<sup>49</sup> Allardt refers to many international studies which show that this relationship and unity between people is a crucial aspect of the quality of inner life.

In *200,000 situations dramatiques* (1950) Etienne Souriau discusses how an actant interpretation can be applied both to folk tales and to theatre plays.<sup>50</sup> Souriau mentions love as the first and most important of the "forces thématiques", e.g. sexual love, love in the family, love between friends, admiration, moral responsibility. Asplund has also discussed love using the categories of faithful love, love between the classes and deceitful love as the main theme in Finnish narrative popular songs (i.e. ballads and broadsides).<sup>51</sup> Love seems to be a pre-eminent thematic force in literature.<sup>52</sup> The common metaphors found in Finnish tango lyrics especially are *Rakkaus on matka*, 'Love is a journey', or *Elämä on tie*, 'Life is a journey', metaphors which, according to Lakoff & Johnson, are amongst the most widespread ones in Western culture.<sup>53</sup> Nikanne also discusses these examples, drawing parallels between them.<sup>54</sup> A further interesting view is one I have pursued, namely the aspect of tango lyrics as dramatic episodes which form a discourse which includes actors, place and time. The journey can include traveller(s), companion(s), vehicle, departure, destination, action, the route (road, river, etc.), goals, guides and delays. This drama called life (or tango in the Argentinean tango lyrics), which reflects reality, life itself, can be presented in the following way:

	<i>Life is a journey</i>		Life
Journey		→	The one whose life is in question
The traveller		→	Family/families, friends, important persons
The companion(s)		→	?
The vehicle		→	Birth
The departure		→	Death
The destination		→	Time; changes, development
The movement		→	The important events in life
The goals		→	Advisers "helpers" in life's decisions
Guides		→	The problems of life
The delays		→	

Lakoff (1990) suggests that the other central metaphor 'Love is a journey', should be defined as follows:<sup>55</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Cf. also Daun's research concerning the Swedish people (1989: passim).

<sup>48</sup> Naess (1974).

<sup>49</sup> Allardt (1975: 31); cf. also Allardt (1989: 212-226).

<sup>50</sup> Souriau (1950: 258-259); Propp (1958); cf. also Apo (1986).

<sup>51</sup> Asplund (1994: passim).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Alberoni (1979).

<sup>53</sup> Lakoff & Johnson (1980).

<sup>54</sup> Nikanne (1992: 61-63).

<sup>55</sup> Lakoff (1990: 47-48).

The metaphor involves understanding one domain of experience, love, in terms of a very different domain of experience, journeys. The metaphor can be understood as a mapping (in the mathematical sense) from a source domain (in this case, journeys) to a target domain (in this case, love). The mapping is tightly structured. There are ontological correspondences, according to which entities in the domain of love (for example, the lovers, their common goals, their difficulties, the love relationship, etc.) correspond systematically to entities in the domain of journey (the travellers, the vehicle, destinations, etc.)

'Life is a journey', and 'Love is a journey' both imply the concept of the road as an ontological and an orientational metaphor, but how can the concept of love be made the object of investigation in order to capture the components of its meaning? What follows aims to discuss this question.

In 1933 Leonard Bloomfield linked semantics to the onward march of science. It was not the scientific study of mental phenomena (thought and symbolisation) that he saw as providing the semanticist's answers, but the scientific definition of everything to which language may refer:<sup>56</sup>

We can define the meaning of a speech-form accurately when this meaning has to do with some matter of which we possess scientific knowledge. We can define the names of minerals, for example, in terms of chemistry and mineralogy, as when we say that the ordinary meaning of the English word salt is 'sodium chloride (NaCl)', and we can define the names of plants or animals by means of the technical terms of botany or zoology, but we have no precise way of defining words like *love* or *hate*, which concern situations that have not been accurately classified – and these latter are in the great majority.

As Geoffrey Leech states,<sup>57</sup> Bloomfield's conclusion sounded a pessimistic note, which turned out to be the virtual death-knell of semantics in the USA for the next twenty years: "The statement of meanings is therefore the weak point in language-study, and will remain so until human knowledge advances very far beyond its present state."<sup>58</sup> In the modern linguistic approach to semantics one of the keynotes is that there is no escape from language: an equation such as *cent* = hundredth of a dollar or *salt* = NaCl is not the matching of a linguistic sign with something outside language; it is a correspondence between two linguistic expressions, supposedly having 'the same meaning'.<sup>59</sup>

The concept of *love* is hard to analyse, but my attempt has been to do so using semantic feature analysis or component analysis.<sup>60</sup> The semantic field of love consists of words and utterances, as well as various paraphrases and metaphors for the concept of love. Hence, the common seme<sup>61</sup> is 'love' denoting the emotion and passion of love and the desire for it. This metafeature could be expressed as +*désir*. The Latin noun *desiderium* has the Finnish meanings 'ikävä' (*longing*), 'kaipa' (*yearning*), 'halu' (*desire, lust*), 'kaipauksen kohde' (*the object of love*), 'kaivattu' (*a person whom one longs for*), 'toivo' (*hope*), 'toive' (*a wish*), 'anomus' (*a request*), 'tarve' (*a need*); the noun *amor* means 'rakkaus' (*love*), 'halu' (*desire, lust*), 'himo' (*lust, greed, thirst, passion*), 'rakastettu' (*beloved*).<sup>62</sup> It expresses such dimensions of 'love' as longing, desire, the object of one's longing, the desired person, hope, need, passion, the beloved.

<sup>56</sup> Bloomfield (1933: 139).

<sup>57</sup> Leech ([1974] 1985: 2).

<sup>58</sup> Bloomfield (1933: 140).

<sup>59</sup> Leech ([1974] 1985: 4).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Greimas (1966); Leech ([1974] 1985).

<sup>61</sup> Greimas (1966: 45).

<sup>62</sup> Salmi & Linkomies (1967: 25, 86).

In accordance with the binary system used by Greimas the semantic notation with a plus sign (e.g. *+désir*) means that the feature is present, while a minus sign (e.g. *-désir*) indicates that it is not present; a combination of the both signs (e.g. *±temporary*) indicates that both features are present. The permanency and the temporary nature of love can be postulated with *±temporary*. Love, loving and happiness themselves are usually temporary in nature, as concluded by Östman.<sup>63</sup> The intensity of love is marked *±intensity*, reflecting the presence of strong feelings of passion, jealousy, hate or non-love. Following the tradition of structural linguistics, a word obtains its *value* in relation to other words in the same semantic field,<sup>64</sup> but naturally the very meaning of the word is specified in the context of language use, i.e. as a pragmatic aspect, and in the semiotics of culture, i.e. language as a sociocultural entity.

According to Lotman, an analysis of the seme is part of cultural semiotics (cf. the above-mentioned culturally bound words); every word or its smallest element of meaning generates culture.<sup>65</sup> Following the idea of describing a word through its opposites, love obtains its feature *+desir* from the joy and delight of love, and *+dolor* from both the sorrow and the pain of longing for one's beloved. Thus, the semiotic components of the concept of love consist, on the one hand, of inherent features based on our perception and world knowledge and, on the other hand, of combined features, interpreted from the actual language and cultural context. The following aims to identify the central semantic and semiotic features.

The Finnish tango texts usually talk about love through the opposites of *désir* and *dolor*. In a very popular Finnish tango *Rakasta, kärsi ja unhoita!*, (1955) 'Love, Suffer and Forget!',<sup>66</sup> composed by Toivo Kärki, lyrics by V. Enckell, the feature *+désir* covers the positive characteristic feature *+happiness*, while the negative features *+dolor*, *+pain*, *+sorrow* and *+suffering*, combined with the feature *+temporary*, demonstrate the transient nature of love. A further semantically positive feature is *+oblivion*, in other words, time helps us forget and is the *helper* that heals the wounds of love. Destiny is at the same time both the *helper* that brings love and oblivion and also the *opponent* that can bring sorrow. Great love and passion naturally possess the elements of suffering and pain combined with longing. In the tango *Pieni sydän* (1939), 'Little Heart', composed by Walter Rae, lyrics by Tatu Pekkarinen,<sup>67</sup> the semantic features consist of *+désir*; *+passion*, *+dream* and *+joy*, and the negative features are *+dolor*; *+sorrow*, *+hate*, *+pain*, *+unemotional*, *+loneliness* and *+rejection*.

Usually the translated tangos use passionate metaphors and express dramatic emotions, e.g. *Järjen veit, ja minusta orjan teit*, 'You took my sense, and made a

<sup>63</sup> Östman (1989: passim).

<sup>64</sup> de Saussure's ([1916] 1970: 157-159) fields of concepts are formed by associative connections; i.e. they are conceptual fields.

<sup>65</sup> Lotman (1989: passim).

<sup>66</sup> *Yleisön pyynnöstä* 1 ([1955] 1956: 8-9), Helsinki University Library Collections.

<sup>67</sup> *Dallapé* 46 (1939: 5), Helsinki University Library Collections.



slave of me'.<sup>68</sup> The semantic feature is *+désir*; *+passion*, *+désir insanity*, *+mad désir* and *+blind désir* (i.e. *jalousie*; love which will possess and own); *kuumuuden huulilta toisen minulle toit*, 'the heat from the lips of somebody else you brought to me' postulates the features *+désir* and *+temporary*. The metaphors of love are often expressed in fiery metaphors, as in A. G. Villoldo's Argentinean tango *El Choclo* (1905), adapted in English by Lester Allen and Robert Hill.<sup>69</sup> In this passionate European tango adaptation the text talks about *Those devil lips that know so well the art of lying, or And tho' it burns me and it turns me into ashes, / My whole world crashes, without your Kiss of Fire*. The subject in the text describes the intensity of the kiss of fire of the receiver. The critical words in the Finnish version are *sun tules liekeissä kun sydämeni räytyy*, 'in the flame of your fire my heart suffers', with the expressive, culturally bound Finnish verbs *räytyä*, *riutua* ('suffer'). In the original Finnish tango lyrics, it is possible to find words expressing strong feelings (*+intensity*), especially in the tango lyrics of the 1930s, but they are generally quite rare.

The concept of love, both as joy and pain, heaven and hell, seems to possess the two features *+passion* and *+suffering*. In Swedish the verb *lida* ('suffer') is the root of both *lidelse* 'passion' (*+désir*) and *lidande* 'suffering' (*+dolor*) which together describe the same, the inherent meaning component, 'love'.<sup>70</sup> In their book *Sémiotique des passions. Des états de choses aux états d'âme* (1991), A. J. Greimas and Jacques Fontanille give a profound analysis of "La Jalousie", this possessive feeling of love postulated as the feature *jalousie*.<sup>71</sup> In his book *A Lover's Discourse. Fragments* ([1977] 1978), Roland Barthes mentions jealousy as a central part of the vocabulary of "a lover's discourse".<sup>72</sup> The philosophy of love is seldom reflected through the scientist's looking glass.<sup>73</sup> The semiotics of love and longing reflected culturally in the Finnish tango is therefore an object of the present study. The themes of the two genres, the Argentinean and the Finnish tangos, are an interesting subject for semiotic research, as are the translations and interpretations of the original Argentinean or, more precisely, the Rioplatensian tangos, and the European tango in their Finnish and Swedish versions. In particular, how have the tango translators adapted the original texts into another culture? In translation studies this phenomenon is described by the term *cultural translation*.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>68</sup> For instance, *Tango Jalousie* (copyright in 1933), *Mustasukkaisuutta* ([1943] 1953), which became a great success in Finland. Composed by the Dane Jacob Gade, it belongs among the great international tangos. The European tango texts are from the *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Villoldo (1905; 1930; 1947), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>70</sup> Kukkonen (1986: 77-100).

<sup>71</sup> Greimas & Fontanille (1991: 189-322).

<sup>72</sup> Barthes ([1977] 1978: 144-146).

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Saarinen & Alanen & Niiniluoto (1984); Kukkonen (1986; 1992a-d; 1993a; 1993d-e; 1995b-c).

<sup>74</sup> Hatim & Mason (1990: *passim*).



## *II The tango as cultural texts and semiotics*

### *I Fado, flamenco and tango – the interpreters of nostalgia*

Destiny and fate have had three very expressive interpreters in music, namely *fado*, *flamenco* and *tango*, forms of popular culture developed among poor people as an expression of folklore or as an urban popular culture. *Popular culture* can be defined as "all those elements of life which are not narrowly intellectual or creatively elite and which are generally though not necessarily disseminated through mass media."<sup>1</sup> *Fado*, derived from the Latin nominal *fatum* meaning 'fate', is a type of popular Portuguese song and dance with guitar accompaniment, apparently dating from c. 1850,<sup>2</sup> a typically urban vocal popular music of cafés, cabarets and night clubs developed from many traditions in the same style and at the same time as the *tango* in Buenos Aires and *rebetika* in Pireus. *Fado* lyrics have traces of the medieval Provençal troubadour tradition and roots in the Arabic lyrics of 700–1200, because Arabic lyrics share a fatalistic melancholy. The *fado* is a strong tradition in Portugal today. Song techniques are not taught, since every *fado* singer has to *feel* the *fado*, i.e. *Life is a fado*. This feeling cannot be learned, nor can it be taught. The history of the *fado* with its nostalgic and melancholic longing and yearning begins with sailors who were a long way from home on the sea, longing for their homeland and their beloved.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the spirit of the *fado* is created from a feeling of longing and yearning, *saudade*, a culturally bound word whose deepest and the most real meaning and connotation can be understood only as a part of the Portuguese culture. The urban phenomenon of *fado* has derived something special from Portuguese culture and mentality. *Saudade* means 'deep longing, yearning, longing for someone or something far away, deep nostalgia and homesickness'.<sup>4</sup> It has no sense of cheap romantic longing but is a serious feature of man's life, its transitory character. The message of the *fado* seems to be that life is short, we have to live and enjoy it right now. The *flamenco* includes all human emotions and passions: melancholy, sorrow, hatred, passion, joy, love and humour. It is a rhythmical Spanish dance style, particularly Andalusian. The *flamenco* style of guitar-playing, rhythmical and improvisatory, is the opposite of the classical. *Canto flamenco* is a type of melody popular in Andalusia and used in both song and dance. It is a branch of *canto jondo*. The significance of the word *flamenco* (Flemish) is much disputed, referring to the mixed culture of Arabic, Jewish, Christian and gypsy folklore now called *flamenco*.<sup>5</sup>

The history of the *tango* begins actually both in England and in Africa. The English *country-dance* of the 17th century made its way to Haiti through France

<sup>1</sup> Brown (1970: 11); Dunlop (1975: 375-383) in *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 9. Shuker (1994: 1-30).

<sup>2</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* (1985: 238).

<sup>3</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980: 142-143), Vol. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor (1958), *A Portuguese-English Dictionary* (1958: 571).

<sup>5</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* (1985: 124, 254).

with Negro slaves to Cuba. Thus the Cuban dance, *contra-danza* or *danza cubana* was born; from this dance the *salsa*, i.e. *habanera*, *cha-cha-cha*, *mambo* and so on were developed. The tango was developed through the *habanera* into different forms; one was the elite *habanera*, the other the *habanera* of the people. In Europe the former became popular in operettas and revues, while the latter made its way with the Negro slaves from Cuba to the area of Río de la Plata. The African feast in this area was called *tambo*, which may gradually have become *tango* with the reference to the negroes' dance, not the place. Hence the amalgamation of the European and African tradition in the 1880s developed into the dance *tango*. The tango was born in the harbour quarters of Montevideo and Buenos Aires, played and danced among sailors, poor immigrants, and prostitutes. This was the time of the great emigration wave from Europe – from Spain, Italy, France and Germany.

The word *tango* and its etymology has many interpretations and explanations, and is therefore still much debated. The Latin verb *tango* meaning 'to touch' seems to be its origin. During the 19th century in Spain and several Latin American countries the term meant various types of dances, songs and communal festivities. Fernando Ortiz and others claim that the word is of African origin with the general meaning 'African dance'. Other researchers believe that it is of Castilian origin, derived from the old Spanish word *tañer* (*taño*, 'to play' an instrument). Rossi and Vega stated that the term *tango* was used by black slaves in the La Plata area (Argentina and Uruguay) in colonial times to designate their percussion instruments (particularly drums), the locale of the dance and the dance itself. By the first decades of the 19th century the meaning had been extended to black *comparsas*, festive carnival groups in Montevideo also known as *candombe*. As late as 1900 the Cuban *comparsas*, a type of carnival parade, were called *tangos*. From the mid-19th century there are references to the Spanish Andalusian or gypsy ('flamenco') tango, but the internationally known Argentinean and Uruguayan urban popular song and dance is related to the Cuban *contradanza*, *habanera* and *Cuban tango*. The latter, together with the *habanera*, had spread throughout Latin America by the 1850s. In Brazil as well as in the Río de la Plata area tango was the name given to the *habanera* itself during the latter part of the 19th century. The *tango brasileiro* was a local adaptation of the Cuban *habanera*, from which several popular genres including the *maxixe* developed. All these dances have the prevailing duple metre (2/4) in common. Despite its many meanings *tango* primarily designates the most popular Argentinean urban dance of the 20th century. The tango was born in the *arrabal* or suburban culture consisting of elements introduced after 1870 by millions of frustrated European immigrants, and aspects of urbanised pampas, or gaucho, traditions. The tango thus became a social protest. Until about 1915 the tango maintained the duple metre (2/4) of the *habanera* and *milonga*, a dance of African origin in duple metre and syncopated

rhythm, after which 4/4 and 4/8 became more frequent; after 1955 new rhythmic complexities were developed (e.g. Astor Piazzolla's *tango nuevo*).<sup>6</sup>

Castro discusses three periods in the history of the Argentinean tango: (1) the *Guardia Vieja* 1880–1917, (2) *epoca de oro* 'The Golden Era' 1917–1943, and (3) the tango under Perón 1943–1955. The first period of the tango's history was dominated by the tango as dance, *tango danza*, the second period is the period of tango song, *tango canción*. The evolution of the tango is an evolution from sinful dance to one of acceptance; from *suburbio* (1865–1895) and the brothels of *el bajo* or the port area of Buenos Aires (ca 1900), and from there to La Boca with its *cafetines cantantes* (bars where music was played), places for prostitutes, pimps, and thugs, places of excitement for upper-class males (ca 1907), to its acceptability in downtown cafes (ca 1910) and final triumph in Paris (ca 1913).<sup>7</sup>

Hence, the tango in its earliest stage (1880–1890) could be considered folk culture, an urban popular cultural form associated clearly with the underclasses, particularly the Creole and the immigrant; in its next stage, *tango danza* (1890–1917), i.e. a form of popular culture by virtue of its wider acceptance in the culture of the *suburbios* (lower and working-class neighbourhoods) of Buenos Aires. After 1917 (Pascal Contursi's, 1888–1932, *Mi noche triste*, sung by Carlos Gardel), the tango developed into the *tango canción*, a time of "the massification of the tango" through the new electronic media of radio, film and sound recordings. By the 1930s, the popularity of sound and radio made the *tango canción* a national and international popular cultural phenomenon.<sup>8</sup> According to Castro the tango changed under the Perón era in the 1940s and 1950s. It was not until the time of Perón that the tango lost its currency as a source of social comment. The regime created a "new" tango focused on nostalgia and on the dance form. "If the tango moved from the feet [*tango danza*] to the mouth [*tango canción*] in 1917, it moved back to the feet in the 1950s. Thus ended the tango as a useful source for Argentine social history."<sup>9</sup>

Once the tango had been accepted in Paris at the beginning of the 1920s, it was also accepted in England. Not until the late 1920s did all Argentine social classes accept the tango, i.e. after the dance became respectable in Europe and particularly in Paris. In the 1920s the tango expressed working-class consciousness, in the 1930s the tangos reflected the economic situation during the depression, and in the 1940s and 1950s *peronismo* was reflected in the texts; the social content was replaced by nostalgia in large part due to the socio-political consequences of that era.<sup>10</sup> Early tangos were played in brothels and bars on the outskirts of town frequented by the criminal class (cf. the cant called *lunfardo*,

<sup>6</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980: 563-565).

<sup>7</sup> Castro (1991: 102-103, 129-130).

<sup>8</sup> Castro (1991: 6-7).

<sup>9</sup> Castro (1991: 251).

<sup>10</sup> Castro (1991: 7-9).

meaning 'thief'),<sup>11</sup> recounting the frustration of urban life and the nostalgia for a simpler provincial life-style.<sup>12</sup>

The tango of the *Guardia Vieja* was closely associated with brothels, especially the *compadrito* ('ladies' man'), the *malevo* ('criminal') and his woman (*las mujeres de la vida*), *minas*, *chinas*, *prendas*, *hembras* ('streetwalkers, skirts, bitches', etc.). In the cabaret in the 1920s with its Frenchified environment the tango "put on a smoking jacket". Prostitution remains an important theme in tango lyrics as does the loneliness and *tristeza* of a single man in search of affection and love.<sup>13</sup>

Besides the tango there was the dance called *milonga*, which has a quicker tempo than the tango. In the tango the choreographic forms reflect the words in the world of the tango. Mafud has described the *compadrito's* suggestive style, with the duels of Creoles and the high-heeled boots.<sup>14</sup> Taylor states that the main concern of the tango dance is the relation between the man and the woman, where the man is active, the woman passive. In his dance the man shows that he is not a *gil*, 'a dumb innocent'.<sup>15</sup> The concept of *gil* (the dupe) was born in the *conventillo*,<sup>16</sup> tenement house, the home of the *compadrito* (dandified Creole thug) as well as the immigrants.

According to Gobello & Bossio (1979), among the great tango poets are Pascal Contursi (1888–1932) who is the father, the teacher, and the beginner of tango literature, and Homero Manzi, who wrote lyrics in solitude and endured their bitterness or nostalgia alone. Enrique Santos Discépolo (1901–1951) employed the fiery language in which the words do not say anything by themselves but combined with a metaphysical sense they take on the expressive force of a powerful image.<sup>17</sup> During the depression in the 1930s Discépolo, one of the greatest writers of tango lyrics ever, wrote *¿Qué vachaché?* (1926), *Yira ... Yira* (1929–1930) and *Cambalache* (1935), which expresses hopelessness, fatalism, distress, anguish, pain, and agony.<sup>18</sup> In his texts misfortune and betrayal dominate. In the 1940s the tango boom was great; big orchestras were created, the record industry was developed, the great names of the tango are Horacio Salgan (1916–), Anibal Troilo (1914–1975), Astor Piazzolla (1921–1992), developing the *tango nuevo* with changeable dynamics, new and surprising harmonies, the dominance of the *bandoneón*. In 1951 Discépolo commits suicide, and the tango is left in crisis. In the 1960s Salgan and Piazzolla reform the tango with elements from jazz, classical music and avant-garde music. A third form of the tango is the modern theatre tango, personified in the singer

<sup>11</sup> Castro (1991: 17-18; 15-52; 53-88); cf. dictionaries, for instance, Casullo (1964), Gobello (1978); cf. also Castro's (1991: 256-257) references to *lunfardo* sources.

<sup>12</sup> Castro (1991: 7-8).

<sup>13</sup> Castro (1991: 177-178).

<sup>14</sup> Mafud (1966: 40-41).

<sup>15</sup> Taylor (1976: 281-282).

<sup>16</sup> Castro (1991: 114).

<sup>17</sup> Gobello & Bossio (1979: 60), Castro (1991: 65, the English translation).

<sup>18</sup> Barreiro (1985: 162-164, 166-167, 167-168).

Susana Rinaldi. There had already been some women tango singers early in the 20th century.<sup>19</sup>

An interesting question for my study is how different cultural influences amalgamated to form the tango as we know it. When the tango was created is difficult to state precisely, but it became a popular dance at the end of the 19th century. The late 19th century tango *El tango de la casera*, 'The Landlady's Tango', describes the world of so-called *conventillos* tenement house, on the banks of the Río de la Plata, where immigrants arrived from the 1870s onwards. Here people of widely different cultures lived side by side.<sup>20</sup> Contursi's tangos are about the *conventillo*, the cabaret, prostitutes, hideaway apartments and lovers. In *Mi noche triste* (1915–1916), where the basic theme is the sadness and loneliness of unrequited love, he uses expressions from *lunfardo*.<sup>21</sup> The false woman left the man with *el alma herida y espinas en la corazón*, 'with a wounded soul and spines in my heart'.

The first tango from the poor districts to be accepted by a "respectable" society was Enrique Saborido's and Angel Villoldo's *La morocha* (1905) 'The Brunette',<sup>22</sup> which was sung in 1910 by the Uruguayan Flora Rodríguez de Gobi, mother of the celebrated violinist Alfredo Gobi. In 1906 the appearance of the phonographic record contributed to its popularity. At the end of 19th century, the tango already had its dance halls, and its *milongas* or Creole cabarets, in which the passion for the tango was included. The *compadres*, tough, quarrelsome and arrogant gang-leaders who were typical figures of the Buenos Aires working class districts, danced the tango in these places on the beaten earth dance floors with their high-heeled boots. These dance halls were meeting places for immigrants and native-born Argentines with very different social backgrounds. They were frequented by seamen from passing ships, the "black sheep" of respectable families, *jailifes* (cf. English *high life*) looking for thrills, and *calaveras*, bachelors or married men looking for an easy pick-up.<sup>23</sup>

The wave of immigration to the banks of the Río de la Plata, Buenos Aires and Montevideo came from Spain, Italy, France, and Germany.<sup>24</sup> Therefore it is especially interesting to notice the double direction of the development of the tango; first from Europe to the area of the Río de la Plata, then from this area back to Europe, and especially to a Nordic country such as Finland, mainly through Germany, and the USA via Paris. Hence, the third line for the Finnish tango is Río de la Plata. These three phenomena, *fado*, *flamenco*, and *tango*, have an interesting history, having been the interpreters of the profound feelings and existential states of man, namely passion in its many forms; love, hate, pain, anxiety, and solitude in a nostalgic way. The *fado* is the same as life; it is the inner *fuego*, fire, of being a human being in a changing world. The same definition can be applied both to the *flamenco* and the *tango*.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. note 30.

<sup>20</sup> Rinaldi (1992:6).

<sup>21</sup> Castro (1991: 66-68).

<sup>22</sup> Barreiro (1985: 150-152).

<sup>23</sup> Castro (1991: 116-117); Rinaldi (1992: 6).

<sup>24</sup> Padilla (1986: 6).

2 *The Argentinean tango — the theme of class and nation:  
argentinidad and tristeza*

The tango is, as María Susana Azzi says in her book *Antropología del tango* (1991), a very complex human phenomenon; it is music, dance, and lyrics which can be the object of interdisciplinary studies from very different points of view.<sup>25</sup>

The tango, which refers to man's deepest states and feelings, is defined as *un pensamiento triste que se puede bailar*, 'a sad thought that is danced'<sup>26</sup> by Enrique Santos Discépolo. It therefore has many dimensions; only some of them can be considered here.

The origins and development of the tango as poetry and music was forged in the cultural melting-point of the Río de la Plata region. The themes of the tango are the eternal themes of man, such as solitude, time, love, death, and injustice. It tells us about the solitude of men and women in big cities, attempting to talk about the human qualities of the Argentinean people and their profound sense of solidarity. It is a total experience, whose poetry is a blend of music, words and dance. Its lyrics are often pieces of literature that have a poetic language of their own and express a vision of the world. The great strength of the tango is that it has fascinated various Argentinean writers.<sup>27</sup>

That each tango is a story, a dramatic episode, a narrative whole, is a fundamental assumption of my study. The tango is also a dance, a form of music, very distinctive among other Latin American rhythms, "a sad thought that can be danced". The tango dance is an art full of virtuoso touches (cf. *tango*, Latin *tangere* 'touch'); its steps such as *cortes*, *quebradas*, *sentadas*, *pataditas* and *lustradas* are all steps which are rigorously codified and ritualised; the tango dancer's body seems to be divided into two parts. The top half is almost immobile, the dancing being concentrated in the bottom half. This is why the tango was accused of being suggestive and sensuous when it first appeared. It is a dramatic, introspective dance. The *porteños* – the people of Buenos Aires – feel a kind of melancholy that affects their way of walking and gives the tango its hidden rhythm. Actually, the tango is rather a way of walking than a dance with which the *porteños* dance the tango to brood on their fate and reflect on the bitterness of life, the aggressive immensity of the city.<sup>28</sup>

The tango is identified with its legendary exponent, Carlos Gardel (1890–1935) who made the Argentinean tango into a concept, and performed, for instance, the tangos *Volver* (1934), *Mano a mano* (1920), *Mi Buenos Aires querido* (1934) and *Silencio* (1932).<sup>29</sup> The tango is above all a performing art, and the great tango singers had a singing style of their own. The tango belonged

<sup>25</sup> Azzi (1991: 362).

<sup>26</sup> Lara & Panti (1961: 217); Reichardt (1981: 96, 261, footnote 196); Castro (1991: 124-125).

<sup>27</sup> Rinaldi (1992: 7).

<sup>28</sup> Taylor (1976: 281-282); Rinaldi (1992: 4-5).

<sup>29</sup> Barreiro (1985: 112-113, 191-192, 105-106, 94).



for a long time to male culture only; hence the concept of *macho tango*. The tango was a dance for tough men. The texts of the tangos reflect the milieu where they were created; there are tangos which represent social history, the strongest form being the *macho*, brutal tango about the life in the harbour, crimes, about sinful women and the macho man. Some tangos idealise motherhood, childhood, and love. In brief, the tangos are stories about man's life in a changing world. However, there have always been female tango singers, ever since the days of the pioneer Rosita Quiroga (died 1984), the first to enter a male-dominated field on radio in 1923,<sup>30</sup> but they always sang about men, stories told by and for men, in which women stayed in the background. However, there are also human stories with which both men and women can identify themselves. The lyrics express a philosophy of living very different from that of the old tangos. Musically, the new tangos represent a break with the traditional subjects and ideas. For instance, the composer Astor Piazzolla (1921–1992) has brought a new harmonic conception to the tango.<sup>31</sup>

The tango is an expression of the cultural identity of a nation. The music from the poor districts of Buenos Aires has become a sign of being Argentinean, *argentinidad*, at home and abroad. Horacio Arturo Ferrer, a writer of tango lyrics, says that the tango is an emotional state specific to the culture of the Río de la Plata. It is the expression of the deepest experience of Argentineans.<sup>32</sup> The tango expresses the rather sceptical attitude to life of people who do not believe in anything and never have; the philosophy of Discépolo's tango *Cambalache* (1935), ('Bric-à-Brac') presents a view of life which justifies drifting and resignation. The origins of the tango expressed the homesickness of immigrants, the resentment of the indigenous population, and the lack of stable values in a changing world. The tango prefers sadness and despair to gaiety and optimism; its inherent feature is *tristeza*.<sup>33</sup>

The tango is always a culturally bound phenomenon, and to understand the real life and soul of the Argentinean tango, knowledge of its culture and society is essential. The tango has a terminology of its own, in the *lunfardo* slang, not always available in normal dictionaries.<sup>34</sup> The tango is a part of Argentina, the nation's life and manners, its social, cultural and historical context. Cultural knowledge is often information hidden in the tango lyrics. It was in the Río de la Plata area among workers that the specifically Argentinean epics, *gaucho* epics, were born. The essential and important themes are hopelessness, alienation and relations with woman. These people were called *porteños*. In Buenos Aires the *gaucho* music tradition was expressed through *payada* and *milonga*. A *payador*

<sup>30</sup> Other famous female vocalists soon followed; Azucena Maizani also in 1923, Libertad Lamarque in 1926, Sofia Bozán in 1926, Manolita Poli and Ada Falcón in the late 1920s. Cf. Castro (1991: 188–191) on the female tango vocalists, and the female tango musician Paquita Bernardo (1900–1925), famous *bandoneónista* of the 1920s. Cf. also Castro (1991: 196, 250–251) on women's position in the male tango world. Women were needed in the tango world to broaden its audience, i.e. the female as a "neutral force".

<sup>31</sup> Rinaldi (1992: 7).

<sup>32</sup> Azzi (1991: passim); Rinaldi (1992: 5).

<sup>33</sup> Taylor (1976: 273–291); Anselmi (1990) in the cover text to his CD *El gringo* UCD 19023.

<sup>34</sup> Casullo (1964).



('a peon on an estancia, Argentine ranch') was a vagabond, a troubadour, who performed songs in an improvised question and answer form, poems called *payada*. A *payador* sang about social or philosophical themes.<sup>35</sup> The lyrics or the texts of the tango have an essential thematic role, with the peculiar vocabulary of the *compadrito*, *lunfardo*. Later this language was developed by the language of Italian immigrants, and had an influence on the Italian Argentinean Spanish which every *porteño* could speak and understand.<sup>36</sup>

In her analysis Julie M. Taylor discusses the tango lyrics, *las letras*, from eight socio-anthropological aspects concerning the concept of *argentinidad*.<sup>37</sup> The first is the Argentinean national character: "el pueblo gris", "Somos un pueblo gris" 'We are a dull people'. This pessimistic feature is expressed in *el hombre tanguero*, when this feature becomes the bitterness which Ernesto Sábato identifies as "that discontent, that ill humour, that vague bitterness, that undefined and latent anger against everything and against everyone which is almost the quintessence of the average Argentine."<sup>38</sup> Julio Mafud describes *tipo tanguero*, a typical tango person as "[...] lone, silent, emotionally unsatisfied, a man who cultivates friendship and maternal love, with a great store of slyness in his social conscience, with a certain resemblance to the *compadre*, an exhibitionist in his *machismo*, using *lunfardo* in his speech, withdrawn into his ego and only coming out of himself to talk with a friend, [...] always watching out so that he may not pass for a fool."<sup>39</sup> The role of *lunfardo* has played a central role in terms of defining Argentine social and cultural values, particularly in view of the role immigration has played in the creation of a sense of being Argentinean, *argentinidad*.<sup>40</sup> The language is one of the most important aspects revealing cultural identity. *El pueblo agranda el idioma*, 'The people give language its greatness', as the motto of the Academia porteña del Lunfardo says.<sup>41</sup> In Castro's words: "If the people of Buenos Aires have a dance that expresses their soul it is the tango, and if the tango must be sung it must be sung in lunfardo."<sup>42</sup>

The central concept characterising the Argentinean tango is *tristeza*, meaning 'sadness, distress, depression, melancholy, nostalgia, grief, anguish, anxiety', etc. It is the third aspect in Taylor's analysis, and can be correctly understood only in the Argentinean cultural context – an Argentine is an unlucky man, nostalgic, and "dull". Sorrow and melancholy as a concept can be illuminated through the language of *el mufarse lunfardo*, 'to mope'. This concept builds up from hate and bad luck, but also from the fact that one resigns oneself to these feelings.<sup>43</sup> His feeling is a consequence of intensive introspection typical of a *gente tanguerelle*.

<sup>35</sup> Mafud (1966: 25-34).

<sup>36</sup> Taylor (1976: 276); Casullo (1964).

<sup>37</sup> Taylor (1976: 276-277).

<sup>38</sup> Sábato (1965: 16).

<sup>39</sup> Mafud (1966: 13-14).

<sup>40</sup> Castro (1991: 16).

<sup>41</sup> Quoted after Castro (1991: 15, note 1).

<sup>42</sup> Castro (1991: 52-53); cf. *the Argentine porteño character* in Castro (1991: 146-147).

<sup>43</sup> Taylor (1976: 277).

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The common denominator of this is the concept of love which involves suffering.

The Argentinean tango texts are usually rather long narrative ones, being stories or dramatic episodes of social history from the time the tango was created with the strong tradition of *macho tango* culture.<sup>44</sup> In these texts men tell about their longing for home and their lack of company, spending their time in brothels listening to the tango. Often men danced the tango, a reason for its being forbidden in 1916. Men dancing the tango was thought to encourage homosexuality. However, the texts also talk about real friendship between men. The concept of woman was dual; Santa Madre, or the prostitute. In the 1920s especially the themes of the tango were poverty, frustration, solitude, and alcoholism.<sup>45</sup> Every tango is a reflection of a specific culture and time; this is apparent both in the lyrics and in the musical arrangements. Folk poetry including the hit, the evergreen, and the tango have their myths and themes, which are often described by high culture as naive, trivial or banal. But the eternal motifs are love, longing, disappointment, and loneliness as in high cultural texts. Actually, ethnomusicologists have stated that popular music is in fact very important, since people repeat their history through its music and lyrics. Hence the role of memories of the past becomes essential.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ahlén (1987: 17-18).

<sup>45</sup> Ahlén (1987: 76).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. M. Niiniluoto (1991: 114).

### III The themes of love, nostalgia and *tristeza* in Argentinean tango lyrics

If we follow Enrique Santos Discépolos' definition of the tango as 'a sad thought that is danced', *el tango argentino es un pensamiento triste que se puede bailar*,<sup>1</sup> the tango refers to man's deepest mental states and feelings. As mentioned earlier Julie M. Taylor distinguishes eight central themes in discussing the tango from a socio-anthropological view,<sup>2</sup> while Donald S. Castro has considered the tango as social history during the period 1880–1955 in nine basic categories in order of their development.<sup>3</sup> My research on the Argentinean tangos shows that the main semiotic nexus is the passions, which consists mainly of the concepts of nostalgia, love, *tristeza*, sadness, distress, grief, sorrow, melancholy, anxiety, anguish and gloom. These, together with different realisations of the concept of love, longing and yearning form a specific nostalgia. Only in a few of the Argentinean tangos considered did joy, delight, happiness, laughter, carnival, or an optimistic view of life appear. Various categorisations emphasise the crucial social aspects of the Argentinean tango, but my account starts from a conceptual point of view. The principal concepts of the Argentinean tangos can be summarised as Taylor or Castro have done.<sup>4</sup> My purpose is to handle certain ideas as belonging to semiotic conceptual fields, focusing on the semantic and semiotic aspect of passions as a mirror of man's mental structures. It examines the content of the lyrics in the following order:

1. The existential states: love, passion, sorrow, anxiety, betrayal, solitude, injustice, death, and the infrequently occurring joy as realisations of nostalgia and *tristeza*.
2. The spirit of actual places and time, *chronotopos*, as realisations of nostalgia and *tristeza*.
3. The central attributes: the tango, the *bandoneón*, the *cafetín*, alcohol.

I will thus discuss only a few Argentinean tango texts which illuminate the central themes of the existential states love, nostalgia and melancholy through the basic modalities of existence. The Argentinean tango material in this study consists of 232 tangos.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Reichardt (1981: 96; 261, footnote 196); Castro (1991: 124-125); Lara & Panti (1961: 217).

<sup>2</sup> Taylor (1976: 276-281).

<sup>3</sup> Castro (1991: 8-10).

<sup>4</sup> Barreiro (1985: 49-211) uses the following divisions of the Argentinean tango lyrics: (1) *Traición y abandono*, (2) *Destino cruel*, (3) *Nostalgia*, (4) *Descripción*, (5) *Narración*, (6) *Exaltación*, (7) *Protesta social*, (8) *Satira y admonición*. His book includes also the special vocabulary of these tangos (op. cit.: 213-225).

<sup>5</sup> The lyrics considered are from Reichardt (1981: 109-270) in the original and in German translations (91 tangos), Barreiro (1985: 49-211) in the original (116 tangos), and Åhlén (1984: 168-207) in the original and in Swedish translations (25 tangos).

## 1 The existential states

### *Life, love and death*

The Argentinean tango is a genre of literature and poetry in which deep psychological factors of man's existence are discussed. Martin Heidegger's philosophy provides the useful term *das Man*, meaning 'anybody' who is involved in *Dasein*, 'being', 'existence', 'the existence of man', as well as *Dasein* and *In-der-Welt-sein*. These terms are essential in understanding the deepest ontological or phenomenological aspect of man and life. For Heidegger *die Angst*, anxiety, or *Dasein*, is a positive phenomenon in that it gives man an opportunity to see or discover his/her potential. Heidegger sees man as needing silence in order to get into a state of anxiety; only through this can man see his/her potential.<sup>6</sup> The states and actions of *das Man* are actualised in modalities (cf. Latin *modus* 'way'). If we think of life as consisting of various modalities, we can according to Greimas' system distinguish the following: being (*être*) and doing (*faire*) are the basic modalities, while will (*vouloir*), know (*savoir*), can (*pouvoir*), must (*devoir*), and believe (*croire*) are the others. An essential modality in my research is desire (*désir*), to want somebody or something. The logic of being is the classical extensional logic; do and can are considered in the logic of action; will and must (ought) in deontic logic; know and believe in epistemic logic. As Niiniluoto states, philosopher-logicians emphasise the syntax and semantics of statements of certain verbs such as *know*, *believe*, *remember*, *do*, *will*, *must*, *ought*, *may*, etc. The semiotician is primarily interested in the pragmatics of such statements, i.e. in the actual role of the states and activities described by these verbs within the context of human culture.<sup>7</sup> The system of modalities has particularly led to a theory of passions offered by Greimas & Fontanille.<sup>8</sup> Three main directions are thus combined in the present study, namely the Greimasian system of modalities, Peirce's three ontological categories, and the framework of Heidegger's existentialism.<sup>9</sup> Heidegger's terms can be applied to Charles Sanders Peirce's terms; anxiety leads *das Man* to *Thirdness*, where he gets an insight into *Dasein* and *In-der-Welt-sein*, a deep synthesis of life and existence.

The theme of death and suicide exists in the Argentinean tango but not in the Finnish tango, where death actually is taboo, found only as implicit structures. In *Cuesta abajo* (1934), 'Bad Luck'<sup>10</sup> the reason for despair is a woman who was for the subject like the sun in spring, his hope and his passion. He knew that all these emotions which caused self-effacing love in his heart were impossible. He feels deep anxiety, crying and longing for the past, even though he knows that it

<sup>6</sup> Kukkonen (1992d); Tarasti (1993: 51-52; 55); Julkunen (1993: 9-60).

<sup>7</sup> I. Niiniluoto (1992: 16-17).

<sup>8</sup> Greimas & Fontanille (1991: passim).

<sup>9</sup> Kukkonen (1991a-b; 1992c-e; 1993a: passim; 1993b-d; 1995b; 1997; 2000; 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Barreiro (1985: 79-80); Reichardt (1981: 133-134).

will never return. In the texts the subject reflects on the modality of knowing (*savoir*). In *Cobardía* (1933), 'Cowardice'<sup>11</sup> he knows (*savoir*) that life is a lie; he knows that his beloved lies to him, but over and over again he wants to hear these lies. This is a pure love song with the elements of pain and love. The subject is a coward as the title already tells us. A love which has ended is the theme of *Confesión* (1931), 'Confession'.<sup>12</sup> The first lines state the modality: *Fue a conciencia pura / que perdí tu amor ...* The confession by the subject is that he wanted to save the life of his beloved in making her hate him! He loves her very much and calls her *¡Sol de mi vida!* 'The sun of my life!'

In Argentinean tangos the man cries for his bitterness and grief, tears are mentioned as well as the last stage when life is empty, the only opportunity left being God; the subject says a prayer. These themes do not exist in the European (an exception is Eduardo Bianco and Carol Raven's tango *Plegaria*) or in the Finnish tango. Man's deepest stage, where he is alone with a higher power, is too intimate for these tangos. Using Peirce's three ontological dimensions, the subject of the Argentinean tango acquires a more mature philosophy of life at the *Thirdness* stage; the sociocultural context of the *suburbos* and the *cafetíns* has taught this. The subject is in a deep state where the fundamental emotions of man are felt; his desire for love, his hate, grief and sorrow; his anxiety, nostalgia and *tristeza* have taught him the essential aspects of life.

Metaphorical descriptions of nature are few. The setting of the tango text actually describes the mental states of man. When the Argentinean tango is an urban phenomenon, it is clear that of the natural places only the suburb and cafés are of importance to the texts (cf. *Sur*).<sup>13</sup> The abstract place is man's soul and heart expressing the modalities of desire, knowing and believing. Man desires something he does not have, he knows that his longing is useless, but in spite of that he believes in something, i.e. he has some hope left (*croire*).

The external descriptions of men and women in the texts are actually very scanty; the woman gets epithets describing her enticing body, or divine eyes compared with the sun and the sea, while the negative qualities are compared with the behaviour of a snake and "the poison of passion in her eyes". The tango as a dance also describes the body as sensual and intense. In conclusion the Argentinean tango is mainly a description of man's inner character and qualities, while the European and the Finnish tango lyrics concentrate more on outer features. The Finnish tango especially uses nature as a mirror in describing the *receiver's* qualities. In the European tango the modality of doing (*faire*) means that the actors in the tango setting are romantically involved in the act of love; the erotic aspects are either implicit or explicit in the texts. In the Argentinean tango the act of love is not described but the state of mind after love. In *Mi noche triste* (1915/1916) 'My Sad Night',<sup>14</sup> the subject describes how his beloved has left wounds in his soul and thorns in his heart, and how he returns

<sup>11</sup> Reichardt (1981: 130).

<sup>12</sup> Reichardt (1981: 132-133).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Azzi (1991: 17-246) the tango in Buenos Aires and Azzi (1991: 247-328) the tango in Olavarría.

<sup>14</sup> Barreiro (1985: 64-65); Reichardt (1981: 191-192).

to his sad and empty room; the description is actually a metaphor for his inner state which is in a mess. The sign, the mirror, is misty, as if it had cried for the loss of love. *Ninguna* (1944–1948), 'Nobody'<sup>15</sup> reveals how different things are iconized, representing the traces of the beloved or the memories of the beloved through which they actually express sameness with the beloved.

## Ninguna

Esta puerta se abrió para tu paso.  
 Este piano tembló con tu canción.  
 Esta mesa, este espejo y estos cuadros  
 guardan ecos del eco de tu voz.  
 Es tan triste vivir entre recuerdos ...  
 [...]  
 Tu piel, magnolia que mojó la luna.  
 Tu voz, murmullo que entibió el amor.  
 [...]  
 Cuando quiero alejarme del pasado,  
 es inútil ... me dice el corazón.  
 Ese piano, esa mesa y esos cuadros  
 guardan ecos del eco de tu voz.  
 En un álbum azul están los versos  
 que tu ausencia cubrió de soledad.  
 Es la triste ceniza del recuerdo,  
 nada más que ceniza, nada más ...  
 Music Raúl Fernández Siro  
 Lyrics Homero Manzi

## 'Nobody'

'This door opened for you to pass.  
 This piano sounded to your song.  
 This table, this mirror and these pictures  
 kept the echo of the echoes of your voice.  
 It is so sad to live among memories.  
 [...]  
 Your skin - magnolia lightened by the moon.  
 Your voice - the ecstasy of love.  
 [...]  
 When I want to be distant from my past,  
 my heart tells me it is in vain.  
 This piano, this table and these pictures  
 keep the echo of the echoes of your sound.  
 In a blue album is the verse,  
 which covered your absence with loneliness.  
 It is the sad ashes of the memory,  
 nothing more than ashes, nothing more ...'

In several tangos various attributes or things are associated with the beloved; in this tango the perfume bottles and the mirror represent the memories of his beloved. The mirror is an important symbol, since the subject can observe himself, and his life and its dimensions. This tango enacts Mikhail Bakhtin's term *chronotopos*; time and place are joined together,<sup>16</sup> the spirit of place being imposed on the things the beloved has touched. In the abstract state of man these things mean the huge construction of man's memory which Marcel Proust deals with in his novel. The Argentinean tango represents the Bakhtin's other central term, *dialogism*, in which the subject has a dialogue with memories. The dialogical character in the tango text means that when the subject discusses life he is involved in a dialogue with "I" and "Other" as Bakhtin says: "I am me, I am other." A *polyphony* of different voices is present at the same time.<sup>17</sup> This dialogical aspect is the main feature describing mental states; in nostalgia as in melancholy man reflects on his existence, which is formed of the different modalities suggested by Greimas: *être, faire, savoir*, and so on.

<sup>15</sup> Barreiro (1985: 106); Reichardt (1981: 196-198), according to Reichardt (1981: 266) this tango was written between 1944 and 1948.

<sup>16</sup> Bakhtin (1988; 1991).

<sup>17</sup> Bakhtin (1991: 426).



The theme of love or the anxiety about not being loved or being rejected is the motif of the tango *No me escribas* (1928), 'Do Not Write to Me'.<sup>18</sup> The lyric subject begs his beloved not to write a letter, because he has *tengo miedo, mucho miedo*, he is anxious that his beloved does not love him. This tango is a good example of the dialogue the subject has with himself and with his beloved, a silent dialogue or request where he begs her not to be in contact with him, because love means suffering. He then gets a letter from her and destroys it without reading it. Many of the tango texts deal with fears, mainly the fear of being rejected. The mental state is *que más triste me encontraba*, 'he is in a very deep state of sadness', i.e. *tristeza*, a state typical of the man in the tango, *el hombre del tango*. His wish, when he enters a café, is that nobody will ask him the question "why?", when he is unhappy, confused, or lost. The place is the *cafetín*, the café and his friends, where alcohol helps against pain and sorrows. The cosmic theme of the star is used for brief happiness or for comparing the eyes of the beloved with stars. The loyalty, solidarity and sympathy he will find among his friends in the café or the *cafetín*, that very focal place which is the scene of several Argentinean tangos, the *genius loci*, is realised in the world of the café. It is an understanding microcosm where all the important states and actions are described and discussed. Here the passions and emotions are born, but they also die. The café is actually the *chora*, the place that gives security and oblivion.<sup>19</sup> In this false world where real love is represented by *la madre*, the tango is the therapy through which a grown man can cry and shed tears, bewail his jealousy, his sadness, his bitterness. In this anguish and anxiety the *bandoneón* and alcohol are the essential elements. The sound of the *bandoneón* is the sound of pain.

Dialogue is frequent in the Argentinean tango, including many questions and requests. In the tango *¿Te fuiste? Ja ... Ja ...* (1928), 'You Have Gone? Ha ... Ha ...'<sup>20</sup> is one of the few Argentinean tangos where the paralinguistic feature of laughter exists. The lyrics by Juan Bautista Abad Reyes make parodic allusion to Pascual Contursi's *Mi noche triste* (1915–1916) as well as his lyrics to *La Cumparsita* (1916–1927).<sup>21</sup> The anxiety is expressed through this ironic phrase. The subject wishes her beloved to be like Mary Magdalene the woman from the Bible, and return to him.

The theme of death is clearly represented in *Sus ojos se cerraron* (1934), 'Your Eyes Are Closed'.<sup>22</sup> The subject recalls a woman who is dead, but the world goes on, being described in the last lines as *el carnaval del mundo / gozaba y se reía, / ¡Burlándose el destino / me robó su amor!* 'the carnival of the world / goes laughing ahead, / gave me the faith / and took her love from me.' He repeats the truth of the tango text: *todo es mentira, mentira es el lamento*, 'everything is a lie, this lament is also a lie.' The central theme is that life is a lie,

<sup>18</sup> Reichardt (1981: 198–199).

<sup>19</sup> Plato, the dialogue *Timaeus*; 52a–52c; Kristeva ([1986] 1990: 93–98).

<sup>20</sup> Barreiro (1985: 203); Reichardt (1981: 228–229).

<sup>21</sup> Reichardt (1981: 267–268); Barreiro (1985: 60–61); Ferrer (1970: II: 260).

<sup>22</sup> Barreiro (1985: 96).

or life is a dream. In *Tengo miedo* (1928), 'I Am Anxious',<sup>23</sup> the anxiety arises from the past. The subject is concerned about encountering his beloved and her eyes, to kiss her, to love her; anxious about beginning a new life. Death is also a theme in *Toda mi vida* (1941), 'My Whole Life',<sup>24</sup> in which the subject begs his beloved to forget him, and rejected love is the reason for self-pity and suicide.

In *La que murió en París* (1929, 1930), 'She Who Died in Paris',<sup>25</sup> the nostalgia of *el barrio* is expressed. The girl has left the happy suburb, *el barrio feliz*, which was poor but represents the spirit of place in her life, which she always dreamt about. Metaphors from nature are, as mentioned earlier, few in the Argentinean tango. The subject contrasts the happy suburb and the cold boulevards of Paris: *Pero siempre está nevando / Sobre tu sueño, en París*, 'but it is always snowing over your dream in Paris': *De nuestros amores, y un Carnaval ... / Y yo te miraba ... / París y la nieve / Te estaban matando, flor de mi arrabal*, 'Our love, and a carnival... / and I looked at you ... / Paris and the snow / which was almost killing you, you flower of my suburb.' The girl died *Como un tango viejo y triste*, 'like an old and sad tango', *Como un tango te morías / en el frío bulevar*, 'like a tango you died / on the cold boulevard.' The attributes of despair and coldness of emotions are associated with winter and snow, whereas the sun in spring usually represents the eyes of the beloved. Life is short like an old tango. Death is compared with an old tango, parallel to the image of life being a tango. Epithets describing the woman are also few. In the tango in question the girl who died in Paris is described as *Muchachita criolla de los ojos negros, / Tus labios dormidos ya no han de cantar*, 'You little Creole girl with black eyes, / your sleeping lips will not sing anymore.' The coldness of the description is evident, the despair of the girls and boys who went out in hope of a better future often ends this way, with the dream of "social mobility" fading.<sup>26</sup> The tango is a symbol of life and its brevity. The nostalgia in the Argentinean tango talks about urban nostalgia as the subject longs for urban places.

The main themes of the Argentinean tango are the recurring human concerns of love, betrayal, life and death. A special theme of the Argentinean tango is religion which does not exist in the Finnish tango. The subject holds a dialogue with God. God and Jesus, as well as Mary Magdalene (cf. *Yira ... Yira* (1930) are mentioned in the texts. He articulates his wish in *Tormenta* (1938/1939), 'The Storm',<sup>27</sup> which deals with a religious theme combined with descriptions of nature, rare in the Argentinean tangos:

Tormenta

¡Aullando entre relámpagos,  
perdido en la tormenta

'The Storm'

'Loud crying between flashes,  
lost in the storm

<sup>23</sup> Barreiro (1985: 205-206); Reichardt (1981: 229-231).

<sup>24</sup> Reichardt (1981: 232-233).

<sup>25</sup> Ahlén (1984: 192-193).

<sup>26</sup> Taylor (1976: 273-291).

<sup>27</sup> Reichardt (1981: 234-235).

de mi noche interminable, Dios!  
 busco tu nombre ...  
 Yo siento que mi fe se tambalea,  
 [...]
   
 Si la vida es el infierno  
 y el honrao vive entre lágrimas,  
 ¿cuál es el bien ...  
 del que lucha en nombre tuyo,  
 limpio, puro? ...¿para qué? ...  
 [...]
   
 Enséñame una flor  
 que haya nacido  
 del esfuerzo de seguirte, ¡Dios!  
 para no odiar:  
 al mundo que me desprecia,  
 [...]
   
 Music and lyrics Enrique Santos Discépolo (1938/1939)

my endless night, God,  
 I searched for your name!  
 I feel my belief is weak  
 [...]
   
 When life is a hell  
 and good people have to cry and suffer,  
 so what is it good for ...  
 they struggle in your name,  
 sincere, and sinless ... for what reason?  
 [...]
   
 Show me a flower  
 which has grown  
 from struggle, to follow you, God!  
 so I do not hate the world,  
 which despises me,  
 [...]

In *Yira ... Yira* (1930) 'Aimless Wandering'<sup>28</sup> the main idea is that "everything is a lie or an illusion". Life is pain and suffering, life is a joke where nobody is your friend, even the doorbells do not work when you seek a real friend. The things happening are subject to destiny, human kind is powerless. The mirror has a seminal symbolic function in man's life; it is magic but first of all a religious symbol, especially in *The Bible*.<sup>29</sup> The mirror ought to show sameness, an icon of the person who is standing in front of it, but somehow the truths of the picture or image can change.

Carlos Gardel's international success meant that the Argentinean tango acquired themes other than the underworld and suburbs. This is reflected in the tango *El Milagro* (1946), 'The Marvel'.<sup>30</sup> The subject addresses his heart; after many hard years it still is ticking like a clock. He experiences love *Con la muda voz del yeso*, 'with voices dumb as gypsum, they separated'. This tango text has a religious aspect in the belief in marvels and God (*croire*). After his hard years the subject sees his beloved returning to him. His life has changed and 'today I saw that there are birds' nests in the trees and a carnation in my window': *Y hoy he visto que los árboles hay nidos / y noté que en mi ventana hay un clavel*. This shows that *das Man* has seen that *amar es vivir otra vez*, 'to love means to live once more', and that the anxiety actually opens new possibilities. The last lines show the religious concern: 'because God knows that the past and the miracle exist!'

### *Anxiety and tristeza*

Discussing silence as a phenomenon, Kukkonen begins with Heidegger's philosophy,<sup>31</sup> comparing Heidegger's *Dasein* can be compared with Peirce's

<sup>28</sup> Barreiro (1985: 167-168); Reichardt (1981: 247-248).

<sup>29</sup> 1 Cor 13:12; Kukkonen (1993a: *passim*) has also discussed the concepts of silence and love as seen through a mirror.

<sup>30</sup> Ahlén (1984: 200-201).

<sup>31</sup> Kukkonen (1991a-b; 1992c; 1993a-c).

*Thirdness* stage. According to Tarasti the existence of anxiety is a sign of something, namely the existence of a subject.<sup>32</sup> Heidegger's concept *Gelassenheit* describes what happens to a subject when it loses an object, becomes disjoined from it, when it approaches and encounters it or when it finally decides to leave *the object as such*.<sup>33</sup> *Angst*, as Tarasti defines it, is perhaps a passion met particularly in German culture. It is a state of being that does not lead to resolution, but is a virtuality of narration, which does not bring us to a 'passage to an act' and its achievement. As soon as it shifts to these states, it ceases to be the passion called *Angst*. Anxiety is a state in which a subject has been disjoined from its value object, as in the Greimasian definition.<sup>34</sup> In the tango *Nostalgias* (1936) 'Nostalgia'<sup>35</sup> the male subject describes what this concept of *nostalgias* means:

## Nostalgias

[...]  
Nostalgias  
de escuchar su risa loca  
y sentir junto a mi boca  
como un fuego su respiración.  
Angustia  
de sentirme abandonado  
y pensar que otro a su lado  
pronto ... pronto le hablará de amor ...  
¡Hermano!  
Yo no quiero rebajarme,  
ni pedirle, ni llorarle,  
ni decirle que no puedo más vivir ...  
Desde mi triste soledad veré caer  
las rosas muertas de mi juventud.

Gime, bandoneón, tu tango gris,  
quizás a ti te hiera igual  
algún amor sentimental ...  
Llora mi alma de fanteche  
sola y triste en esta noche,  
noche negra y sin estrellas ...  
Si las copas traen consuelo  
aquí estoy con mi desvelo  
para ahogarlos de una vez ...  
Quiero emborrachar mi corazón  
para después poder brindar  
"por los fracasos del amor" ...  
Music Juan Carlos Cobián  
Lyrics Enrique Cadícamo (1936)

## Nostalgia

[...]  
Nostalgia  
to hear your mad laughter  
and on my mouth  
like a fire I feel your breathing.  
Anxiety  
to feel myself rejected  
and to think that by your side somebody else  
soon ... soon will speak of love ...  
Brother!  
I will not lower myself,  
not beg her, not cry,  
not tell her that I cannot live any longer.  
Through my sad loneliness I see  
the red roses of my youth die.

Cry out, bandoneón, your grey tango,  
perhaps you will also be forgotten  
by some sentimental love ...  
My marionette soul  
cries alone and sad  
in this dark, starless night.  
If the glass brings consolation  
I am here, to think always  
of my grief ...  
I want make my heart drunk  
in order to be able to reject  
"the splinters of love."

These lyrics show that nostalgia is not just some romantic and sentimental longing but a whole where the existential states of man, the aspects of love, rejection, betrayal and loneliness are united. *Nostalgia* is actually not something sentimental and romantic if on the one hand we have the original meanings in

<sup>32</sup> Tarasti (1993: 51-57).

<sup>33</sup> Heidegger ([1927] 1953; 1991).

<sup>34</sup> Tarasti (1993: 52).

<sup>35</sup> Reichardt (1981: 203-204); Barreiro (1985: 107-108).

mind, and on the other hand, the above text as a point of reference. The *bandoneón* expresses the sound of the anxiety, alcohol helps to forget the bitterness and loneliness of life. They offer oblivion for the soul. Here the central semantic features of the concept of love, i.e. *désir*, and *dolor* are actualised very clearly. While the man in the Argentinean tango usually is a *macho*, he can however cry or weep tears for the bitterness of life. In *Nostalgias* he states that he is not a *gil*, an innocent fool who will not lower himself or cry or beg her to return to him, because he will not be a *gil*.<sup>36</sup> However, in many tangos he shows his feelings and cries over his *tristeza* openly.

The tango *Uno* (1943) 'One' is a typical of this phenomenon, "uno" is 'das Man', everybody and nobody, who is all of us and no one individually.<sup>37</sup> They are best actualised in accordance with the various modalities. *Das Man* desires (*désir*), longs for something, he knows (*savoir*) that his existence (*être*) is as it is, he leaves it as such, to use Heidegger's term *Gelassenheit*. In *Uno* (1943) 'One',<sup>38</sup> translated into Finnish by Aappo I. Piippo as *Yksin* (1987) 'Alone'<sup>39</sup> the subject sets a scene for the mind, emphasising loneliness and rejection, but the Argentinean lyrics have a more serious theme than rejected love:

## Uno

[...]  
 Uno va arrastrándose entre espinas  
 y en su afán de dar su amor,  
 sufre y se destroza hasta entender  
 que uno se ha quedado sin corazón ...  
 Precio de castigo que uno entrega  
 por un beso que no llega  
 o un amor que lo engaña ...  
 ¡Vacío ya de amar y de llorar  
 tanta traición! ...  
 [...]  
 Pero, Dios te trajo a mi destino  
 sin pensar que ya es muy tarde  
 y no sabré cómo quererte ...  
 Déjame que llore  
 como aquel que sufre en vida  
 la tortura de llorar su propia muerte ...  
 [...]  
 Uno está tan solo en su dolor ...  
 Uno está tan ciego en su penar ...  
 Pero un frío cruel  
 que es peor que el odio  
 - punto muerto de las almas,  
 tumba horrenda de mi amor -  
 maldijo para siempre y me robó ...  
 toda ilusión ...  
 Music Mariano Mores  
 Lyrics Enrique Santos Discépolo (1943)

## 'One'

[...]  
 One struggles between the thistle  
 and one's longing to love somebody;  
 one suffers and destroys oneself until  
 one realises that one has been left without a heart ...  
 One has paid too high a price  
 for an unanswered kiss  
 or a love which was false ...  
 One has been incapable of love  
 or of crying for such a betrayal ...  
 [...]  
 But God has brought you into my life  
 without thinking that it is already too late  
 and that I do not know how to love you anymore ...  
 Let me cry  
 like one who feels the anxiety of life  
 the pain of crying for his own death ...  
 [...]  
 One is so alone in one's pain ...  
 One is so blind in one's suffering ...  
 But a cruel coldness,  
 which is worse than the hate  
 - the dead point of the soul,  
 a terrible grave for my love -  
 condemns me for ever and robs me of  
 all my illusions ...'

<sup>36</sup> Taylor (1976: 278).

<sup>37</sup> Heidegger ([1927] 1953: 174; 1991: *passim*).

<sup>38</sup> Reichardt (1981: 240-241).

<sup>39</sup> *Kultainen tangokirja* 1 (1994: 202-203 ); Grön (1987), *Bandoneon* SMK 719, Fazer Finnlevy.

*Das man*, the subject created by Enrique Santos Discépolo, is in a state of anxiety for the existence which forms his *Dasein*. His mental state or heart is the cold point of his soul. His anxiety leads him to deliberate upon his *In-der-Welt-sein* and what happens to him after a betrayal. His anxiety and silence have made him think over his situation; the tango text includes all the elements of human life: hope, dreams, anxiety, the cruelty of life, belief, love, betrayal, God, fate, tears, pain, suffering, coldness, hate, the dead point of the soul, and illusion. His being (*être*) is very thoroughly discussed in this text; he knows (*savoir*) that he is no longer able to love anybody.

The second essential theme is *tristeza*, which can be defined as *nostalgia* combined with *pain, sadness, anxiety, anguish, Angst, loneliness* and *sorrow*. In *Una canción* (1953), 'A Song', the scene of the tango is a café. The subject begs the woman to sing a song with her steely voice: *Una canción / que me mate la tristeza, / que me duerma, que me aturda, / 'a song which can kill the sadness and sorrow'*.<sup>40</sup>

The dramatic episode of *Tres esperanzas* (1933),<sup>41</sup> 'Three Hopes' is about the essential hopes in man's life, in which the subject has been disappointed:

## Tres esperanzas

[...]  
 La gente me ha engañao  
 desde el día en que naci.  
 Las hembras se han burlao,  
 la vieja la perdí ...  
 [...]  
 Tres esperanzas tuve en mi vida,  
 dos eran blancas y una punzó ...  
 Una mi madre, vieja y vencida,  
 otra la gente, y otra un amor.  
 Tres esperanzas tuve en mi vida,  
 dos me engañaron, y una muriré ..  
 [...]  
 Music and lyrics Enrique Santos Discépolo (1933)

## 'Three Hopes'

[...]  
 People have betrayed me  
 since the day I was born,  
 Women have betrayed me,  
 and my parents I have lost ...  
 [...]  
 Three hopes I had in my life,  
 two were white and one was bright red ...  
 one was my old and humiliated mother,  
 the second was people, the third a love.  
 Three hopes I had in my life,  
 two have me betrayed and one is dead ...  
 [...]

The pessimistic view is normal in the texts where the only real value in life is represented by *la madre*. The subject betrays his disappointment in life through the repeated theme of life as a lie. He has been betrayed by people, rejected by his beloved and lost his parents. He feels a deep bitterness, a characteristic of Discépolo's texts. The colours white and red represent the pure and the false and passionate in life.

*The joy and carnival of life*

The above account shows that sadness and *tristeza* is the leading theme in the Argentinean tango when it deals with the deepest dimensions of *Dasein*. It is

<sup>40</sup> Reichardt (1981: 238-240); Ahlén (1984: 202-203).

<sup>41</sup> Reichardt (1981: 236-237).



true that the tango is a sad thought which takes the shape of a dance, the tango, but some of the Argentinean tango texts will also show the other pole of man's existence, namely the joy of life.

The idea of *grotesco* which appears in Discépolo's tangos actually embody Mihail Bahtin's idea of carnivalism.<sup>42</sup> Three fundamental themes can be pointed out in Discépolo's tangos. The first is that life is a continuum of illusions; what is real, what is dream? Conflict, the second theme, is necessary to express this continuum of illusions. The last is based on the fact that tragic conflict becomes comic. In his tango *Soy un arlequín* (1929) 'I am a Clown', the themes of illusion, ambiguity, and contradiction are developed.<sup>43</sup> The clown sings and dances while suffering from a broken heart. The images are all as if they are seen in a trick mirror. If one looks one way one can see Mary Magdalene, the whore, while another way she has become Christ so that the harlequin's love is both. Who is saving whom? Her lover? Mary Magdalene? or Christ? It all depends on the mirror. The last lines offer the profound truth: *¡Cuanto dolor que hace reír!*, 'How much pain to make laughter!' The Catholic world has the carnival, the one day when the forbidden is allowed. The illusions, the dreams, the conflicts are combined with tragic and comic themes.<sup>44</sup>

The tango *¡¡¡Siga el corso!!!* (1926/1948), 'Stop the Carnival Procession!!!'<sup>45</sup> is a carnival flirt from a chauvinistic and cynic point of view, quite frequent in tango lyrics. The music is by Anselmo A. Aieta with lyrics by Francisco García Jiménez. The idea of carnival appears in the last lines of the text where the carnival decorates the world and the man meets a girl, Colombina, who takes him joyfully and harmlessly on the wings of laughter and makes him remember another laughter, and those eyes in his life. The carnival is actually a reflection of the lie in life; in a carnival everything forbidden is allowed, including the lie of life. The first version of *La Cumparsita* (1916–1927) also deals with the theme of *la cumparsa* 'the little carnival'. These three traits are typical of Discépolo's tango lyrics.

The tango *¡Victoria!* (1929/1930), 'Victory!',<sup>46</sup> music and lyrics by Enrique Santos Discépolo, is a very pragmatic tango in its use of expressions of joy and delight, which the subject feels when his woman has gone. It is as if he wants to shout: "It is a triumph to live!" Now, at last he can be free, meet his friends and visit his mother, who represents honest love. He praises God and thanks him for this joy. *Das man* and his *Dasein* give expression to a real *Firstness* joy, sharing the dimension of *Secondness*. The narrator describes the state of joy and those things which cause it. A *Thirdness* joy would be a deep ontological insight into joy which is actually rare. The first stages deal only with the so-called external features of his joy and delight. The mental state of being free also means something other than the external life of freedom, coming and going as he likes.

<sup>42</sup> Bahtin (1988; 1991).

<sup>43</sup> Castro (1991: 77-78).

<sup>44</sup> Ferrer ([1970] 1980: 103-104); Castro (1991: 77-78).

<sup>45</sup> Barreiro (1985: 127-129); Ahlén (1984: 203-204).

<sup>46</sup> Barreiro (1985: 210-211); Reichardt (1981: 242-243).

He shouts out his victory – his wife is or has gone (forever?), and now he is free to do whatever he wants.

¡Victoria!	'Victory!'
¡Victoria!	'Victory!
¡Saraca, victoria!	Hurrah! Victory!
Pianté de la noria:	Gone are the yokes:
¡Se fue mi mujer! ...	My wife has gone! ...
Si me parece mentira,	I can hardly believe,
después de seis años	that after six years
volver a vivir ...	I can live again ...
Volver a ver mis amigos,	again meet my friends,
vivir con mamá otra vez ...	again I can visit my mother ...
¡Victoria!	Victory!
¡Cantemos victoria!	A song of victory!
Yo estoy en la gloria:	I shout out my joy:
¡Se fue mi mujer!	My wife has gone!
[...]	[...]
Music and lyrics Enrique Santos Discépolo (1929/1930)	

Love means anxiety – he shouts out his freedom and gratitude to God, being free again, free from the woman also. However, in Francisco Lomuto's and Antonio Botta's tango *¡Si soy así!* (1924–1933) 'If I Am Like That',<sup>47</sup> the subject says: *pa mí la vida / tiene forma de mujer*, 'for me life has the form of a woman', i.e. the whole of life and the joy of life is after all the woman who is at the centre of the Argentinean tango texts, while Ernesto Ponzio's and Alfredo Gobbi's tango is a humorous variant of the man, *Don Juan* (1898–1912), who is a tough guy.<sup>48</sup>

## 2 The man: macho or gil

The Argentinean tango actually deals to a great extent with the psychological states of the man as a human being; he tries to be a macho man, not to be considered a *gil*, an innocent fool, but we can find him crying bitterly in a *cafetín*. This especially pessimistic view creates the spirit of its time and its soul; to look back on memories shows nostalgia, while to be ego-oriented is an expression of the introspective state of man in which the human being, frequently a male in the Argentinean tango, is in the depressive, pessimistic state of *tristeza*, melancholy, in its original sense. This reflects alienation in a world where the era of social inequalities, depression, industrialism, urban life, and modernism in art and literature describe the material life (cf. the Finland-Swedish lyricist Henry Parland, who wrote about "the revolution of things").<sup>49</sup> In this socio-cultural context man is an outsider.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Barreiro (1985: 159-160).

<sup>48</sup> Åhlén (1984: 199-200).

<sup>49</sup> Broms (1984: 176-185).

<sup>50</sup> The English translation is from Taylor (1976: 278); Barreiro (1985: 104).

## Madreselva

[...]  
 Así aprendí que hay que fingir  
 para vivir decentemente,  
 que amor y fe mentiras son  
 y del dolor se rie la gente ...

[...]  
 Music Francisco Canaro  
 Lyrics Luis C. Amadori (1931)

## 'Honeysuckle' [a plant]

[...]  
 'So I learned that you must pretend  
 in order to live decently.  
 That love and faith and lies  
 and people laugh at pain.'

[...]

While 'people laugh at pain' a man has to be tough and macho, not a *gil*. Taylor's fourth point is that love and suffering belong together and form an inseparable whole (the idea of "the cuckold"): "Sabe que es condición de varón el sufrir", 'the natural state of man is to suffer' as Francisco and Rafael Canaro and Juan Andrés Caruso's tango *Sentimiento Gaucho* (1924) 'A Sad Gaucho'<sup>52</sup> puts it. The man here is an idealist, dreaming of innocence, which the woman heartlessly uses for her own purposes. In Pascal Contursi's lyrics in *Pobre corazón mío* 'My Poor Heart' the man says, 'Then in my eyes / I felt tears like / drawing out knives, / [...] the *bandoneónes* continued playing / and that woman / went back into the dance and danced.'<sup>53</sup> He can cry over life's injustice, but the show goes on. Jealousy is another recurrent notion of the Argentinean tango; sometimes it leads to a crime, a murder or even a suicide caused by the law of life and its cruelty and injustice.

The Argentinean tango consists of narrative. In *Allá en el Bajo* (1927), 'Under the Harbour',<sup>54</sup> the story begins with a description of the harbour, where the shadows sleep, the storm is silent, the wind sings its song and far away a dog barks. Two rivals meet there: *a desflorar los besos / de la mujer fatal ...* When the two men fight outside, the woman dances to the sound of a *bandoneón*, thinking of herself being a woman: *sólo se acuerda que es mujer, / y en las cadencias que dan los fuelles, / provocativo su cuerpo ondula, / es la serpiente que en las pupilas / guarda el veneno de la pasión*. An eternal triangle is described in this text. Meanwhile the men fight: *La lucha es brava, no se dan alce*, 'the woman is like a snake dancing in a provocative way'. She is the snake with eyes filled with the poison of passion. Here the allusion to Paradise and the sinful Eve is clear. The woman is the snake who provokes men's jealousy; when she has used her poison of passion, she continues her game and searches for another victim.

The dual character of the woman is repeated. She is first of all the *femme fatale*, a liar who only plays with man's feelings, the reason for unhappiness in life, while real love is represented only by *la madre*, the mother. In Enrique Santos Discépolo's tango *Secreto* (1932), 'The Secret',<sup>55</sup> the narrator is desperate. He calls his beloved *munéca maldita, castigo de Dios ...*, 'you bloody coddling

<sup>52</sup> Barreiro (1985: 68-69).

<sup>53</sup> Taylor (1976: 278).

<sup>54</sup> Music by Augustin Magaldi & Pedro Noda, lyrics by Ismael Aguilar & J. F. Martinelli Massa, Reichardt (1981: 116).

<sup>55</sup> Reichardt (1981: 217-218); Ahlén (1984: 184-185).

tomboy, you punishment of God': *y es pan de mis dos hijos / todo el lujo que te he dao* 'with the bread of my children / I pay for your luxury'. He has destroyed the life of his wife and his children, and sought a place where he could have killed himself, but he cannot do it because he has to think of his children, and his beloved. He is in the stage of *Firstness* since he cannot react or understand, and is lost. The girl represents for him a gust of wind which in its force breaks the tenderness of yesterday, the family happiness and faith. She is the reason for the cruel horror in his life. In his despair and passion he cries out: *Quién sos, que no puedo salvarme* 'Who are you whom I cannot be rid of?' He is totally without respect, but cannot kill himself either. In the Argentinean tango texts a woman is usually the reason for destruction.

### 3 The woman: Madonna or whore

The Argentinean woman of the tango clearly has a dual function. Tango texts shows as Taylor claims that the woman is described in a dual way, being either the Madonna or a whore. *La madre*, the mother, or *Santa madre* represents real values in a false world. *La madre* is a forgetful 'little old lady', but at the same time every female type is paradoxically compared to her as in the tango *Cafetín de Buenos Aires* (1948).<sup>56</sup> In this life of betrayal and adversity there is one good that transcends all, namely one's mother, *una mujer sacrificada*, 'a sacrificing woman' as in *Madre hay una sola*, 'There is Only One Mother'.<sup>57</sup>

Madre hay una sola

Besos y amores  
amistades, bellas farsas  
y rosadas ilusiones  
en el mundo hay a montones  
por desgracia.  
Madre hay una sola  
y aunque un día lo olvidé  
me enseñó al final la vida  
que a ese amor  
hay que volver.  
Lyrics José de la Vega

'There Is Only One Mother'

'Kisses and love  
friendships, wonderful parties  
and rosy illusions  
in the world you have them in quantity  
unfortunately.  
There is only one mother  
and though one day I forgot this,  
life taught me finally  
that to that love  
one must return.'

In *Malena* (1941/1942)<sup>58</sup> the central attributes of the Argentinean tango can be found. These are the song, the tango, the heart, the suburb, the *bandoneón*. There is the concept of time, bringing on the one hand oblivion, and on the other memories of childhood in the narrow streets of the suburb. When Malena sings, alcohol makes her sad and grieving. The song of Malena has the same voice as the *bandoneón* in her blood. *Malena* is a representative tango, *tristeza* being its main aspect. The description of a woman singing of life, demonstrates the universal themes of man and at the same time the Argentinean tango:

<sup>56</sup> Castro (1991: 152-154).

<sup>57</sup> The English translation is from Taylor (1976: 279); Reichardt (1981: 128-129).

<sup>58</sup> Barreiro (1985: 153-154); Reichardt (1981: 181-182).

## Malena

Malena canta el tango como ninguna  
y en cada verso pone su corazón.  
A yuyo del suburbio su voz perfuma,  
Malena tiene pena de bandoneón.  
Tal vez allá en la infancia su voz de alondra  
tomó ese tono oscuro de callejón.  
O acaso aquel romance que sólo nombra  
cuando se pone triste con el alcohol.  
Malena canta el tango con voz de sombra,  
Malena tiene pena de bandoneón.  
[...]  
Tus ojos son oscuros como el olvido,  
tus labios apretados como el rencor,  
tus manos dos palomas que sienten frío,  
tus venas tienen sangre de bandoneón.  
[...]  
Malena canta el tango con voz quebrada.  
Malena tiene pena de bandoneón.  
Music Lucio Demare  
Lyrics Homero Manzi (1942)

## Malena

'Malena sings the tango like nobody else  
and puts her heart in every verse.  
The smell of suburban air she keeps in her voice  
Malena has the voice of the bandoneón.  
Maybe she got her voice in childhood,  
this dark colour of the narrow street.  
Or it was a romance, which she only speaks about  
when alcohol makes her sad.  
Malena sings the tango with voices of shadows,  
Malena has the voice of the bandoneón.  
[...]  
Your eyes are dark as oblivion,  
your lips pressed together like the grief,  
your two hands like doves, which are freezing,  
your veins have the blood of the bandoneón.  
[...]  
Malena sings the tango with an exhausted voice  
Malena has the grief of the bandoneón.'

In *Malena* the music and the text form a dialogue describing the deep dimensions of life. *Malena* herself; her eyes, lips, hands, and veins reflects oblivion, grief, coldness. The *bandoneón* is the soul of *tristeza*.

The realism of the Argentinean tango means that external descriptions of women are few. The eyes, the voice and the hands of the beloved as well as the whole body are however mentioned. The title of *Tu piel de jazmín* (1960?), 'Your Jasmine Skin',<sup>59</sup> reflects the qualities of the woman: *me faltas tú / con tu piel de jazmín ... / me faltas tú / con tu voz, tu reír* [...] *escucho siempre tu voz, toco tu piel, / ¡tu piel de raso y de jazmín!* 'You touch me / with your Jasmine skin ... / You touch me / with your voice, your laughter [...] / I always hear your voice, I touch your skin, / your skin of silk and Jasmine'.

The tango *Sombras nada más* (1933–1948), 'Only after Shadows',<sup>60</sup> begins with an impassioned gesture: *Quisiera abrir lentamente mis venas ... / Mi sangre toda vertirla a tus pies ... / para poderte demostrar / que más no puedo amar / y entonces ... Morir después* 'I would like to slowly open my veins / and shed all my blood at your foot, / to show you / that I cannot love any more / and then ... at last die.' He describes the eyes of his beloved, eyes which are the colour of the sky and the sea: *jazul que tienen el cielo y el mar!*, the most frequent epithet for a woman, and *qué tibias fueron tu mano y tu voz*, 'so warm were your hands and your voice', but these kinds of external qualitative expressions are rare, because the Argentinean tango deals with the internal, the psychological states of man. The emptiness of life and loneliness are the general concern as in *Acquaforte* (1933)<sup>61</sup> describing cabaret life. The narrator thinks about life: *Y pienso en la vida ... / las madres que sufren, / los hijos que vagan, sin techo, sin pan ...* Life is *tristeza*; *¡Qué triste es todo esto, / quisiera llorar!* 'I

<sup>59</sup> Reichardt (1981: 237-238).

<sup>60</sup> Reichardt (1981: (223-224).

<sup>61</sup> Reichardt (1981: 112-113), Reichardt's German translation is entitled *Radierung*.

have to cry, life is so sad'. Alcohol is the *helper*; in *Los mareados* (1942), 'The Drunken Ones',<sup>62</sup> the central word is *pena*, 'pain', and words the subject dwells on: *Tres cosas lleva mi alma herida: / Amor ... / Pesar ... / Dolor ...*, 'Three things my sad soul cries for: / Love ... / Regret ... / Pain...'

Religion can be found as prayers, as mentioned earlier, for instance, in *Al pie de la Santa Cruz* (1933), 'In front of the Holy Cross'.<sup>63</sup> In this text the social aspect is expressed in the first lines: the strike, hunger, the job being hard and the salary small. In this text the cry of man reflects an existential state (*être*): 'God, what evil have we done to suffer so much?' The unfairness of life is the central concept.

The tango also provided a way to get the boy away from *la madre* in the form of *la milonguita*, a poor Creole or immigrant girl who might end up in a brothel becoming a prostitute in the hope of a better future.<sup>64</sup> This is Taylor's sixth point, shown in *Milonguita* (1920):<sup>65</sup>

## Milonguita

¿Te acordás, Milonguita? Vos eras

la pebeta más linda' e Chiclana;  
la pollera cortona y las trenzas ...  
y en las trenzas un beso de sol ...  
Y en aquellas noches de verano,  
¿qué soñaba tu almita, mujer,  
al oír en la esquina algún tango  
chamuyarte bajito de amor?  
¡Estercita!  
Hoy te llaman Milonguita,  
flor de noche y de placer,  
flor de lujo y cabaret.  
¡Milonguita!  
Los hombres te han hecho mal,  
[...]  
Music Enrique Delfino  
Lyrics Samuel Linning (1920)

## 'The Dance Hall Girl'

'Remember, Milonguita, you were  
the prettiest girl in Chiclana  
the short skirt and braids  
and between the braids a kiss of the sun  
and in those summer nights,  
what did your soul dream, woman,  
when it heard some tango on  
the corner  
talk softly of love?  
Little Esther!  
Now they call you Milonguita  
flower of luxury and pleasure  
flower of night and cabaret  
Milonguita!  
Men have done you wrong,  
[...]

In the period 1943–1955 the tangos which portrayed women as prostitutes, or betrayers were no longer valid, since in the "new" Argentina these kinds of conditions were not supposed to exist. The woman of the "new" Argentina had to be the sacrificing mother, which was an acceptable theme in some old tangos. Women were presented only as the loyal helpmate, faithful wife, never as truly equal to men.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Reichardt (1981: 176-178).

<sup>63</sup> Reichardt (1981: 113-114).

<sup>64</sup> Castro (1991: 107).

<sup>65</sup> Barreiro (1985: 89-90). The English translation is from Taylor (1976: 279).

<sup>66</sup> Castro (1991: 187; 229-231; 251).



#### 4 The spirit of place: the *cafetín*

The spirit of place in the Argentinean tango is created through the description of urban places such as the suburb, the harbour, the streets, and naturally, the *cafetín*. The key place of the tango is a café or a *cafetín*. In *San José de Flores* (1953),<sup>67</sup> the subject feels pain when his suburb or quarter has changed. Nostalgia for past times is expressed at the outset. The *barrio* provides the spirit of place which he bears with him always. When he has understood that life outside the *barrio* did not give him fortune, he follows his nostalgia to return to his *barrio* to die: *rumbié a mi querencia, buscando morir*.

Many tangos have been composed and written in the *cafecito*, where one is together with friends talking about life and its cruelty. It is a place where one can forget the negative side of life, a place where one can cry over the bitterness of life. This is described in *Cafetín de Buenos Aires* (1948) 'The Café of Buenos Aires',<sup>68</sup> a famous tango of the Perón era in which "the tango lost its power to comment on the reality of its day in the 1940s and the 1950s",<sup>69</sup> as did *Sur* (1948) 'South'. Nostalgia is the heart of the famous tango *Corrientes y Esmeralda* (1933) 'Corrientes and Esmeralda Streets', with music by Francisco Pracánico and lyrics by Celedonio Esteban Flores.<sup>70</sup> In *Por qué canto así* (1929/1933–1947) 'Why I Sing Like This'<sup>71</sup> Flores actually explains why he wrote such bitter, sad poetry and tangos; he was raised in the hatred, sadness and bitterness that comes from poverty [...], "that's why I sing so sadly".<sup>72</sup> In *Cafetín de Buenos Aires* the memory of the past consists of a café and mother. Life there taught him philosophy, everything worthwhile in life.<sup>73</sup>

##### Cafetín de Buenos Aires

[...]  
 Cómo olvidarte en esta queja  
 cafetín de Buenos Aires,  
 si sos lo único en la vida  
 que se pareció a mi vieja ...  
 En tu mezcla milagrosa  
 de sabihondos y suicidas,  
 yo aprendí filosofía ... dados ... timba ...  
 y la poesía cruel,  
 de no pensar más en mí.  
 [...]  
 Music Mariano Mores  
 Lyrics Enrique Santos Discépolo (1948)

##### 'The Café of Buenos Aires'

'How could I forget you in this lament,  
 cafe of Buenos Aires  
 if you are the only part of my life  
 which reminds me of my mother ...  
 In your miraculous mixture  
 of know-it-alls and suicides,  
 I learned philosophy, dice, and gambling  
 and the cruel poetry  
 of no longer thinking of myself.'

The Argentinean tango shows that the Argentinean man is not *el hombre gil*, but that he understands the deepest philosophy of life. Having seen and experienced

<sup>67</sup> Reichardt (1981: 214-215).

<sup>68</sup> Reichardt (1981: 128-129).

<sup>69</sup> Castro (1991: 247).

<sup>70</sup> Barreiro (1985: 120-121).

<sup>71</sup> Reichardt (1981: 208-210).

<sup>72</sup> Castro (1991: 73).

<sup>73</sup> The English translation is from Taylor (1976: 277-281).

much, he is a polished, realistic man. The characterisation of the *tipico tanguero* forms the third aspect in Taylor's study.<sup>74</sup> Love is an important theme, not a romantic but a deep state, in which the subject suffers for love, love that often ends because of the female's infidelity (*traición*) and her abandonment of her lover (cf. *La Cumparsita*).<sup>75</sup> Love affairs are irregular with no marriages, and there is no mention of the traditional ideal of a husband-wife relationship with home and children (cf. *¡Victoria!*). However, in the tango *¿Te fuiste? ¡Ja ... Ja!* (1928/1929) 'Have You Gone? Ha ... Ha!'<sup>76</sup> the love affair is at its end because of the woman's action and the man expresses relief at his return to liberty.<sup>77</sup> Love is actually like a game, a horse-race, a game of cards where fate rules; life expresses alienation and vulnerability, and love is ruled by omnipotent and inexorable fate.<sup>78</sup> Dario Canton (1972) writes of Carlos Gardel: "la de un hombre sin futuro, encerrado en el presente, inclinado sobre su pasado", a very important notion for the whole idea of the tango: 'that of a man without a future, imprisoned by the present, inclined towards his past.'<sup>79</sup> Only fifty-two of Gardel's tangos deal with the present and of these thirty-eight are pessimistic; thirty-eight look back from the present to the past. Twenty-nine of these are negative.

The tango *Café de los Angelitos* (1938–1947), 'Café Angels', with music by José Razzano and lyrics by Cátulo Castillo,<sup>80</sup> and *Cafetín de Buenos Aires* (1948), 'Café Buenos Aires', by Mariano Mores and Enrique Santos Discépolo, describe places where men learn the essentials and values in life. *Yo te evoco, perdido en la vida*, the subject cries: 'I cry for you, I am lost in life.' This important "lost in life" notion relates to the more religious allusions in some of the Argentinean tango texts. The existential answers are: *porque nadie me llama a la mesa de ayer, / porque todo es ausencia y adiós*, 'because everything is departure and farewell.'

In *Cafetín de Buenos Aires* (1948)<sup>81</sup> the *café* means everything in life *Como una escuela de todas las cosas, / ya de muchacho me diste entre asombros: / el cigarrillo, la fe en mis sueños / y una esperanza de amor*; the *café* is like a school with all subjects, it has provided faith in dreams, and it has given hope of life. The pain of life is discussed at the table, which never asks. The last lines show the existential modality of knowing (*savoir*) when the subject gets an insight into life. Sitting at this table he has learnt much of the philosophy of life and the cruel poetry of life to forget himself. In *El último café* (1963), 'The Last

<sup>74</sup> Taylor (1976: 278).

<sup>75</sup> Music and lyrics by G. H. Matos Rodríguez (1916/1917). Buenos Aires: Ricordi Americana. I am grateful to Jaakko Salo at Warner Music/Chappell Finland Oy, Fazer records, who gave me this version of *La Cumparsita*. The first Finnish recording of *La Cumparsita*, an instrumental version, was made in 1938 performed by the Dallapé orchestra and in 1953 by Olavi Virta and the Metro-työt 'Girls', cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 52, 256).

<sup>76</sup> Barreiro (1985: 203); Reichardt (1981: 228–229).

<sup>77</sup> Castro (1991: 147–148).

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Castro (1991: 156–157) for references to the tango and its relation to horse-racing.

<sup>79</sup> Canton (1972: 44); Castro (1991: 157, English translation).

<sup>80</sup> Reichardt (1981: 127–128).

<sup>81</sup> Reichardt (1981: 128–129).

Cup of Coffee',<sup>82</sup> the nostalgia of memory appears in a café: *Llega tu recuerdo en torbellino, / vuelve en el otoño a atardecer, / miro la garúa, y mientras miro, / gira la cuchara de café.* In this text autumn and rain suggest the nostalgia of memory. The last cup of coffee which the beloved drinks with cold lips shows the coldness of love. Only the loneliness is left. In the urban Argentinean tango various places in the city or the harbour offer a particular spirit. The subject recalls a place such as a bridge as in *Puente Alsina* (1927), 'Alsina Bridge'.<sup>83</sup> The suburb here is his mother, his father the rebellious blood in his veins. The *chora*, the place is, as the lyric subject says: *Mi barrio es mi madre que ya no responde ...*, or *Yo no he conocido caricias de madre ... / Tuve un solo padre que fuera el rigor / y llevo en mis venas, de sangre matrera.* The suburb is like the tango. It is the whole of life.

### 5 The spirit of time: global and social themes

The theme of nostalgia and *tristeza* is the primary theme in the Argentinean tango, directed back to the past. In *Tiempos viejos* (1925), 'Old Times',<sup>84</sup> the subject, a man, asks his friend if he can remember the old times. Times change, and in the last line, after he has remembered the beautiful women of his youth, he can only state that time has done its work. In *Viejo smoking* (1930), 'The Old Smoking'<sup>85</sup> the theme of time is literal. He does not weep for the sadness he has had to surrender but for the remembrance of his lost power. He cries because he is lonely without a woman, without a friend, and is now waiting for death. The same theme occurs in *Uno* (1943) 'One'; 'One is so alone in one's pain ... / One is so blind in one's suffering'.<sup>86</sup> When *das Man* is involved in a state of anxiety he achieves the knowledge that life is loneliness, suffering and pain, a natural human state.

In the last lines of *Volvió una noche* (1932), 'She Came Back One Evening',<sup>87</sup> *das Man* takes a mirror – a semiotic sign – and looks at himself in order to know himself after his former beloved has gone in silence, since he could not forgive her betrayal. Moments from the past and their love are ghosts. He could not forgive her, and with her blue eyes open she noticed his bitterness and pain. He was afraid of this ghost which represented the madness of his youth: *busqué un espejo y me quise mirar / había en mi frente tantos inviernos / que también ella tuvo piedad*, 'I took a mirror to look at myself; / on my forehead there were so many winters written / that she also felt sympathy.' In this text *das Man* has encountered the state of bitterness and pain which form his anxiety. He knows that life is a lie. Time has left its traces on his forehead. In *Y todavía te quiero*

<sup>82</sup> Reichardt (1981: 152-154).

<sup>83</sup> Reichardt (1981: 210-211).

<sup>84</sup> Reichardt (1981: 231-232).

<sup>85</sup> Reichardt (1981: 243-245); Barreiro (1985: 110-11).

<sup>86</sup> Reichardt (1981: 240-241); Ahlén (1984: 202-203).

<sup>87</sup> Reichardt (1981: 245-246)

(1956), 'And I Love You Still',<sup>88</sup> the subject represents the modality of knowing (*savoir*), knowing that his love is hopeless and that love is a lie. However, he asks over and over again: *¿Por qué?*, 'Why am I going on like this?', 'Why am I going on with this bitterness and pain, when your love just means pain and suffering for me?' Here he does not know (*non-savoir*). This text expresses a deep anxiety, but the subject cannot find a solution. The text ends with an unanswered question.

Man is always on his way, searching and longing for what he does not have (cf. Plato, *The Symposium*). The tango *Yira ... Yira ...* (1929–1930), 'Aimless Wandering'<sup>89</sup> by Discépolo has a social aspect, as does *Cambalache* (1935) 'Bric-à-Brac',<sup>90</sup> showing the sense of frustration, *la indiferencia del mundo*, 'the indifference of the world' felt by the working-class. The poverty-stricken subject tries to find a coin, women betray him, and loyalty and solidarity cannot be found: 'everything is a lie and an illusion.' He realises that everything in this world is a lie and that nothing is love, a fact that does not bother the world. He is always on his road, on the road of life filled with anxiety, pain, despair and longing for love, loyalty, and understanding.

In *Cambalache*, the world is also like a carnival, upside down, where right is wrong, and wrong is right; life is described as a *porquería* 'a nasty mess' where it does not matter what you do, or whether or not you are good or evil; it is all the same, since life is a hoax. Time takes its revenge on beauty, and nostalgia for past things is rudely destroyed by reality. Life will dupe us, we feel like fools. The ultimate disgrace of being made a fool preoccupies the *porteño*. Discépolo also plays on the theme "we are not what we want to be", asking the question, "Don't you realise you are a fool?" as in *¿Qué vachaché?* (1926) 'Can We Help It?'<sup>91</sup> The message of the last lines in *¿Qué vachaché?* is *¿Qué vachaché? Hoy ya murió el criterio ... ¡Vale Jesús, lo mismo que el ladrón!* 'Reason is dead, Jesus is no longer worth more than a thief', and man's becoming a fool depends on his humanity, his innocence, his goodness, and his capacity for love.<sup>92</sup> Can we do anything to change the circumstances? *Si aquí ni Dios rescata lo perdido ... ¡¿Qué querés vos? ¡Hacé el favor!* 'When God cannot change anything.../ How can you? Please, go away!' The subject is tired of words, which do not help him to get something to eat. In his tangos Discépolo asked for social justice; his pain is not class-oriented, but universal. Many of the *tangueros* who wrote tango music and lyrics were also active in the radical movements of the time. For instance, Juan de Dios Filiberto (1885–1964) was classified as "a dangerous agitator" at the time of labour unrest prior to World War I. Angel Gregorio Villoldo (1864–1919), the father of *tango criollo*, was a

<sup>88</sup> Reichardt (1981: 246-247).

<sup>89</sup> Reichardt (1981: 247-248); Barreiro (1985: 167-168); Ahlén (1984: 183-184).

<sup>90</sup> Barreiro (1985: 162-164).

<sup>91</sup> Barreiro (1985: 166-167); Reichardt (1981: 211-212).

<sup>92</sup> Castro (1991: 78-79).

Creole with a working-class background, many of whose tangos deal with working-class themes.<sup>93</sup>

The Argentinean tango is social history when it deals with human, psychological and socio-cultural themes. In the 1930s the life was hard, as described in *Pan* (1932), 'Bread'.<sup>94</sup> The subject seeks bread and work, his children cry, his grandmother has pains, his wife is weak. The last lines of the text express a deep despair. Social criticism of this kind is not found in European or Finnish tango lyrics. *¡Se viene la maroma!* (1925), 'Soon There Will Be Thick Air Here'<sup>95</sup> contains social criticism as does *Cambalache* (1935), in which the world is ruled by money and immorality and real values are dead. *Cambalache*, with its many time- and place-bound words is one of the most cynical of texts.<sup>96</sup> Discépolo describes the life in the 1930s, the poverty, the confusion in society and the despair of the depression.<sup>97</sup>

## Cambalache

Que el mundo fue  
y será una porquería  
ya lo sé.  
[...]  
Que siempre ha habido chorros,  
maquiavelos y estafaos,  
contentos y amargaos,  
valores y dublé ...  
[...]  
¡Hoy resulta que es lo mismo  
ser derecho que traidor! ...  
¡Ignorante, sabio  
chorro, generoso  
estafador! ...  
¡Todo es igual! ¡Nasda es mejor!  
¡Lo mismo un burro  
que un gran profesor!  
No hay aplazaos,  
ni escalafón,  
los inmorales nos han igualao.  
[...]  
¡Qué falta de respeto!  
¡Qué atropello a la razón!  
¡Cualquiera es un señor!  
¡Cualquiera es un ladrón!  
[...]  
Es lo mismo el que labura,  
noche y día como un buey  
[...]  
que el que cura  
o está fuera de la ley ...  
Music and lyrics Enrique Santos Discépolo (1935)

## 'Bric-à-Brac'

That the world has been  
and always will be a dirty place,  
I know already.  
[...]  
That there have always been villains, thieves  
machiavellians and swindlers,  
content and bitter people,  
values and worthlessness ...  
[...]  
So it is the same  
if one handles right or wrong!  
Ignorant, erudite  
or false, generous  
or humbug!  
Everything is equal, nobody is better!  
It is the same if one is an ass  
or a well-known professor!  
There are no failures  
or a ranking list,  
the immoral people have caught us.  
[...]  
What a lack of respect!  
What an insult to reason!  
Everybody can be a gentleman!  
Everybody can be a thief!  
[...]  
It makes no difference if one works on  
day and night like an ox  
[...]  
it is the same whether one is a priest  
or stays outside the law ...'

*Cambalache* is very sceptical, expressing hopelessness and depression. It is also a pessimistic view of a world which has always been the same, and which man

<sup>93</sup> Castro (1991: 112; 121; 159; 172).

<sup>94</sup> Reichardt (1981: 207-208).

<sup>95</sup> Reichardt (1981: 215-216).

<sup>96</sup> *Maquiavelo*, 'villain', living according to Macchiavello's life style, cf. Barreiro (1985: 164); Åhlén (1984: 197).

<sup>97</sup> Barreiro (1985: 162-164); Åhlén (1984: 197-198).

has no ability to change. Goodness, loyalty, solidarity, equality and brotherhood do not exist, so the struggle is useless. Good and evil are alike. Discépolo's cynicism has lost faith in man. This tango text talks about the lack of love between people, or altruism. In other texts by Discépolo there are themes of jealousy, pride, the dramas of love and pain and stories about men and women in the streets, and especially of betrayal and how women take advantages of men (e.g. *Yira ... Yira* (1930) 'Aimless Wandering').

This view of life is discussed in many of the Argentinean tango texts, which is not the case in the European tangos, which mostly offer repetitive romances about love or places. The tango *Por qué canto así* (1929/1933–1947), 'Why I Sing Like This'<sup>98</sup> answers actually the questions: "What is a tango?", "What is the deepest idea of a tango?", "What does *argentinidad* express?", and "What is life in general?"

## Por qué canto así

Porque cuando pibe me acunaba en tangos  
la canción materna pa' llamar al sueño,  
y escuché el rezongo de los bandoneónes  
bajo el emparado de mi patio viejo.

Porque vi el desfile de las inclemencias  
con mis pobres ojos llorosos y abiertos,  
y en la pobre pieza de mis buenos viejos  
cantó la pobreza su canción de invierno.

Y yo me hice en tangos,  
me fui modelando en odio, en tristeza ...  
En las amarguras que da la pobreza ...  
En llantos de madres,

[...]

Y yo me hice en tangos  
porque el tango es bravo, porque el tango es fuerte,  
tiene olor a vida, tiene gusto a muerte.

[...]

Porque tengo odios que nunca los digo,

[...]

Porque quise mucho y no me han querido ...

¡Por eso yo canto tan triste, por eso!

Music José Razzano

Lyrics Celedonio Esteban Flores (1933–1947)

## 'Why I Sing Like This'

'Because when I was a child the tangos were my cradle  
the motherly song which brought sleep,  
and I heard the growl of the bandoneóns  
under the roof of my parents' house.

Because I saw with open eyes filled with tears  
how the storm began,  
and in the poor room of my parents  
poverty sang its wintry song.

And I became older with tangos,  
formed by hate and sadness ...  
bitterness, and poverty learnt ...  
the tears of my mother

[...]

And I became older with tangos,  
because the tango is brave and strong,  
it stretches after life and has the smell of death.

[...]

Because I have feelings of hate, which I never speak out

[...]

Because I loved much and no one has loved me.

That is the reason why I sing so sadly!

The tango is a question of life and death, love and hate; it is all the essential passions of life. It is *tristeza*: hate, bitterness, and sadness caused by poverty and rejected love and dreams. The tango is also like a hope, however, being brave and strong. The tango is the *helper* in the Argentinean tradition; it could be once again expressed in the notion that *life is a tango*.

One of the central themes in the Argentinean tango lyrics is the alienation of men and women in the big cities. In *A la luz del candil* (1927), 'In the Light of the Oil Lamp',<sup>99</sup> the subject, a "gaucho honrado", 'a honest gaucho', says that he feels a stranger in Rosario. He will confess to a crime, and tells his story for a police inspector; his beloved was a liar and his friend a coward. His despair is

<sup>98</sup> Reichardt (1981: 208–210).

<sup>99</sup> Barreiro (1985: 49–50); Reichardt (1981: 110).



expressed in the last line: *yo encontré dos vainas para mi facón*. *Facón* is a long knife symbolising a double murder. In his bag he has the evidence in the plaits of his woman and his heart. The only witness was the light from an oil lamp. He pleads *si soy un delincuente que me perdone Dios*, 'if I am a criminal may God forgive me'. The themes of betrayal and alienation here are typical. In *Sentencia* (1923), 'Judgement',<sup>100</sup> the subject is in court for murder. The tango begins with: *La audiencia de pronto / se quedó en silencio; / de pie, como un roble, / con acento claro / hablaba el malevo* 'In court suddenly there was silence, / when the accused stayed straight / when he spoke with a clear voice.' He talks about the poverty in the sad suburb and about the real love which is represented by *la madre, el cari – o de mi madre, de mi viejita adorada, [...] en la calle de mi vida fue como luz de farol*. His mother has been the light on his street of life. Man's life, in the Argentinean tango, moves between the polarity of the woman as beloved or prostitute. The tango *El penado 14* (1930) 'The Prisoner No. 14',<sup>101</sup> describes the prisoner who was a brother-killer, who never had any love in his life, and has now written a letter to his mother before committing suicide. His last wish was to kiss the wrinkled forehead of his first love, his mother. *La madre* is his *primer amor*, representing the real values of pure love in life. His last memory before he died was the name of his mother.

Several Argentinean tango texts describe a scene where the man changes, becoming a gangster boss, a *compadrito*, or the girl, becomes a *milonguita*. These texts are about the sexual dominance of the male. In tangos which evoke *el ambiente* women are secondary characters who, as *chinas* ('low class women or prostitutes'), or *prendas* ('skirts'), are little more than *hembras* ('female animals'). The *machismo* of such texts incorporates evocations of the lives of prostitutes, pimps, and the petulant lady's man, the *compadrito*.<sup>102</sup> The *milonguita* walking on the streets left her former life as a laundress or housemaid, protected by her *compadrito*, hoping that a rich man would take her away from such a life. This is "the dream of social mobility", the seventh aspect in Taylor's analysis.<sup>103</sup> But for a boy from a good family the tango could also mean destruction beginning in the brothels. Social protest is apparent in the titles of the Argentinean tango (e.g. *Pan* (1927) 'Bread'). The tango is thus called "the book of complaints of the *arrabal*."<sup>104</sup>

In this kind of life and state the subject is aware of the shortness of time. Profound insight into life will come sometime. The Argentinean tango dramatises but does not moralise, simply stating what happened (cf. *Gelassenheit*); whether it was right or wrong is left open. The texts are dramatic episodes, or rather long narrative wholes, in which man's existence is handled quite differently from the texts of the European tango.

<sup>100</sup> Reichardt (1981: 218-219).

<sup>101</sup> Barreiro (1985: 135-136); Reichardt (1981: 148).

<sup>102</sup> Castro (1991: 9).

<sup>103</sup> Taylor (1976: 279-281).

<sup>104</sup> Mafud (1966: 3-34); Taylor (1976: 280).

The eighth aspect suggested by Taylor concerns return to the *barrio* (cf. *Sur*). Nostalgia is only expressed in the life of the *barrio* which represents tradition and childhood, while the city symbolises the international manner and elegance as Taylor also has pointed out.<sup>105</sup> For instance, Francisco Canaro's and Marianito Mores & Ivo Pelay's tango *¡Adiós, pampa mía!* (1945) talks about nostalgia for the *pampa*. Tango texts do not usually talk about the countryside or the homeland of the immigrants. The key notions of class and nation are summarised in the following text, an example of "social mobility" in which the Argentinean tango singer Reynaldo Anselmi describes his life:<sup>106</sup>

*"My childhood wanderings led me to the street, its fury, and its poverty. The tango was born in the outskirts, the city "banks" on which the landless and the uprooted had come around at the turn of the century. [...] Soon the tango spilled out into the pavement, and all the city outskirts went to the dogs. At the Sunday dances, where servants, pimps, laundresses, working girls, construction workers, prostitutes and slaughter-house killers gathered, a tango was ten cents a piece, including the partner. An insurmountable barrier still kept it out of the classy neighbourhoods. But then it conquered Paris [...]"*

*My sleepless nights taught me how to live. At twenty, with empty pockets and an empty stomach, one has nothing but time to spend. I did it generously, with my friends, and daybreak used to catch us drinking and smoking, lost in our projects and dreams for the future... It was there, in those cafés, that the notes of your bandoneón, Eduardo Arolas, and the beauty of your poems, Celedonio Flores, blossomed within us. My Buenos Aires "café", you were "the school of all things" to me. A "compadrito" leaning on the bar over a glass of juniper, a singer and his guitar, a worker drinking up his pay, some ruffians scheming... and there, at a table, a man alone, with a lost look on his face, slowly stirring his coffee... the one that saw happiness go by and was never able to reach it. And imagining what this man wanted to hear, I offered my voice to his suffering, to his silence.*

*TANGO... the emotion of a story wrested from the privacy of the streets, a day by day account of a world where illusions wither and dreams agonize... you are feeling, an Art, dramatic and sad, like life. [...] the bandoneón moaning over the ruins of a woman's beauty knows time is inescapable. My horizon was clouded, the roads were shutting down. In desperation I got on board "for nowhere". But now is the time for returning, "for my soul is in a suitcase, but an ever-returning suitcase". [...] a trip through the streets, the neighbourhoods and memories, upon a wobbly streetcar where my heart is hanging, which is taking me away "to the land of the moon and the weeping tango."* (Anselmi 1989.)

Here Julie M. Taylor's (1976) eight aspects of the Argentinean tango themes, i.e. what *argentinidad* and *tristeza* mean, are demonstrated. In poverty the tango is the promise of a better life, but the tango could also mean destruction: 'like an old tango you died on the cold boulevard in Paris' as it is put in Enrique Maciel's and Héctor Pedro Blomberg's tango *La que murió en París* (1932), 'She Who Died in Paris'.<sup>107</sup> To sum up according to Donald S. Castro the tango as social history during the period 1880–1955 forms nine basic categories in order of their development. These are: (1) the countryside (*el tema campesino*), the Creole's romanticised object of nostalgia, whether newly arrived in Buenos Aires or more settled into city life; (2) the suburban (*arrabal*, or *orillero*) life in the *conventillo*, (*porteño*, tenement house), and in the lower-class neighbourhoods; (3) the city of Buenos Aires, described in the tangos, its streets, its events, celebrations, personalities, its docks, harbour and port facilities, and the *tristeza* of the individual lost in a big city (cf. *Mi Buenos Aires Querido* (1934)

<sup>105</sup> Taylor (1976: 281).

<sup>106</sup> Anselmi (1989) in the cover text of *Argentina–Tango* (1989) A.S.P.I.C. X 5510. Cf. also Azzi (1991: passim).

<sup>107</sup> Cf. also Reichardt (1981: 102–107); Castro (1991: passim).

'My Beloved Buenos Aires'<sup>108</sup> performed by Carlos Gardel). (4) The love theme in tango songs ranges from pure, honest love (love of mother, of children and of home) to purely erotic love, frequently involving the crucial theme of betrayal; (5) the world of men/women (*el ambiente*) is an underworld of men and women shaped by male sexual dominance. (6) Satire (*la cachada*) on life and society, and social criticism. In the 1920s the tangos express working-class consciousness: "Tango – eres un estado de alma de la multitud", "Tango – you are the soulful condition of the masses",<sup>109</sup> in the 1930s tangos reflected the Great Depression, while in the 1940s and the 1950s the tango loses its social content which is replaced by nostalgia in large part due to the socio-political consequences of *peronismo*. (7) The criminal environment (*el mundo lufa*). The slang of thieves and criminals, *lunfardo*, was a secret form of communication among the criminal classes of Buenos Aires. Later on, when the tango became more acceptable, *lunfardo* changed into a more generalised slang. (8) The philosophies of life are reflected in the tango texts, and (9) the tango texts are also social history, reflecting Argentinean socio-cultural history at different social periods.<sup>110</sup>

### 6 The spirit of the tango: the bandoneón

*Alma de bandoneón* (1935), 'The Soul of the Bandoneón'<sup>111</sup> as in so many other Argentinean tango texts repeats the soul of this instrument which represents the most important attribute of the most powerful feelings and emotions of man, i.e. *argentinidad*. The *bandoneón* is *¡voz de desdicha y de amor!* 'the voice of unhappiness and love'. It is the voice of pain and the spirit of the tango:

#### Alma de bandoneón

[...]  
Fue tu voz,  
bandoneón,  
la que me confió  
[...]  
Alma de bandoneón  
- alma que arrastro en mi -  
¡voz de desdicha y de amor! ...  
Te buscaré al morir,  
te llamaré en mi adiós,  
para pedirte perdón ...  
y al apretarte en mis brazos  
darte en pedazos  
mi corazón ...  
Music Enrique Santos Discépolo  
Lyrics Enrique Santos Discépolo & Luis César Amadori (1935)

#### 'The Soul of the Bandoneón'

[...]  
'It was your voice,  
bandoneón,  
which gave me consolation  
[...]  
The soul of the bandoneón  
- the soul which is dwelling in me -  
The voice of bad luck and love! ...  
In my death I will search for you,  
as farewell I will cry for you,  
and beg for your forgiveness ...  
and when I press you in my arms  
I will give you the pieces  
of my heart ...'

The *bandoneón's* task was to give the tango its characteristic soul and feeling, its sign of *argentinidad* and *tristeza*. The very important cultural aspect of the soul

<sup>108</sup> Barreiro (1985: 105), music by Carlos Gardel, lyrics by Alfredo Le Pera.

<sup>109</sup> Lara & Panti (1961: 116); Castro (1991: 159).

<sup>110</sup> Castro (1991: 8-10).

<sup>111</sup> Reichardt (1981: 114-115).

of the tango is expressed by an informant in Taylor's study: "To dance a tango is to feel oneself a part of the land, a part of Argentina."<sup>112</sup> An interesting aspect is the fact that the *bandoneón* is an imported phenomenon which became essential to describing the Argentinean soul in the tango. In *¡Che bandoneón!* (1948) 'Oh, Bandoneón!'<sup>113</sup> the essence of the Argentinean tango takes its characteristic expression. The *bandoneón* is the sound of *dolor*, the pain. It expresses the song of life and love, which one neither got or gave. The song of the *bandoneón* is the song of longing:

¡Che bandoneón!

El duende de tu son, che bandoneón,  
se apiada del dolor de los demás,  
y al estrujar tu fueye dormilón,  
se arrima al corazón que sufre más.  
[...]  
Bandoneón,  
hoy es noche de fandango  
y puedo confesarte la verdad,  
copa a copa, pena a pena, tango a tango,  
embalado en la locura  
del alcohol y la amargura.  
Bandoneón,  
[...]  
no ves que está de olvido el corazón  
y ella vuelve noche a noche como un canto  
en las gotas de tu llanto,  
¡che bandoneón!  
Tu canto es el amor que no se dio  
y el cielo que soñamos una vez,  
[...]  
Music Anibal Troilo  
Lyrics Homero Manzi (1948)

'Oh, Bandoneón!'

The cobalt of your sound, oh, bandoneón,  
has mercy on the pain felt by others,  
and while wringing your sleepy bellows,  
it draws close to the heart which suffers most.  
[...]  
Bandoneón,  
today is the night of fandango  
and I can tell you a truth,  
glass for glass, pain for pain, tango for tango,  
covered in the fog  
of alcohol and bitterness.  
Bandoneón,  
[...]  
don't you see that the heart will forget  
and she returns night after night like a song  
in your tears,  
oh, bandoneón!  
Your song is the love which one did not give  
and the heaven we once dreamt about,  
[...]

Actually this tango text provides the quintessential setting of the Argentinean tango; the *bandoneón* tells the sad story of man with its "cobalt" sound expressing all the mental states the verbal language cannot describe, when words are not enough. The *bandoneón* is the primary attribute of the Argentinean tango. It is an icon for the deepest feelings, which the language cannot express, whose sounds of pain and love repeat the sameness of the feelings which words are not able to describe. Only the moaning of a *bandoneón* playing mirrors such mental states. This notion occurs in Juan B. Deambroggio and Pascual Contursi's tango *Bandoneón arrabalero* (1926), 'The Bandoneón of the Suburb'.<sup>114</sup> The *bandoneón* gives consolation: *Has querido consolarme / con tu voz enronquecida / y a tus notas doloridas / aumentó mi berretín*, its sound is the sound of pain, and though consoles, it also makes the pain greater. The theme of the suburb has always been strong in the Argentinean tango. In Anibal Troilo's and Homero Manzi's tango *Barrio de tango* (1942), 'The Suburb of the Tango',<sup>115</sup> nostalgia for the suburb *Pompeya* is most apparent. Somewhere in the

<sup>112</sup> Taylor (1976: 289).

<sup>113</sup> Reichardt (1981: 136).

<sup>114</sup> Barreiro (1985: 102-103); Reichardt (1981: 124-126).

<sup>115</sup> Reichardt (1981: 126-127).

distance is the sound of a *bandoneón*: *Barrio de tango, luna y misterio, / calles lejanas, ¿como estarán! / Viejos amigos que hoy ni recuerdo, / ¿qué se habrán hecho, dónde estarán!* 'The tango of the suburb, the moon and the secrets...' The moon is an important image as well as the *bandoneón*: *y la luna chapaleando sobre el fango / y a lo lejos la voz del bandoneón*. The moon adds nostalgia to the text and a mythic feeling of the past.

The Argentinean tango expresses a variety of themes describing the whole existence of man through a deep psychological view. It is therefore difficult to differentiate exact categories since each tango represents many different themes at the same time. The tango is social history, but it is also a philosophical analysis of man's, *das Man*'s, 'anybody's or somebody's', humankind's mental states. In conclusion the Argentinean tango as music and text can be described as a parallel to the battle of life and death; namely, to the bull-fight. It expresses the strength of both life and death. The idea of the bull-fight is as is described in Ernest Hemingway's novel *Death in the Afternoon* published in 1932, a study of the cruelty of life and death; in the arena life and death are locked in conflict.

In the tango texts life consists of man's longing for love, beauty, freedom, and truth. Death is actualised not only as the last point on man's road, but also as the various "deaths" in man's everyday life: the death of love, the death of beauty, the death of freedom, the death of truth. The *tristeza* of the Argentinean tango deals with existential and philosophical aspects of life and its central modalities: existing (*être*), loving (*désir*), believing (*croire*), and knowing (*savoir*) with their oppositions: not-existing (death), not-loving (rejection, loneliness, oblivion), not-knowing (e.g. not-knowing that the beloved was a liar), and the central modality of being able to (*pouvoir*), i.e. what man can do to change his/her existence. *Dasein* in the tango text, which is a narration of life describes the *In-der-Welt-sein* processes in which *das Man*, 'anybody, somebody', the world's everyman is involved.

The Argentinean tango lyrics are philosophical texts, not cheap sentimental or romantic love songs. The nostalgia in the texts expresses a painful return to memories of love, past time or past places, usually in the *suburbos*. It is a nostalgia for the home and the *cafetín* in the suburbs. Joy exists only in the short moments of love and happiness in the past. Melancholy is a state of depression, *tristeza*, actualised in the hopeless states when man understands the lie of life, rejection and the lost time and places when he/she realises that sadness and loneliness are man's natural states. In spite of this state of *tristeza*, the subject of the Argentinean tango does not usually long for death as a solution, even though the texts talk about suicide or of longing to return to the suburbs. He realises his state and leaves his life as such, the idea is expressed by Martin Heidegger's term *Gelassenheit*. But the man of the Argentinean tango can cry for his loneliness, sadness and bitterness in the *cafetín* with friends listening to the soul of the tango, the sound, the howling and moaning of the *bandoneón* which continues to express such passions when words are not enough.

## IV International tango lyrics

The tango began its history in Finland as an urban dance in 1913, when a Danish couple introduced it at Hotel Börs in Helsinki. The tango from the big world and Europe represented something new and urban. In 1929, François de Godzinsky composed his tango *Tango Carita* performed by the opera singer Martta Tiger. So-called German "Konditorei tangos" acquired Finnish translations, for instance in 1929 *In einen kleinen Konditorei, Me kahvilassa istuttihin*, and *Ich küsse Ihre Hand, Madame, Kättänne Rouva suutelen* (1929). Another early tango is *Oi, Donna Clara* (1930) performed by Gunnar Kalenius with music by J. Petersburschki and Finnish lyrics by R. R. Ryynänen. The first version of the tango *La Cumparsita* appeared with Finnish lyrics in 1929 under the title *Tropiikin yö* 'Tropic Night'<sup>1</sup> and in 1943 entitled *La Cumparsita (Argentiinalainen tango)* 'La Cumparsita (Argentinean Tango)'.<sup>2</sup> In the following I discuss some of the Argentinean tangos in English and Finnish interpretations or translations in order to show whether the themes of the originals remain, or whether they change in their new shapes, i.e. how they are acculturated in Europe. Because the Argentinean tango lyrics are long narrative wholes I must confine myself to a few texts only.

### 1 Argentinean tangos with English and Finnish texts

#### Passion

The great Argentinean tangos Angel Gregorio Villoldo's (1864–1919) *El Choclo* (1905),<sup>3</sup> and G. H. Matos Rodríguez' *La Cumparsita* (1916–1927)<sup>4</sup> which became popular in Finland had their first performances in Finland in the 1940s. *El Choclo* under the Finnish title *Tulisuudelma*, *Kiss of Fire* became popular especially in the 1950s; *El Choclo* (1905) acquired its Finnish text or form as *Tulisuudelma* ([1943, 1944] 1953) *Kiss of Fire* (1952), (*tuli* 'fire', *suudelma* 'kiss') as did the Swedish version *Din kys av eld* 'Your Kiss of Fire' by Gösta Rybrant,<sup>5</sup> probably after the English title. The major theme of the refrain was excluded by Lester Allen and Robert Hill who adapted the English lyrics and made an international tango of it.<sup>6</sup> The Finnish words were written by Kullervo. Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong made this tango a popular

<sup>1</sup> The tango was performed by Aarne Salonen in a recital form. A copy of the tango is on Rektophon F 501 04 (A 1), Gramophone Library, Oy Yleisradio Ab, Finnish Broadcasting Company. Cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 90).

<sup>2</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 90, 256; 1992: 52).

<sup>3</sup> Castro (1991: 43) mentions its first appearance in 1898.

<sup>4</sup> According to Barreiro (1985: 60–61) composed in 1916 with lyrics from 1924; Reichardt (1981: 268) gives 1917 and 1927.

<sup>5</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes).

<sup>6</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes), *El choclo* ([1952] 1953), *Kiss of Fire*, *Tulisuudelma*, Fazer.



"European" tango, and the English lyrics have probably been the basis of the Finnish lyrics. *El Choclo* (1905) got its first text from Villoldo himself, the second version in 1930 from Marambio Catán, and the third and the best-known from Marambio Catán and Enrique Santós Discépolo from 1947.<sup>7</sup> It is not clear what exactly *El Choclo* means or what it symbolises; *choclo* means actually 'corn' (in Finnish *maissin tähkä*) denoting a person, a lion man with blond hair, or a place where people can eat.<sup>8</sup> Other suggestions are that *El Choclo* is a secret language for erotic plays,<sup>9</sup> and that it means 'The Ear of Corn', e.g. penis. The first "official" *tango canción* (tango as written lyric/poem) was composed by Pascal Contursi (1888–1932) as *Mi noche triste* (1916–1917).<sup>10</sup> Tango lyrics existed before that time, but they were often obscene. The texts from the 1890s focus on the locale of tango dancing, the brothels and their conditions.<sup>11</sup> It is clear that the sentimental or passionate European tango could not use these kinds of texts. *El Choclo* (1905) tells about the plant corn, as mentioned above, which can be a metaphor for various things. In 1930 and 1947 the texts talk about the tango as a life style, the tango as a metaphor for life. The English lyrics however have a very passionate form where the key word is *kiss*; the meaning of the text becomes banal and trivial, or like a parody or a melodrama. The original Argentinean themes with social history, *bandoneón*, pain and *tristeza*, are gone. The text describes a kiss of fire and how mad it can make one instead. The Finnish text has the same banal passion, which probably is a very good reason for its enormous popularity; in passionate song texts one can be rid of taboos; for a while one can escape from reality and social rules to another place where one's passions can be expressed and processed; it offers a *dual setting* (*den dubbla scenen*), a term used by Lönnroth.<sup>12</sup> The English and the Finnish versions are presented here. Thematically the Finnish lyrics follow the English.

## Kiss of Fire

I touch your lips, and all at once the sparks go flying.  
Those devil lips that know so well the art of lying,  
And tho' I see the danger, still the flame grows higher,  
I know I must surrender to your Kiss of Fire.  
Just like a torch, you set the soul within me burning;  
I must go along this road of no returning.  
And tho' it burns me and turns me into ashes,  
My whole world crashes, without your Kiss of Fire.  
[...]  
If I'm a slave, Then it's a slave I want to be.  
Don't pity me! Don't pity me!  
Give me your lips, the lips you only let me borrow,  
Love me tonight and let the devil take tomorrow.  
I know that I must have your kiss although it dooms me.

## Tulisuudelmä

Sun tulisuu delmasi tähden aatos entää  
nyt onnen kipinät kun silmissäni lentää.  
Tuo huultes kuuma valhe uskoa mun täytyy,  
sun tules liekeissä kun sydämeni räytyy.  
Sä lailla soihdun toit mun sieluhuni liekin,  
se vaikka onnesta nyt murheeseen viekin.  
ja tuolta katkeralta tieltä minä koskaan  
en palaa koskaan, niin lähdet kuitenkin.  
[...]  
Sun orjas oon ja aina orjaksesi jään.  
vaan säälimään en pyydäkään.  
Siks jälleen huules mulle hetkiseksi lainaa,  
tuo muisto mieltäni vaikk huomenna jo painaa.  
Sun tulisuu delmassas onni mua kohtaa,

<sup>7</sup> Villoldo (1905; 1930; 1947).

<sup>8</sup> Ahlén (1987: 86).

<sup>9</sup> Hämäläinen (manuscript 1982: 11) writes that well-known tango titles can be sexual euphemisms and refer to the underworld and brothels. At the outset some texts were blatantly pornographic. Cf. Barreiro (1985: 18).

<sup>10</sup> Barreiro (1985: 64-65); Castro (1991: 66).

<sup>11</sup> Castro (1991: 15-52) discusses the *lunfardo* language in the tangos.

<sup>12</sup> Lönnroth (1978: passim).

Tho' it consumes me, Your Kiss of Fire.  
A. G. Villoldo, adapted by Lester Allen & Robert Hill

se myöskin johtaa mun turmioon.  
Finnish lyrics Kullervo (1953)

This belongs among the most famous "European" tangos. A comparison of the Argentinean versions and the English version of the themes shows that the original themes have changed in that they have been the object of acculturation. The passionate English text deals hyperbolically with love and jealousy, using words and expressions such as: *devil lips, the art of lying, a torch, burning, this road of no returning, it burns, and turns me into ashes, My whole world crashes, I am a slave, a slave I want to be, Don't pity me!, let the devil take me tomorrow, it dooms me, it consumes me*, which form the semiotic field of passions. The key words in the Finnish version are *sun tules liekeissä kun sydämeni räytyy*, 'in the flame of your fire my heart suffers', where the Finnish verb *räytyä* is semantically strong, expressing a state of very great suffering. In the Finnish tango lyrics expressions like *Sun orjas oon ja aina orjaksesi jään*, 'I am your slave and I always will be', or *Sun tulisuu delmassas onni mua kohtaa, / se myöskin johtaa mun turmioon*, 'In your kiss of fire I meet my luck, / it also leads me to destruction', are too fervent for the traditional Finnish tango text discourse. The subject, the actor, describes his mental state, i.e. what the kiss of fire caused him. Fire is a metaphor for passion expressing the conflict love–betrayal, love–bitterness. In their book *Sémiotique des passions. Des états de choses aux états d'âme* Greimas & Fontanille offer a profound analysis of the passion "La Jalousie", the possessive feeling of love.<sup>13</sup> For this I use the terms *désir* and *jalousie*, which Barthes employs in his book *A Lover's Discourse. Fragments* belonging to the vocabulary of "a lover's discourse". Barthes describes jealousy as "A sentiment which is born in love and which is produced by the fear that the loved person prefers someone else."<sup>14</sup> Jealousy is a strong feeling which is actualised in the Argentinean tango texts especially, but not in this "insane" and destructive form as in the English version of *El Choclo*.

The tango began to emerge as the national dance of Argentina in 1917, when the tango singer Carlos Gardel (1890–1935) became famous with his song *Mi noche trista* (1915–1916), 'My Sad Night'.<sup>15</sup> The most played international tango of the Argentinean tangos is *La Cumparsita* (1916–1927), music and lyrics by G. H. Matos Rodríguez, the lyrics of 1927 by Pascual Contursi and Enrique Marone.<sup>16</sup> The English lyrics are by Russel Goudey, the Finnish lyrics by Kullervo.<sup>17</sup> The very first time it was recorded in Finland 1929 under the title *Tropiikin yö* (1929), 'Tropic Night' with a recital performance by the actor Aarne Salonen. This tango shows very well how the foreign tango genre was seen in Finland.

<sup>13</sup> Greimas & Fontanille (1991: 189–322).

<sup>14</sup> Barthes ([1977] 1978: 144–146)

<sup>15</sup> Barreiro (1985: 64–65), composed 1916, lyrics 1924; Reichardt (1981: 268) gives 1917 and 1927.

<sup>16</sup> Rodríguez (1917; 1927), Barreiro (1985: 60–61).

<sup>17</sup> Among others Kullervo wrote Finnish texts to the great international tangos *El Choclo*, *Tango Jealousy*, and *Tango Desirée*. *La Cumparsita* is the signature tango melody of *Seinäjoen tangomarkkinat*, The Seinäjoki Tango Festival (1985–), an annual festival in Seinäjoki, Ostrobothnia, Finland.

## Tropiikin yö

Yö tropiikin kiehtovan ihmeellinen  
peittää kuultavaan, hehkuvaan syleilyynsä  
tuon pienen, niin kauniin ja hurmaavan maan.  
Tuo maa, se on minun unelmieni kohde.  
Tuo maa, se on Kuuba,  
lemmen ja rakkauden satumaailma.  
Music G. H. Matos Rodriguez  
Finnish lyrics unknown (1929)

## 'Tropic Night'

The fascinating wonderful night in the tropics  
covers in its shining glowing embrace,  
such a little, beautiful and charming land.  
That land is the goal of my dreams.  
That land is Cuba,  
the fairy-tale world of passion and love.'

The translation shows that the original themes have been changed to sentiment and escapism. The Finnish lyrics for the same tango from 1943 with lyrics by A. Nuotio are also about passion, but now that of the Argentinean night with a girl, 'the Rose of Argentina', the castanets and a gaucho with his horse.<sup>18</sup> Actually, it has all the escapist features of the ecstasy of the South. Several recordings have been made of this tango, both as instrumental and vocal versions.<sup>19</sup> In the 1950s new lyrics for this tango were written by Kullervo, and it was performed by Finland's tango legend, Olavi Virta. An interesting aspect in the European tango texts is their so-called cultural adaptation; the Argentinean character with its deep meanings vanishes and the European texts are, as Åhlén states, repetitive.<sup>20</sup>

The first version of *La Cumparsita* by G. H. Matos Rodriguez was done in 1917, and in 1927 Contursi and Maroni wrote a new text, against Rodríguez' wish, with the new title *Si supieras* (1927), 'If You Knew'.<sup>21</sup> *La Cumparsa* is a little carnival procession. In the Catholic world the carnival is an important cultural phenomenon; for one day of the year the world is upside down and people are allowed to do whatever they want and say whatever they want, whereas during the rest of the year one has to be responsible. In the European tango *la cumparsita* is a passionate girl whom the subject has met, while the Argentinean text tells a story about the little carnival girl and *la cumparsa* 'the carnival procession'. The lyrics by Contursi and Maroni (1927) tell about the love which the subject has in his soul. His friends have left him, nobody gives him consolation in his grief and sorrow. When she leaves him the morning sun no longer shines through the window in his room. His little dog, seeing that she has left, also leaves. He is completely alone. The first version begins by describing *la cumparsa*, the little carnival go around, but it has a serious concern, telling about the social mobility of the subject in the hope of a better future. The girl left her mother for this reason and when she finally returns to her, her mother has died alone and abandoned. In the European version the text is sentimentalised, as is the case in *Cumparsita*, the English text.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Nuotio (1943: 9).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945, 1946–1961 (1981; 1992).

<sup>20</sup> Åhlén (1987: 81–82).

<sup>21</sup> Reichardt (1981: 268); Barreiro (1985: 60–61). Cf. also Castro (1991: 149–150).

<sup>22</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).

## Cumparsita

Cumparsita,  
I know you're playing  
Cumparsita,  
In rhythm swaying,  
Hypnotising,  
your love I'm praying,  
Tantalizing,  
your eyes are saying,  
"Take me, why are you waiting?  
Hold me, no hesitating,  
Kiss me, tonight's the night for love."  
As we dance my arms enfold you,  
Heav'nly dream it is to hold you,  
And as the night goes on until the dawn,  
You're mine my Cumparsita.  
Our romance, a fiery passion,  
Our kiss, a breathless ecstasy.  
And for tonight it seems  
This is the dream of dreams,  
No other ever could be  
[...]  
Fate has brought us here together.  
For this meeting sweet and tender  
Music G. H. Matos Rodriguez  
English lyrics Russel Goudey

La Cumparsita<sup>23</sup>

Hiljaa yössä  
nyt sävel kaikaa,  
tähtein vyössä  
on kummaa taikaa.  
Mieltä kiehtoo  
tää rytmi kuuma,  
tulsta liehtoo  
sen outo huuma.  
Tieni illoin  
kun luokses johtaa,  
tunnen silloin:  
mua onni kohtaa,  
mulle milloin  
suot kuumen suudelman.  
  
Hetki tää on meitä varten,  
nyt käymme tietä onnetarten.  
Sä mulle onnen tuot,  
kun hymyn suot,  
jää huolet unhoon.  
[...]  
Finnish lyrics Kullervo  
(1953)

The English version of *La Cumparsita* uses a pragmatic form with dialogue, questions, requests and answers. The theme expresses passion; *hypnotising, fiery passion, breathless ecstasy, and complete surrender* recall the theme of *Kiss of Fire*. The music with its dynamics and passionate lyrics have made it popular in Finland since the 1950s. The Finnish text begins with a place description: *Hiljaa yössä / nyt sävel kaikaa, / tähtein vyössä / on kummaa taikaa*, 'Silent in the night / now the sound will echo, / in the night of stars, / there is a strange magic'. A night with stars often provides the setting of a traditional Finnish tango text. Only the end of the text gives expression to strong passion: *Sua yksin aina jumaloin, / sun vuokses kaiken tehdä voin, / sun lempes maljan kerran join, / se huumas mun*, 'You are the only one I adore, / for you I can do everything, / I once drank a toast to your love, / I was ecstatic.' These few examples show that the atmosphere of the Argentinean, the "European" (the modified Argentinean tango version) and the Finnish tango are completely different.

## Nostalgia

In the 1980s especially, Argentinean tangos acquired Finnish interpretations or translations. Anibal Troilo's and Homero Manzi's tango *Sur* (1948) 'South',<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> This version was performed in 1953 by Olavi Virta and the Metro-tytöt ('Girls'), SD 5218, cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 52). An instrumental version of this tango was recorded in 1938 by the Dallapé (A 228491), cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 256).

<sup>24</sup> Barreiro (1985: 130–131); Reichardt (1981: 224–225).

which belongs among Manzi's masterworks, is a good example. He *expresado la nostalgias de los porteños*, 'expressed the nostalgic sense of the *porteño*'.<sup>25</sup> The characteristic theme of nostalgia, longing for youth and one's home reveals depth in this Argentinean tango where an urban place, a quarter and its past life, are described. The objects of nostalgia are usually urban places, the suburbs, their time and people. While the Argentinean tango is an urban phenomenon with stories about the city, its streets and the events there, the nostalgia in Finnish tangos concerns descriptions of nature and rural places. An exception is the tango *¡Adiós, pampa mía!*, a nostalgic review in which the subject recalls memories from the pampas. Taylor points out in her study that longing for the pampas or home is not among the frequent themes.<sup>26</sup> *Sur* offers a nostalgic view through the subject remembering his youth and his beloved. The key concept *sand* symbolises time, the pain of changed suburbs and the bitterness of a dead dream. In the Finnish translation of this tango, "south" is replaced by a description of a working-class quarter in Helsinki in the past. The tango thus retains its urban milieu in both versions, but the Finnish translation uses cultural adaptation and talks about a Finnish place.

## Sur

San Juan y Boedo antiguo y todo el cielo,  
[...]

La esquina del herrero, barro y pampa,  
tu casa, tu vereda y el zanjon,  
y un perfume de yuyos y de alfalfa  
que me llenade nuevo el corazón.

Sur, ...

paredón y después ...

[...]

Ya nunca me verás como me vieras,  
recostado en la vidriera  
y esperándote.

Ya nunca alumbraré con las estrellas  
nuestra marcha sin querellas  
por las noches de Pompeya ...

Las calles y las lunas suburbanas  
y mi amor y tu ventana,  
todo ha muerto, ya lo sé.

[...]

Nostalgias de las cosas que han pasado  
arena que la vida se llevó.  
pesadumbre de barrios que han cambiado  
y amargura del sueño que murió.

[...]

Music Anibal Troilo

Lyrics Homero Manzi (1948)

## 'South'

'San Juan and the old Boedo and the wide sky,  
[...]

The blacksmith's corner, mud and pampas,  
your house, your path and the tombs  
and the smell of weed and alfalfa  
which again fill the heart.

South ...

the wall and then ...

[...]

You will never see me as you saw me once  
when I leant against a window  
and I waited for you.

I no longer lighten with stars  
our happy road  
through the nights of Pompeya.

The streets and the moonlight of the suburbs  
and my love and your window,  
all has died, I know it.

[...]

Nostalgia for the past things,  
the sand which life has taken away.

The pain of changed quarters  
and the bitterness of a dead dream.'

[...]

In this tango Manzi describes the southern part of the city, Nueva Pompeya (The New Pompei), around the intersection of San Juan and Boedo Streets, a traditional working-class neighbourhood. This is also the place for Discépolo's

<sup>25</sup> Castro (1991: 235-237).

<sup>26</sup> Taylor (1976: 281).

*Cafetin de Buenos Aires* (1948), the *cafetin* where one could be alone with one's sorrows and work them out with friends. The modality of the subject in the tango *Sur* is knowing (*savoir*); *todo ha muerto, ya lo sé*, 'everything has died, I know that'. Nostalgia for the past in the form of lost love and innocence, one's childhood and youth are fundamental; all is past except for the memories.

*Sur* retains the original theme of the longing for the past in the Finnish version with the title *Sörkkaan terveiset vie* (1987), i.e. 'Give My Greetings to Sörkka' with Finnish lyrics by Aappo I. Piippo. It describes the story of the tango through a part of Helsinki, *Sörnäinen*, in Swedish *Sörnäs*, in its slang form *Sörkka*, which signalises the slang of Helsinki and at the same time adds a social aspect to this tango. Another slang word is *kundit*, a common word meaning 'fellows', 'guys'. Time, place and love are the themes. This tango is an interesting description of one part of Helsinki of the past and its vanished life style; the formerly beautiful parks no longer exist. The Argentinean words and themes have been the object of cultural adaptation.<sup>27</sup> This is also a phenomenon which can be explained in Bakhtin's term *chronotopos*, place and time belonging together;<sup>28</sup> here they are transferred into another culture and its own life. The Argentinean "south", *Sur*, is transformed to Sörkka, an eastern part of Helsinki, a well-known workers' quarter and a new cultural context, although familiar to some citizens of Helsinki. The self *mä* ('I') remembers his past life, time and place, *vanhat Sörkan seudut*, 'the old parts of Sörkka' which 'I always love', *aina rakastan*. The first love and memories are at the places *Sörkka*, *Rantatie* and *Haapaniemen kenttä*. This kind of urban nostalgia is rare in the Finnish tangos. Man's memory is always searching for the time and place which give the spirit of place, the *chronotopos*. The subject expresses his joy of life, a metaphor, but love is gone and he cannot conquer time. His memories are man's most important possession, and the gold of Sörkka which only exists in our memory. A back translation with the Finnish names in Helsinki: *Sörkka* (*Sörnäinen*, *Sörnäs*), *Rantatie* (*Sörnäisten rantatie*, *Sörnäs strandväg*), *Haapaniemen kenttä* ('the athletics field of Haapaniemi') of the Finnish lyrics to *Sur* is as follows:

Sörkkaan terveiset vie<sup>29</sup>

Mä missä vaellankaan, voin aina muistaa  
ne vanhat Sörkan seudut kundeineen.  
Siellä varmaan kuin ennen kaikki luistaa,  
sinne palaan mä vielä uudelleen.  
Taas kukkaan puhkee muistot Rantatiellä  
ja puisto nauraa harvahampainen.  
Kuulen jälleen sen kuinka kerran siellä  
Elämälle soi kadut Söömäisten.

'Give My Greetings to Sörkka'

'Wherever I wander, I can always remember  
the places of the old Sörkka with its guys.  
There life is surely the same as it was before;  
there I will again return.  
Again the memories will bloom on [Sörnäisten] Rantatie  
and the park laughs with its few teeth.  
I again hear how once there  
the streets of Söömäinen are full of Life.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Hatim & Mason (1990: 9, 14, 19).

<sup>28</sup> Bahtin (1988; [1965] 1991).

<sup>29</sup> *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 56-57). Other Argentinean tangos with Finnish texts are *Uno* (*Yksin*, 1987), cf. *Kultainen tangokirja 1* (1994: 202-203). *Por una cabeza* (*Kuoleman on paikka*, 1987), *Araña de la noche* (*Yön kulkija*), cf. *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 8-9, 38-39). *A media luz* (*Kun yö on valoton*), cf. *Kultainen tangokirja 1* (1994: 62-63). *Adiós muchachos* (*Adios muchachos*, 1950), cf. *Suuri toivelaulukirja 6* (1985: 234).



Siis sinne terveiset vie;  
kai vielä aito se lie.  
Mä siellä rakastin ja kaiken elin aidommin  
ja siellä sain myös ensisuudelman.  
Kun arki painaa joskus liikaa mieltä,  
etsin lohdutusta sieltä,  
missä tunne poltti rintaa.  
On ohimennyt nuoruuteni  
siellä vanhan Sörkan Rantatiellä,  
sitä aina rakastan.

Sen illan muistan kun suokun annoit,  
ja rakkautemme puhkes kukkiin.  
Kun sä kentällä Haapaniemien vanhoit,  
että pettäisit et mua milloinkaan.  
Taas kaiken muistan, kainostelleet emme  
me tunteitamme nuoren rakkauden.  
Vaikka vuodet pois veikin nuoruutemme,  
ei ne koskaan vie kultaa Söömäisten.  
Siis sinne terveiset vie...  
Music Anibal Troilo, Lyrics Homero Manzi  
Finnish lyrics Aappo I. Piippo (1987)

So, give my greetings there;  
perhaps it may still be real.  
I loved there and experienced everything so genuinely  
and there I got my first kiss.  
When the everyday life is too heavy on my mind,  
I try to find consolation there,  
where the feeling burnt my breast.  
Gone is my youth  
there on the old Rantatie of Sörkka,  
I always will love it.

I remember the night when you gave me a kiss,  
and our love burst into bloom.  
When you swore on the field of Haapaniemi  
that you would never betray me.  
Again I remember, we were not ashamed of  
our feelings of young love.  
Even though the years took away our youth,  
they will never take away the gold of Söömäinen.  
So give my greetings there ...'

The Finnish translations of some Argentinean tangos, especially in the 1980s began a new era in the Finnish tango culture, which now got long narrative texts and thematically more faithful translations. Even though the contents were adapted to Finnish culture, they showed another style in tango lyrics, i.e. narration combined with social comment and descriptions of the urban life style.

*¡Adiós, pampa mía!* (1945) 'Farewell, My Pampas!',<sup>30</sup> music by Francisco Canaro, and lyrics by Marianito Mores and Ivo Pelay, describes the story of the subject leaving his pampas. The Finnish lyrics from 1955 by Aarne Lohimies [Reino Helismaa], writer of many tango texts in Finnish, has kept almost the same atmosphere in the Finnish lyrics. The title is as in the original:

¡Adiós, pampa mía!

¡Adiós, pampa mía! ...  
Me voy ... Me voy a tierras extrañas.  
Adiós, caminos que he recorrido,  
ríos, montes y cañadas,  
tapera donde he nacido.  
Si no volvemos a vernos,  
tierra querida,  
quiero que sepas  
que al irme dejo la vida.  
¡Adiós! ...

Al dejarte, pampa mía,  
ojos y alma se me llenan  
con el verde de tus pastos  
y el temblor de la estrellas.  
Con el canto de tus vientos  
y el sollozar de vihuelas  
que me alegraron a veces,

Adiós, pampa mía!

Adiós, pampa mía,  
nyt jää mun kotiseutuni rakkain.  
Adiós, te joet, laaksot ja vuoret,  
teidän luoksenne mä kaipaen,  
kun täältä kaukana kuljen.  
Pois kunnaat kauniit jo jäivät  
ja harmaat päivät  
on cessä mulla.  
Toi matka murheisen mielen.  
Adiós. -

Viime silmäyksen luon nyt  
tälle rakkahalle maalle  
josta erota mun täytyy  
nyt kun kaipuu mielen valtaa.  
Mutta sittenkin on niin  
kaunis muisto maastani jäävä.  
Suloinen ja kaunis muisto -

<sup>30</sup> I am grateful to Jaakko Salo (Warner Music/Chappell Finland Oy, Fazer Records, Espoo) who provided me with these notes. Copyright 1945 by Peer International Corporation (E.D.A.M.I.), Argentina.

y otras me hicieron llorar.

¡Adiós, pampa mía! ...  
Me voy camino de la esperanza.  
Adiós, llanuras que he galopado,  
senads, lomas y quebradas,  
lugares donde he soñado.  
Yo he de volver a tu suelo,  
cuando presenta  
que mi alma escapa  
como paloma hasta el cielo ....  
¡Adiós! ...

¡Me voy, pampa mía!  
¡Adiós! ...  
Music Francisco Canaro  
Lyrics Marianito Mores & Ivo Pelay (1945)

Se mulle lohduñ suo.

Adiós, pampa mia - Adiós -  
Finnish lyrics Aarne Lohimies [Reino Helismaa]  
(1955)

One theme in these tangos is wandering, coming to somewhere and leaving a place, which exemplifies the notion that *Life is a journey*, as in Chatwin's book.<sup>31</sup> The nostalgic Argentinean tango above reflects the memory of the pampas. The Finnish text is as in the following back-translation into English.

Adiós, pampa mía!

Adiós, pampa mía,  
nyt jää mun kotiseutuni rakkain.  
Adiós, te joet, laaksot ja vuoret,  
teidän luoksenne mä kaipaän,  
kun täältä kaukana kuljen.  
Pois kunnaat kauniit jo jäivät  
ja harmaat päivät  
on eessä mulla.  
Toi matka murheisen mielen.  
Adiós. -  
Viime silmäyksen luon nyt  
tälle rakkahalle maalle  
josta erota mun täytyy  
nyt kun kaipuu mielen valtaa.  
Mutta sittenkin on  
niin kaunis muisto maastani jäävä.  
Suloinen ja kaunis muisto -  
Se mulle lohduñ suo.  
Adiós, pampa mia - Adiós -  
Music Francisco Canaro  
Lyrics Marianito Mores & Ivo Pelay  
Finnish lyrics Aarne Lohimies [Reino Helismaa] (1955)

'Farewell, my Pampas!'

'Farewell, my pampas!  
now my dear home region is left behind.  
Farewell, you rivers, valleys and mountains,  
I long for you,  
when I wander from here far away.  
The beautiful fields stayed behind  
and  
I have grey days in front of me.  
The journey brought a sad mind.  
Farewell. -  
The last glance I now give  
to this dear country  
which I have to leave  
now when nostalgia fills my mind.  
But, however,  
such a beautiful memory will remain of my country.  
A sweet and beautiful memory -  
It gives me consolation.  
Farewell, my pampas - Farewell'

The man's memory brings consolation; the sweet memory helps the subject endure the longing. In the Finnish lyrics the subject leaves his country, while in the Argentinean he leaves the pampas, even though the Finnish text repeats the foreign words of the title. This is a nostalgic journey to another scene; on the one hand, to the far-away country Argentina, and on the other hand, to the land of beautiful memories in one's mind. Carlos Gardel's tango *Volver* (1934)<sup>32</sup> has also

<sup>31</sup> Chatwin (1988: passim).

<sup>32</sup> Gardel, Carlos & Le Pera, Alfredo, *Volver*, Editorial musical Korn S.A.I.C, Buenos Aires; Barreiro (1985:

been a prototype for man's return home; home can be the native country, the native place, the home area, or a return through memories back to the place where one began the journey of life. The memories are always both sweet and painful. The title of this tango refers to man's eternal return, *volvere*, suggesting the image of the road from one place to another.<sup>33</sup>

Volver  
Yo adivino el parpadeo  
de las luces que a lo lejos  
van marcando mi retorno.  
Son las mismas que alumbraron  
con sus pálidos reflejos  
hondas horas de dolor.  
Y aunque no quise el regreso,  
siempre se vuelve al primer amor.  
La quieta calle donde el eco dijo:  
tuya es su vida, tuyo es su querer,  
bajo el burlón mirar de las estrellas  
que, con indiferencia, hoy me ven volver.

Volver  
con la frente marchita,  
las nieves del tiempo  
platearon mi sien.  
Sentir,  
que es un soplo la vida,  
que veinte años no es nada,  
que, febril la mirada,  
errante en las sombras,  
te busca y te nombra.  
Vivir,  
con el alma aferrada  
a un dulce recuerdo  
que lloro otra vez.  
[...]  
Music Carlos Gardel  
Lyrics Alfredo Le Pera (1934)

Luokses jään<sup>34</sup>  
Olen kauan ollut poissa,  
olin kaupungeissa noissa,  
jotka ansoja vain heittää.  
Tuli muutos elämäni,  
nyt mä etsin ystäväni,  
jos hän muistaakaan.  
Mä jätin pois uhmamielen,  
nyt uskomaan hänet kuinka sen saan.  
Mutta jos hän vieläkin mua oottaa,  
niin laulun uuden hän saa elämään.  
Se kertoo rakkaudesta joka kestää,  
ei mikään voisi estää, hänen luokseen jään.

Nyt jään –  
sulle kaiken mä annan,  
sun luoksesi kuulun  
jos tahdot sä niin.  
Nyt jään –  
ja jos kuulet mun laulun,  
vielä mahdollisuuden  
mulle annathan uuden,  
et pois mua häädä,  
sun luoksesi jäädä!  
Nyt jään –  
on jo päättynyt matka,  
en tietäni jatka  
sun luotasi pois.  
[...]  
Finnish lyrics Aappo I. Piippo (1987)

*Volver* is actually also a sentimentally nostalgic tango text in which the subject recalls his return, which is a painful state, realising the original etymons of nostalgia.

Volver  
Yo adivino el parpadeo  
de las luces que a lo lejos  
van marcando mi retorno.  
Son las mismas que alumbraron  
con sus pálidos reflejos  
hondas horas de dolor.

'To Return'  
'I strayed along the glance of the light  
which in the distance  
told of my return.  
The same light lightened  
with its dim shine  
the moments of great pain.

112-113). Jaakko Salo gave me also these notes.

<sup>33</sup> Barreiro (1985: 112-113). In tango places in Argentina when Carlos Gardel's films are shown; old people take this classic tango very emotionally, bursting into tears when they hear Carlos Gardel. It is a sign that they themselves are returning in their memories to the nostalgic past.

<sup>34</sup> *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 64-65).

[...]  
 Volver  
 [...] [...]  
 Sentir,  
 que es un soplo la vida,  
 que veinte años no es nada,  
 que, febril la mirada,  
 errante en las sombras,  
 te busca y te nombra.  
 Vivir,  
 con el alma aferrada  
 a un dulce recuerdo  
 que lloro otra vez.

Tengo miedo del encuentro  
 con el pasado que vuelve  
 a enfrentarse con mi vida.  
 Tengo miedo de las noches  
 que pobladas de recuerdos  
 encadenan mi soñar.  
 Pero el viajero que huye  
 tarde o temprano detiene su andar.  
 Y aunque el olvido, que todo destruye,  
 haya matado mi vieja ilusión,  
 guardo escondida una esperanza humilde  
 que es toda la fortuna de mi corazón.  
 Music Carlos Gardel  
 Lyrics Alfredo Le Pera (1934)

[...]  
 To return  
 The feeling  
 that life is just a flash,  
 that twenty years are nothing,  
 when one feverishly searches  
 the glance of you through the shadows  
 and cries for you.  
 Life  
 presses the soul  
 in a sweet memory  
 which still cries in me.

I am anxious about the meeting again  
 with the past which comes back  
 and fills my life.  
 I am anxious about the nights  
 which cover me with memories  
 and knit my dreams together.  
 But the traveller who escapes,  
 will sooner or later stay,  
 and the oblivion, which destroys everything,  
 has killed my old illusion,  
 so I will however keep in secret the hope  
 which is all my heart has.'

The last example of the nostalgic Argentinean tangos is Juan de Dios Filiberto (1885–1964) and Gabino Coria Penaloza's tango *Caminito* (1926) 'The Little Path'<sup>35</sup> with Finnish lyrics by Olli Hämäläinen. This tango is entitled *Muistojen polku* ([1982] 1990) 'The Path of Memories' in Finnish.<sup>36</sup> The central metaphor of the path gives a spatial definition to man's life – here on this path you and I walked when nature was beautiful, but now time has done what it has to do. You have left me, and here I am on the path of my memories; I am suffering in my longing, and I only wait for Death. This nostalgic tango music and its nostalgic and tragic words are filled with contraries. Olli Hämäläinen's Finnish lyrics in the 1982 manuscript are closer to the original text with death and suffering in longing. In the published text the Finnish lyrics have been adapted. *Caminito* (*Muistojen polku* 'The Path of Memories') represents the typical nostalgic tango with: 'The little path which time has wiped away, / [...] surrounded / by clover and blooming flowers'. The little path will be just a shadow as the subject soon will be. In his book Castro has given *Caminito* the English title 'The Little Street', which emphasises the urban idea of this tango, but this point of view does not fit the whole context of the text.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Barreiro (1985: 103).

<sup>36</sup> Hämäläinen in *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 48–49); Hämäläinen (1982, manuscript), I am grateful to Jaakko Salo who gave me this manuscript, and Jaime Potenze who gave me his Finnish translation of *Caminito*.

<sup>37</sup> Castro (1991: 176–177).

## Caminito

Caminito que el tiempo ha borrado,  
que juntos un día nos viste pasar,  
He venido por última vez,  
he venido a contarte mi mal.

Caminito que entonces estabas  
borrado de trébol y juncos en flor,  
una sombra ya pronto serás,  
una sombra lo mismo que yo.

Desde que se fue  
triste vivo yo,  
caminito amigo,  
yo también me voy.

Desde que se fue  
nunca más volvió.  
Sequiré sus pasos ...  
Caminito, adiós ...

Caminito que todas las tardes  
feliz rocorria cantando mi amor,  
no le digas, si vuelve a pasar,  
que mi llanto tu suelo regó.

Caminito cubierto de cardos,  
la mano del tiempo te huella borró ...  
Yo a tu lado quisiera caer  
Y que el tiempo nos mate a los dos.  
[...] [...]  
Music Juan de Dios Filiberto  
Lyrics Gabino Coria Peñaloza (1926)

## 'The Little Path'

'Little path which time has wiped away,  
which saw us together one day,  
I have come the last time,  
I have come to tell you my sorrows.

Little path which then was surrounded  
by clover and blooming flowers;  
you will soon be a shadow,  
a shadow like me.

Since she went away,  
I live with grief.  
Little path, my friend,  
I will also leave.

Since she went away,  
and never returned,  
I will follow her steps,  
little path, farewell.

Little path which I walked along  
happily singing about my love,  
do not tell her, if she walks by again,  
that my tears wet your ground.

Little path, covered by thistles,  
the hand of time wipes away your steps.  
I would like to fall down by your side,  
And I would like time to kill us both.

The original Spanish text talks about the idea of time also expressing the sadness of life; the path of life has gone, time has killed life and now the lyric subject wants to be 'killed together with the little path covered now by thistles, by time'. The nostalgic idea is love, past love and rejected love. The spirit of time and place is described through the little path. The Finnish translation has become more romantic; it does not tell about how time *kills* the path or memories, but mentions autumn, the time of death.<sup>38</sup>

*Caminito* is an archetypical tango expressing a joyful sadness, and nostalgia in describing the path of man's life, and the role of memory. In the Finnish version *caminito* is 'a path', but in Castro's 'a little street' the nostalgia is directed to the past of a district, probably in Buenos Aires. As mentioned before the nostalgia of the Argentinean tango usually concerns the city's urban quarters, while the countryside and the rural aspects of life are not such frequent objects of nostalgia. In spite of the interpretation of *caminito*, this tango is an expression of pure nostalgia, a return along the road of memories, i.e. *life is a journey, life is a road, and life is a tango*.

<sup>38</sup> *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 48-49).

## Reality

La vida es una herida absurda,  
y es todo, todo tan fugaz  
que es una curda,  
– ¡nada más! –  
Music Anibal Troilo  
Lyrics Cátulo Castillo  
[...]  
Music & Lyrics Enrique Santos Discépolo

'Life is an absurd wound,  
and everything, everything is temporary  
like booze,  
– nothing else!'

[...]  
Finnish lyrics Aappo I. Piippo

The global and social theme of Enrique Santos Discépolo's tango *Cambalache* (1935), as interpreted in Finnish by Aappo I. Piippo as *Arkipäivän tango* (1987), 'The Tango of Everyday Life',<sup>39</sup> is culturally adapted in Finnish. Its Finnish title talks only of 'the tango of everyday life', while the message of the lyrics is that our world is a second-hand store where money and lies make the world go round. The theme in this tango cynically describes everything as useless, an intertextual allusion to *The Bible*. The cultural adaptation is justified because the original text has many expressions bound in time and place and a culturally bound language. A back translation from Finnish to English shows the cultural adaptation; the theme is the same, i.e. the vanity of the world, but the title has been changed to 'The Tango of Everyday Life':

## Arkipäivän tango

Kun sä ympärilles katsot,  
niin sä varmaan myöntänet,  
on pellet typerät  
sun ympärilläs vaan.  
Voit nähdä kuinka juoksee  
ahneet pikkuihmiset,  
ja kuinka tärkeät  
on pamput viroissaan.  
On maailmanme divari ja divariksi jää,  
ja kautta kauppiaan tie kulkee.  
Ja herrat sekä narrit  
näyttelevät tärkeää,  
on hyllyt täynnä myytävää.

Meille ihmisille lopultakin  
yksi lysti lie,  
kuka kieroilulla  
meiltä vaikka vaatteet päältä vie.  
Hän saattaa olla  
tiedemies tai pappi,  
poliitikko kuka ties.  
[...]

Jos kaikki isot valheet maailmassa niputtais,  
se suuri nippu ois,  
kai suurempi kuin maa.  
Ja nipun sen jos vielä meren pohjaan tiputtais,  
niin kalat kuolis pois,  
se olis kauheaa!  
Näin kaikki laskek luikuria aivan tosissaan,

## 'The Tango of Everyday Life'

'When you look around you,  
you will surely admit,  
there are only foolish clowns  
around you.  
You can see how they run  
the greedy little people,  
and how important  
are the bosses in their occupations.  
The world is bric-à-brac and always will be,  
and the road will go via the merchant.  
And the gentlemen and the clowns  
feign importance,  
the shelves are full of things for sale.

For us people it is the same in the end  
it's all the same,  
who fraudulently  
even takes our clothes.  
He could be  
a scientist or a priest,  
a politician, maybe.  
[...]  
If we put all the big lies in the world together  
it would be a very big stack,  
perhaps bigger than the world.  
And if the stack were thrown in the sea  
the fish should die,  
it would be terrible!  
Thus everybody is cheating,

<sup>39</sup> *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 28-29).



kun rihkamaa ne myydä julkee.  
Myös ystävyyttä täällä niinkuin paitaa kaupataan,  
kuin divari on turhuus maan.  
Music and lyrics Enrique Santos Discépolo  
Finnish lyrics Aappo I. Piippo (1987)

when they have the impudence to sell trash.  
Friendship is also sold here like a shirt,  
the vanity of the world is like bric-à-brac.

However, this Finnish tango translation shows a new direction in Finnish tango culture in long narrative texts and realism. In the Argentinean tango booze belongs among themes which do not exist in traditional Finnish tango lyrics. The 1980s translations and interpretations of Argentinean tango texts first introduce this theme in Finnish tango texts. Aníbal Troilo's and Cátulo Castillo's *La última curda* (1956), 'The Last Booze'<sup>40</sup> is dramatically narrated as if the subject were on a stage crying about his life and the love he has lost.

## La última curda

Lastíma, bandoneón,  
mi corazón,  
tu ronca maldición maleva ...  
Tu lágrima de ron  
me lleva take me  
hasta el hondo bajo fondo  
donde el barro se subleva ...  
Ya sé, no me digás. ¡Tenés razón!  
La vida es una herida absurda,  
y es todo, todo tan fugaz  
que es una curda,  
— ¡nada más! —  
¡mi confesión ...!  
[...]  
Un poco de recuerdo  
y sinsabor  
gotea  
tu rezongo lerdo ...  
Marea tu licor  
y arrea  
la tropilla de la zurda  
al volcar la última curda ...  
Cerrame el ventanal  
que quema el sol  
su lento caracol  
de sueño, a sleepy slug.  
¿No ves que vengo de un país  
que está de olvido, siempre gris,  
tras el alcohol? ...  
Music Aníbal Troilo  
Lyrics Cátulo Castillo (1956)

## 'The Last Booze'

'Poor bandoneón,  
my love.  
your husky and evil sound.  
Your tears of rum  
  
to the deepest depth  
to the disgusting dirt where the noise ends.  
I know, you need no longer to say it to me:  
Life is an absurd wound,  
and everything, everything is temporary  
like booze,  
— nothing else!  
that is my confession.  
[...]  
A few memories  
and problems  
ooze from  
your dull mumble.  
Your syrup disgusts me  
and makes  
my heart gallop  
falling into the last booze.  
Shut the window for me  
through which the sun beats,  
going like  
  
Don't you see that I come from a land  
which is the land of oblivion, always fuddled  
with alcohol?'

This text mentions those central attributes of the Argentinean tango, the *bandoneón* and alcohol. In the *cafetín*, the subject can moan in his *tristeza*, and cry away his problems in booze. The Finnish text is very close to the Argentinean. The texts can now tell about social criticism or alcohol, themes which have not been mentioned in the Finnish tango culture either in its own

<sup>40</sup> I am very grateful to Jaakko Salo who gave me these tango notes; *La última curda*, music Aníbal Troilo, lyrics Cátulo Castillo, Ediciones Musicales Julio Korn, Moreno 2034, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

texts or in translations or interpretations, except as implicit structures or hints (e.g. *Cuban Serenade*, 1942). The Finnish text has excluded the *bandoneón* due to its central significance to the Argentinean tango. The Finnish text *Viimeinen känni* (1992)<sup>41</sup> is faithful to the theme of the futility of life and man's grief of the original.

The new idea of the translated Argentinean tangos in the 1980s and 1990s is that the original text and its theme are transferred into Finnish more faithfully than before. The new wave in song culture and the Finnish tango culture now allows slang words such as *känni* 'booze'. Finnish tango lyrics with their nostalgic and romantic themes described through nature have now also acquired a realistic setting with social themes. A back translation from Finnish to English shows the thematic correspondence between the Spanish and the Finnish texts.

## Viimeinen känni

On sielun murhe mulla salainen  
mä kiroon katkeraa tuskaa.  
On vesi pyörteineen niin mustaa  
sä valheen kynnelees viet syvyteen  
veen pohjaan.  
Irvistää haavat ellämän  
nyt kuka oikeessa onkaan.  
Turhuuden ohikiitävän  
mä känniin hukutan ja tunnustan.  
[...]  
Mutt' hyljättykin rakkaus  
voi elää viinin huuruissa  
laseissa kolpakoissa.  
Mua huumaa humala  
on näytös lopussa  
voi verhon vetää eteen sydämen.

Muistot ja tyhjiys, typeryyks  
kätkevät tylsän mielen  
näin viini huumaa kielen  
kuin tyhjään ränniin  
sä putoot viimeiseen känniin.  
Nyt peitä hehku auringon  
ja kiinni akkuna laita  
mä onohduksen maita kuljen  
ehkä palaan takaa tämän humalan.  
Siis sano tuomiosi ...  
Finnish lyrics Sini Sovijärvi &  
Harri Saksala (1992)

## 'The Last Booze'

'I have a secret grief in my soul  
I blame the bitter pain.  
The water is so black with its whirls,  
you take your tears of lie  
in the depth of the water.  
The wounds of life grin;  
who is now actually right?  
Futility rushing by;  
I drown in booze and confess.  
[...]  
But a rejected love  
can also live in the vapours of wine  
in the glasses and the tankards.  
The booze is making me dizzy,  
the act is at its end,  
you can draw the curtain before my heart.

The memories and emptiness, the foolishness  
hides the gloomy mind,  
the wine stuns the tongue  
like in an empty gutter,  
you fall down in the last booze-up.  
Now cover the glow of the sun  
and shut the window.  
I walk along the lands of oblivion,  
maybe I will return from this booze-up.  
So pass your judgement ...'  
Music Anibal Troilo  
Lyrics Cátulo Castillo (1956)

Once again, the central theme of *tristeza* finds expression. In Horacio Pettorossi and Carlos Marambio Catán's *Acquaforte* (1933)<sup>42</sup> life is empty and sad as the subject says: *la eterna y triste fiesta*, life is empty even though the cabaret is filled with women, flowers and champagne. The final statement sums it up: *Qué triste es todo esto, / quisiera llorar!*, 'Everything is so sad, / I have to cry!' The

<sup>41</sup> Saaristo (1992), on the cassette *Anneli Saariston parhaat* 'The Best of Anneli Saaristo', Kerberos KEC 679.

<sup>42</sup> Reichardt (1981: 112-113).

alienation of man recurs in many texts. The *bandoneón* and alcohol stand for the existential state of man's sadness and loneliness.

This section has shown that *nostalgia*, interpreted in its original sense, can be a serious way of life, either a way of seeing existence, or a melancholic state in which the lyric subject recalls his anxiety, sadness, bitterness and depression. The third sort of nostalgia is the sentimental nostalgia which deals with a past love. Nostalgia is 'a longing to return', a longing for the past, a painful longing for the past or a sweet, wonderful memory which informs the beauty of man. Memory can also be a nostalgic power. Nostalgia actualises the following dimensions: (1) nostalgia as an essential existential state of longing, (2) a painful but also a joyful longing for the past, and (3) a sentimental and romantic longing for the past. Hence, the inherent features of the concept of nostalgia cover on the one hand *tristeza* and on the other hand, the joy of a past life. The two poles, joy and sorrow, are inseparable. *La vida es sueño* or *La vida es nostalgias* – *Life is a dream* or *Life is nostalgia*.

## 2 European tango lyrics themes

In his research on the tango in Europe, Åhlén states that the European tango has been repetitive, using the same romantic and escapist themes.<sup>43</sup> For instance, in Germany the romantic so-called *Konditorei tangos* arose, in which the violin plays softly and 'we were sitting in a Konditorei, drinking tea and eating cakes' or 'I kiss your hand, Madame' typically recur.<sup>44</sup> The material in the Helsinki University Library collections consists of 140 European and international Argentinean tangos, mainly representing Spanish, Italian, English, German, French, Greek<sup>45</sup>, Russian, Hungarian, Polish, Turkish, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish tango texts since the 1920s.<sup>46</sup> Usually the scores are provided in the appropriate language lyrics. The main theme, for instance, in the Greek tangos of the 1930s and 1940s is longing and pain; Greek tango music and its sound and dynamics seem very close to the Finnish tango.<sup>47</sup> Finnish tango is influenced by the Russian romances and tangos, as well as by the soft and romantic European tangos, German tangos, with dynamics from the German march style but actually very little of the original Argentinean tango. An overview of the European tango, excluding the Finnish and Greek examples, even though they have the romantic and trivial aspects, shows that the themes are very similar, and that the texts repeat the same metaphors. The over-romantic aspect in making *the dual setting* (cf. Lönnroth's *den dubbla scenen*) of the tango text has an exaggeratedly passionate aim.

The Finnish lyrics of the international or/and European, or the Eastern tango texts are usually so-called cultural translations, i.e. the translations are not equivalent but rather interpretations adapted to Finnish culture. Many instrumental tangos have Finnish texts (e.g. Jacob Gade's *Tango Jalousie*). I will concentrate primarily on those European tango texts which have lyrics in two or three languages, providing a contrastive analysis of the language and culture in question which will show how and to what extent the motifs and themes alternate when the original text gets new cultural surroundings. In the Finnish tangos the most urgent voice is sorrow and depression following the war in the 1940s. In the Swedish tango texts of the 1930s there are no melancholic or tragic themes, but mainly romantic and pathetic ones.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Åhlén (1987: 143-144).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Rolf Erwin's and Fritz Rotter's tango *Ich küsse Ihre Hand, Madame* with Finnish lyrics by Saukki [Sauvo Puhtila] *Kättäne rouva suutelen* (1929), cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 19), and Fred Raymond's tango *In einen kleinen Konditorei* with Finnish lyrics by R. R. Ryyänen, *Me kahvilassa istuttiin* (1929), cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 164). The Finnish texts in *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 7 (1985: 204), and 8 (1988: 124). Cf. also J. Petersburschki's tango *Oi Donna Klara* (1930), cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 27).

<sup>45</sup> I am grateful to Visa Salojärvi at the *Dromos* company who provided me with some Greek tangos.

<sup>46</sup> The Japanese, Russian and Greek tango lyrics have not been included in the present study but would be a worthwhile further study. Åhlén (1984: 125-126) has pointed out that the Argentinean tango was adapted in Japan and several tango orchestras were established in Japan at the beginning of the 20th century. As in the Finnish and Greek styles, the lyrics are important in the Japanese tango.

<sup>47</sup> Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the Greek music is very popular in Finland. The sounds of the words, the dynamics of the music communicate the feeling and emotion of longing, and *nostalgia* very similar to the *kaiho*, *kaipuu* and *ikävä* in Finnish longing. The Russian romances also express romantic longing.

<sup>48</sup> Åhlén (1987: 76).

Foreign influence shows in escapism, serenades, night scenes, erotic atmospheres, exciting rhythms; these soft Spanish melodies were communicated by the violin, or castanets. Often the place is Spain or Argentina, so that the so-called "Hispanic feature" appeared in the European tango in the 1920s, especially in the Swedish tango. In Argentinean tangos, as mentioned earlier, the tango means everything, it is a metaphor for the whole of life. In the European tangos in the 1930s the soft and smooth atmosphere of the tango is both in its rhythm and lyrics, the violin reflecting these soft tones. The European tango can be called a hit tango (*Schlager* tango), so very different from the Argentinean tango both as music and lyrics. The soft rhythm of the European tango differs from the Rioplatensian tango rhythms; the passions of the European tango which the text describes are repetitive. In the European tangos the passions are sentimental, romantic and escapist, and have no philosophy of existence, as with their Argentinean counterparts, in which the subject psychologically contemplates his existence. Hence the European tango can be called a surrogate theatre whose function is to protect the tango listener and dancer from the unpleasant experiences of reality.<sup>49</sup>

The main themes of the European tangos are:

- Sentimental, romantic, escapist and nostalgic love and passion.
- Time and place are foreign and escapist in order to present a romantic setting.
- Nature descriptions are mainly of warm, foreign and exotic places.
- The cosmos with the moon, the sun, the sky, the stars.
- The man and the woman are described unrealistically or comically.
- Death, crime and alcohol are mentioned in exaggerated situations.
- Humour is used in describing love and human beings.
- Passions and freedom are presented through ethnic features such as gypsy themes and myths.
- The texts represent unrealistic fairy-tales for adults.
- Passions are expressed through sighs and requests and other features typical of snatches of dialogue.

### *Sentimental and romantic escapism*

The titles of the European tangos themselves indicate their most significant themes,<sup>50</sup> for instance, Erwin Hentschell's *Illusion tango* (1919), *Tango Ilusion* (1951, 1955)<sup>51</sup> with Finnish lyrics by Kullervo. The melodrama of passion is found, as already seen, in the adapted form of Villoldo's *El Choclo* (1905), in the English lyrics to *Kiss of Fire* (1952), or in Jacob Gade's *Jealousy (Jalousie)* (1933), *Mustasukkaisuus* (1935, 1943, 1944), *Mustasukkaisuutta* (1953),<sup>52</sup> with

<sup>49</sup> Ahlén (1987: 77).

<sup>50</sup> All the tangos in this section are from *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).

<sup>51</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes), cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 65).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 3, 331, 355), Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 49, 109).

its hyperbole and pathetic, self pitying passion *Oon raukka kun ...*, 'I am a poor fool ...' following the same style as, for instance, the international version of *La Cumparsita*. In Carl Niessen's *Tango Desirée* ([1954] 1956), a conscious geographical mixture appears in the Finnish lyrics: *Argentiinan pusta*, 'the puszta of Argentina', the gaucho, the serenade and the *señorita* Desirée. Texts become fairy-tales for adults such as B. Leopold's *L'amour Oriental, Itämaista rakkautta* (1954).<sup>53</sup>

The most frequent symbols are *gold, golden earrings, red roses, red lips, red wine, guitars and violins, cold lips, fire*. Longing for distant places represents sentimental nostalgia (*kaukokaipuu, Sehnsucht*), escapism and passions, as is the case in Will Grosz' *Capri* (1934), *Capri* (1948) with Finnish lyrics by Kullervo,<sup>54</sup> W. Engel-Berger's *Stern von Rio* (1940), *Rion tähti* (1942), one of the most popular tangos during the war was provided with a Finnish text in 1939 by Palle [R. W. Palmroth, Reino Hirviseppä] and in 1942 by Kerttu Mustonen.<sup>55</sup>

Nordic nature, the sea and the hills, as metaphors for love and happiness describe the beloved, e.g. in Evert Taube's *Min älskling* (1943), *Rakkaani* (1973–1977, 1987). The snow is a metaphor for oblivion, e.g. in M. Stepien's tango *Fallande snö* (1943)<sup>56</sup> *Lumihituleita* (1942)<sup>57</sup>, but these themes are not so apparent as in the Finnish tango lyrics. The Swedish tango by Sören Aspelin talks about nature, love and melodies created by God *Det finns så många vackra melodier, Niin monta ompi sävelmätä sorjaa* (1945), 'There Are So Many Beautiful Melodies'.

Myths or cosmological themes appear in the traditional Russian melody *Yksinäinen pihlaja* (1965), 'The Lonely Rowan Tree', which tells the story of the love through this tree, which is holy in Finnish mythology. The sky and the moon express the cosmological aspect in Joe Rixner's *Blauer Himmel* (1937) entitled *Sinitaivas* with Finnish lyrics by M. Jäppilä in 1937, and in 1955 by Lauri Jauhiainen with the same title.<sup>58</sup> The moon is the object through which the subject reflects his/her inner states in G. Malgoni's *Guarda che Luna* (1959) with Finnish lyrics by Rauni Kouta [Reino Helismaa] *Hopeinen kuu* (1960),<sup>59</sup> while in *Stern von Rio* (1940) *Rion tähti* (1939, 1942), the star of Rio is the star of destiny, joy and pain; stars are also significant in Louis Forbes' *Passion* (1954), *Liekki* (1956, 1957) with Finnish lyrics by Pekka Saarto [Sauvo Puhtila].<sup>60</sup> In *L'amour Oriental, Itämaista rakkautta* (1954) a star is awake (showing intertextual links with fairy-tales).

<sup>53</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 308).

<sup>54</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 30).

<sup>55</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 270, 189, 343).

<sup>56</sup> Finnish lyrics by K. Sara and Swedish lyrics by Vera Valtonen.

<sup>57</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 20, 180, 356).

<sup>58</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 245); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 174, 314).

<sup>59</sup> Haapanen 1920–1971 (1971: 105).

<sup>60</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 73, 324).



N. G. Holmquist's *Tango Harmony* ([1949] 1951) talks about the harmony of space, how 'the violins of space form one's whole life'.<sup>61</sup>

Usually the subject is a male whose love is directed to *Desirée, Irene, Lieschen Müller* (1955) *Pikku-Liisa, Fröken Lisa* (1957), *Annabella, Dolores, Dolores Yasmin, Lolita Jardin, Teresa*, or "the woman". The woman's role in the text is implicitly or explicitly that of a *femme fatale*. When the subject is a woman she is the object of parodic or comic events. The mother theme is only mentioned in S. de Yradier's *La Paloma* with Kauko Käyhkö's Finnish lyrics and performance in 1938,<sup>62</sup> and in 1955 with Finnish lyrics by Raili Kahilainen.<sup>63</sup> Children or childhood as a theme do not exist. The subject can be either male or female. In the Finnish translations and interpretations this aspect is still apparent because the Finnish pronoun *hän* is neutral, meaning both 'she' and 'he', as against Swedish (*han* 'he', *hon* 'she'), and other languages in my material. In *Egon* ([1952] 1953) the subject is a woman whose life is almost destroyed, the reason being Egon, who is not accorded any further qualitative description. In *Freddy* ([1955] 1956) the subject is a woman, while *O'Malley's Tango* (1956), *Don Johans tango, Jussin tango* (1957) tells about a man.

The theme of death is presented in a pathetic way, for instance, in Georges Boulanger's *Avant de mourir* (1945), *Ennen kuolemaa* melodramatically expressing pain, anxiety, anguish, hopelessness and death. The man in L. Nicolas and N. Latanza's tango *Annabella* (1963) states in the Finnish lyrics by M. Maja [Martti Jäppilä]:<sup>64</sup> *kaikk' on turhaa, ikävää. / Jospa vois päästä pois*, 'everything is useless, boring. / If only I could get away from here.' S. de Yradier's *La Paloma* (1860s) talks about the sea. If it takes the subject his soul will return as a white dove to his beloved. The themes of death, criminality or alcohol which recur in the Argentinean tangos appears in Piero Trombetta's European tango *Kriminal Tango* (1959), in Finnish *Kriminal tango* (1960), and in Swedish *Tango på tavernan* (1960), 'The Tango in the Tavern'.<sup>65</sup> In the tango *Egon* ([1952] 1953) alcohol, smoking, and eating are the main themes but presented in an entertaining, comic way. The Swedish and the Finnish texts talk about 'a hot tango' and 'tango jealousy' alluding to *Tango Jalousie* (1933).

The theme of joy or humour appears in the Swedish tango *Tango di Concertina* (1947) by Gösta Westerberg, with a Finnish text by Kullervo entellert *Klovni soittaa* (1948), 'The Clown Plays'. The clown idea expresses laughter as well as the serious aspects of life. Tommie Conner's tango *A Tango Will Not Do With An Eskimo*, with Finnish lyrics by Reino Helismaa as *Eipä sovi tango toki kera eskimon* (1957) is a naive and comic story. *Volevo un gatto negro* (1969), *Mustan kissan tango* (1971),<sup>66</sup> is a children's song about a black cat dancing the tango. Bjarne Amdahl's *Tango for to* is a Norwegian tango with

<sup>61</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 17).

<sup>62</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 47, 262).

<sup>63</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 66).

<sup>64</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 174).

<sup>65</sup> Haapanen 1920–1971 (1971: 216).

<sup>66</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 8 (1990: 64–65), music by Framario & A. Soricillo, lyrics F. Maresca, Finnish lyrics Saukki [Sauvo Puhtila].

Finnish lyrics by Orvokki Itä [Reino Helismaa] entitled *Tango kahdelle* (1957), 'The Tango For Two' is a hyperbolic story about the subject dancing tango with a man who cannot dance.<sup>67</sup>

A prototype of the European tango may be a romantic or sentimental tango with the colour *blue*, which seems to be an attribute of romantic love (cf. the American English expression *to feel blue*). Leroy Anderson's tango *Blue Tango* (1951) *Blå Tango*, *Sininen tango* (1953, 1956)<sup>68</sup> represents the repetitive character of the European tango, whose focus is on sentimental, romantic, and escapist blue moments.

Blue Tango	Sininen tango	Blå tango
Here am I with you in a world of blue, and we're dancing to the tango we loved when first we met; [...] As I kiss your cheek, we don't have to speak, the violins, like a choir, express the desire we used to know not long ago. So just hold me tight in your arms tonight, and this BLUE TANGO will be our thrilling memory of love. Music Leroy Anderson Lyrics Mitchell Parish	Tango sininen illan tummeten silloin kaiku, ensikerran kun sun mä kohtasin. [...] Sua suutelen, sano mitään en: tää sävel tunnelmaa luo, se uudelleen onnen hetket nuoo taas elää suo. tango sininen, sävel muistojen kuin sävel onnen ja riemun taas kiehtoen taas helkähtää. Finnish lyrics Kullervo (1953)	Denna kväll tycks allt ha fått ny gestalt. Allt är insvept i ett skimmer av rosenrött och blått. [...] Lägg din kind mot min. Låt oss fly dit in. Se varje sky är förgylld och rymden är fylld av romantik och ljuv musik. Det finns bara vi och en melodi, i en blå tango vi förs till kärlekens och drömmens land. Swedish lyrics Gösta Rybrant

The aim of this tango is to offer the dancers and the listeners a blue atmosphere which takes them to the wonderland of love, as the Swedish interpretation goes. Often the banality and triviality of the lyrics are somehow hidden under the expressive or "symphonic" tango music. In the European tango the typical theme is the sentimental and romantic rosy and blue atmosphere. At the other extreme is the hard and melodramatic tango with obscure and criminal aspects, but this is rare among the European tangos which were sentimental and romantic, especially during the war; popular music lyrics tried to provide escapist scenes for people so they could forget sombre reality for a while.

A sentimental romantic story is told in M. Philipp and Gerard's *The Magic Tango* (1953) *Taikatango* (1955) where the setting includes witches, a mythical setting, and aims to be a metaphor for love. As in *Tango Jealousie* (1933) love supposedly causes insanity, as in the cliché *I'm so insane about you*. The modalities are desiring (*désir*), wanting (*désir*) and knowing (*savoir*); I desire you, I want you, I know it.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 73, 75, 207).

<sup>68</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 52); *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).

<sup>69</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 53, 316); *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).

## The Magic Tango

Last night I heard a tango,  
it's called "the magic tango"  
I long to dance it while you hold me.  
I want its fascination.  
I want to feel temptation,  
Just as "the magic tango" told me.  
Don't want to dance without you,  
I'm so insane about you,  
[...]  
Music M. Philipp & Gerard  
Lyrics Jimmy Kennedy

## Taikatango

Tangon kun kuulin yössä  
silloin soi tähtivyössä  
taika kuin kaiku avaruuden.  
Noidat sen lienee luoneet  
mahdin tään sille suoneet  
suuren ja pyörryttävän, uuden.  
Tangoon yön tatuoima  
outo on taikavoima  
[...]  
Finnish lyrics Saukki [Sauvo Puhtila] (1955)

The English original talks about love as a magic emotion, while the Finnish interpretation uses mythical elements like elves and witches in the magic night with the stars above; the tango is tattooed by the night. This tango also has magic elements, being actually a myth for adults in which anything fantastic can happen. The universal images like the sky and the stars are used in order to set another scene.

Leonard Heuse and Al Gamse's tango *Take Me Away, Rakkauden tie* (1956) with Finnish lyrics by Saukki [Sauvo Puhtila]<sup>70</sup> is actually like a guide for going abroad. In three languages the story of romantic love is told; the road of love, as the Finnish title suggests, makes it possible to travel around. After counting up all the places the subject and his beloved will see, he says: *But believe me, we need not go far, / I find my heaven where ever you are.* In the Finnish version he states: *Mansikka kuitenkin on oma maa, / luonasi haaveillen istua saa,* 'One's own country is the best, / by you I can sit and dream.' The message of this text is that the best journeys are actually love and dreams.

The motifs and themes here are very narrow and the forms in which they are told are sentimental and romantic and often banal and trivial. The themes which are lacking in the European tango are the social and existential aspects, urban themes incorporating social criticism, and themes of longing for one's home region. The European tango aims to be a saccharine tango with repetitive, clichéd sentiments and romantic love.

## Humour

The category of humour is maybe best represented by the tango *Never Do A Tango With An Eskimo* (1955) by Tommie Connor, mentioned earlier. Tangos with humour can be the light, sentimental stories well-known from American films. Humour and tango are usually combined when female subject has fallen in love with Egon or Freddy. The Finnish lyricist Reino Helismaa, who has produced a great number of tango and other popular music texts, has written the lyrics to the tango about an Eskimo.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 321); *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).

<sup>71</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).

## Never Do A Tango With An Eskimo

You must never do a tango  
with an Eskimo  
No, no, no,  
Oh dear no,  
When a lady from Nebraska's  
at a party in Alaska  
She must never do a tango  
with an Eskimo.  
You can do it with a Latin  
from Manila to Manhattan,  
You can do it with a Gaucho in Brazil.  
But if once those Eskimos  
starts to wiggle with their toes  
You can bet your life you're gonna get a chill. (Brrr!)  
You must never do a tango with an Eskimo  
No, no, no,  
Oh dear no.  
If you do you'll get the breeze up  
And you'll end up with a freeze up  
So you never do a tango with an Eskimo  
No no no no no no no no. (Brrr!)  
Music and lyrics Tommie Conner (1955)

## Eipä sovi tango toki kera eskimon

Eipä sovi tango toki kera eskimon.  
Ei, ei, ei!  
Niin se on!  
Eräs tyttö pettyi kovin,  
kun hän tanssahteli tovin,  
sillä influenssa tulos oli karkelon.  
Tanssi tango kera jenkin  
taikka japsin –  
kestää senkin,  
ja on gauchon kanssa tango vapaus.  
Mutta eskimoa välttä -  
hän ei tunnu lämpimältä,  
ja on hinkuuskä varma tapaus. (Hrrrr!)  
Eipä sovi tango toki kera eskimon.  
Ei, ei, ei!  
Niin se on!  
Kyllä hymy siltä hyytyy.  
joka eskimoihin tyytyy.  
Eipä sovi tango toki kera eskimon.  
Ei, ei, ei, ei, ei, ei, ei, ei, ei! (Hrrrr!)  
Ota ei! (Hrrrr!)  
Finnish lyrics Reino Helismaa (1957)

In the tango *Egon* ([1952] 1953) with lyrics by Schween and Pinelli to music by Heino Gaze a long, funny story is told in German, Swedish and in Finnish. The subject of the text is a woman who changes for the sake of Egon; the original German text says that she drank only liqueur before, but now she drinks cognac. In Swedish she was a stout little brunette before but is now thin like a pin, while in the Finnish text she drank a little glass of wine, now poor girl, she *vaivuun niehuun virran kammotun*, 'has sunk in the gap of the horrible flood'. Before she smoked *pilliä*, a particular Finnish cigarette, but she soon will begin to smoke a pipe. The idea in the three versions is expressed in the German original: *Egon, ich hab ja nur aus Liebe zu dir, / ja nur aus lauter Liebe zu dir / ein Glas zu viel getrunken! / Ach, Egon, Egon, Egon, Egon, / ich bin ja nur aus Liebe zu dir, / ja nur aus lauter Liebe zu dir / so tief gesunken!* When the subject is clearly female, the theme is comic or parodic, or as here tells about the girl whose life changes completely. Falling in love in this way is a typically spontaneous *Firssiness* emotion. In *Freddy* ([1955] 1956) composed by Peter Pan and Steve Kirk with German lyrics by Gisela Günther, the theme is the same as in *Egon*. The subject states: *Ich bin zwar keine feine Lady, [...], aber ich spiel' dir Platten von Schubert und Grieg, ich spiel dir die kleine Nachtmusik!* She sighs, *Komm bitte schnell zu deiner Mädi!* [...] *Geh nicht zu meiner Freundin Hedi!* Her friend Hedi, *die hat doch kein Herz, trinkt und ist blau wie die Veilchen in März;* but Freddy is not good: *Du böser, ungetreuer Freddy!* The intertextual clues to this tango are given in the line *Egon ließ ich laufen, als der Walter mir gefiel, but heute trübt der Freddy sein Spiel mit mir!*

The other aspect of the girl is the natural girl in the office described, for instance in Peter Pan and Gisela Günther's tango *Lieschen Müller* (1955),

Fröken Lisa, Pikku-Liisa (1957, by Orvokki Itä [Reino Helismaa])<sup>72</sup> who is a *kleiner Spatz aus dem Büro*, quite the opposite of the *femme fatale* – *Deine treuen Augen strahlen*. Even though the text tries to elevate true values in life, it has a touch of chauvinism and humour. This lightweight text offers joy and delight: *Lieschen Müller, mach mich glücklich, mach mich froh*, a direct request which is not common in these kinds of texts. Occupations are not usually mentioned.

A male tango enthusiast has comic qualities in the only tango in my collection which has male names both in its Swedish and Finnish titles, Noel Carter's and Michael Mitchell's tango *O'Malley's tango*, *Don Johans tango*, *Jussin tango* (1957)<sup>73</sup> with Swedish lyrics by Gösta Rybrant and Finnish lyrics by Donna. This comic story of the man called Pancho Rodriguez after he had been on vacation in Spain is told in three languages. The text can be seen as a parody of the European tango, as well as parodying or using Hispanic features, i.e. the escapist features well-known from Spanish tangos which became very strong both in the Swedish and in some Finnish tangos.

#### *The serious themes*

Georges Boulanger's well-known tango *Avant de mourir*, *Ennen kuolemaa* (1953) with Finnish lyrics by Kullervo and Swedish lyrics by Joel Rundt is one of the European tangos which talks explicitly about death; the subject is alone and wishes to be dead, but he gets new hope in the form of a new melody, and in the last line he says hopefully: 'Maybe I will meet happiness before my death'. Eduardo Bianco's Argentinean tango *Plegaria* (1943) has the original Spanish lyrics, English lyrics and two different Finnish texts (1943, 1955). During the war another Finnish text of this tango appeared with the title *Rukous* 'A Prayer' (1944)<sup>74</sup> which is a love song – 'a prayer of my heart, stay by me' (lyrics by A. H.), but in spite of the title it has no religious meaning. The Spanish text has *alma*, 'the soul' as its main concept, while the English version tells a whole narrative story. The Finnish texts are both cultural adaptations with neutral words without any religious sense. The reason is Protestant ethics which do not permit entertainment to use this theme, even though recent research has shown that the Finnish traditional tango of Unto Mononen has connections with religious music.<sup>75</sup> The view seems to be that only psalms can use religious themes, whereas the Argentinean tango can and does deal with religious themes including crucial notion of the Madonna-whore in discussing the nature of love and woman.

<sup>72</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes).

<sup>73</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes).

<sup>74</sup> *Pyöreä torni. Lauluja y.m.* (1944), Helsinki University Library Collections (notes). Cf. also Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 328, 355, 367); Strömmer & Haapanen 1945–1961 (1992: 67).

<sup>75</sup> Jalkanen (1992; 1993).

## Plegaria

Plegaria que llega a mi alma,  
 Alón de lentas campanadas,  
 Plegaria que es consuelo y calma,  
 Para las almas des amparados.  
 El organo de la capilla,  
 Embarga a todos de emocio,  
 - Mientras que en alma de rodilla,  
 Pide consuelo, pide perdón!  
 Murió la bella penitente,  
 Murió, y su alma arrepentida,  
 Voló muy lejos de esta vida,  
 Se fué sin quejas ti midamente.  
 Y dicen que en noche callada,  
 Se oye un canto de dolor,  
 Y su alma triste, perdonada,  
 Toda de blanco canta al amor!  
 Music and lyrics Eduardo Bianco

## Plegaria

Oh, pray'rs arising when the daylight dies,  
 You come with bells at evening stealing,  
 And deep within us pity wakes and cries,  
 For hearts in pain to heav'n appealing.  
 The organ's music thru the chapel soars,  
 And thrills us like a thought divine,  
 While kneeling a penitent, her heart outpours,  
 And asks with tears a pardoning sign.  
 She passed away, the lovely penitent,  
 Forgiveness found to peace returning,  
 The heart that long its days in grief had spent,  
 At last was freed from mortal yearning.  
 But some have said that in the moonlight,  
 They still can see her pure form rove,  
 An Angel in snowy white wings,  
 And sings a song of hope to her love.  
 English lyrics Carol Raven

This English translation is the most faithful to the original Spanish text. Both Finnish texts have excluded the religious aspect. The Finnish lyrics of 1943, during the war years, talk about the bells which toll: 'Once happiness will smile' when the dark tone sounds and all hope is gone. *Plegaria* (1943) *Kellot soi, kello niin kuin sielu ihmisen – voi murheen, riemun löytää sieltä*, 'the bells are like the soul of man – there you can find both grief and delight'. The idea of the soul which exists in all other versions is lacking here. The Finnish lyrics of 1955 do have this theme even though the text otherwise is neutral in mentioning the bells – whoever can interpret the sounds of the bells finds both joy and sorrow. The bell is like the soul of man, partaking of both joy and sorrow. The very idea of the Finnish text is the concept of time; the sound of the bells alternates and nothing is permanent on this earth.

In the tangos analysed in this section the descriptions of nature usually concern foreign and exotic places. An exception is the Swedish tango *Det finns så många vackra melodier* (1947) *Niin monta ompe sävelmätä sorjaa* 'There are So Many Beautiful Melodies'<sup>76</sup> by Sören Aspelin. Its controlling idea is that 'there are so many beautiful melodies in the garden God created for us' and 'all these beautiful melodies are playing from the soul of nature: one from a flower, another from a pond'. The lyrics praise nature, which produces music and the beauty in the world. The Finnish lyrics follow the original thematically.

The sky has always mediated human communication. People ask the heavens, the moon, the sun, and the stars to understand and help them in their problems, while the sun is a means of describing love. Heaven and the sky are vast and unknown entities, mythical and strange like the whole of space and the universe where man is an insignificant creature who feels very small before it. The tango *Blauer Himmel* (1937), *Blå himmel, Sinitaivas* (1955, 1956) composed by the German songwriter Joe Rixner (1902–1973), with his own German lyrics, belongs to the great tangos of the 1930s. Its popularity is built on the features

<sup>76</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes).



mentioned, while the abstract idea of the text can also be interpreted as representing existential and phenomenological aspects of life in the context of the war. But primarily it is a sentimental, romantic European tango.<sup>77</sup>

## Blauer Himmel

Himlen  
strålar i mörkblått ljus –  
stjärnor  
lysa på mark och hus.  
Världen har lagt sej till ro  
under stjärnomras bro.  
Vinden viskar namn man glömt –  
minnen väckas som man glömt.  
Kvällen är precis som då  
när vi träffades vi två.  
Samma dunkelblå värld  
med sin trolska musik,  
full av nattens mystik.  
När dagen är förbi  
och solen svinner,  
man vila finner i hemmets famn.  
[...]  
Och man minns  
en enda gång  
man trodde lyckan man fann –  
minnet färgas av vemod  
över att den stund av lycka så hastigt svann.

Nu står jag här allen och ser en himmel  
med stjärnevimmel  
i mörkblått sken.  
Stjärnomras bro, stjärnomras bro.  
Music Joe Rixner  
Swedish lyrics Unknown (1955)

## Sinitaivas

Taivaan  
milloin nään sinisen  
kaipaan  
sinisillalle sen,  
korkeuteen huumavaaan  
päästä kahleista maan.  
Kaiken kätkee taivas tuo (auringon).  
Pilvet, tähdet se myös suo (kuutamon).  
Taivas kätkee maailmat (suurimmat).  
Se myös kätkee unelmat (kauneimmat).  
Suuri taivaan on sininen äärettömyys  
tumma kuin ikävyyks.  
ma pieni ihminen,  
nyt sulta pyydän.  
oi taivas sininen,  
sen täytähän.  
[...]  
Taivas oi,  
mun ota unelmat  
ja kätke ne niin,  
ettei niitä voi löytää  
kenkään sellainen, ken usko ei ihmeisiin.

Oon lapsi kylmän maan  
vaan onneen uskon  
kun taivaan  
nähdä saan ja auringon.  
... pois ikävöin kahleista maan.  
Finnish lyrics Lauri Jauhainen (1955)

A back-translation of the Finnish lyrics is as follows:

## Sinitaivas

Taivaan  
milloin nään sinisen  
kaipaan  
sinisillalle sen,  
korkeuteen huumavaaan  
päästä kahleista maan.  
Kaiken kätkee taivas tuo (auringon).  
Pilvet, tähdet se myös suo (kuutamon).  
Taivas kätkee maailmat (suurimmat).  
Se myös kätkee unelmat (kauneimmat).  
Suuri taivaan on sininen äärettömyys  
tumma kuin ikävyyks.  
Ma pieni ihminen,  
nyt sulta pyydän,  
oi taivas sininen,  
sen täytähän.  
[...]  
Taivas oi,

## 'The Blue Sky'

'When I see  
the blue sky  
I long for  
its blue bridge,  
for its high ecstasy,  
to get free of the bounds of the ground.  
All is covered by the sky (the sun).  
The clouds, the stars it gives (the moonlight).  
The sky covers the world (the greatest).  
It also covers dreams (the most beautiful).  
Great is the blue infinity  
dark like sadness.  
I, a little human being,  
beg you now,  
oh, blue sky,  
that you fulfil my wish.  
[...]  
Oh sky,

<sup>77</sup> The original German lyrics are lacking. Cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 174), Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 314). Cf. *Sinitaivas*, *Olavi Virta*, pp. 3–5. Fazer (notes).

mun ota unelmat  
ja kätke ne niin,  
ettei niitä voi löytää  
kenkään sellainen, ken usko ei ihmeisiin.

Oon lapsi kylmän maan  
vaan onneen uskon  
kun taivaan  
nähdä saan ja auringon.  
... pois ikävöin kahleista maan.  
Music Joe Rixner  
Finnish lyrics Lauri Jauhainen (1955)

take my dreams  
and hide them so  
that they cannot be found  
by anybody who does not believe in wonders.

I am the child of the cold land  
but I believe in happiness  
when I can see the sky  
and the sun.  
... I long to be free the bounds of the ground.'

The subject believes (*croire*) in happiness; hope is offered by the infinity of the sky. This tango, unlike the European tango generally, actually has a deeper dimension. Even though the title suggests sentimentality, the Finnish lyrics, following the traditional Finnish world view which combines man and nature into a whole; the subject knows (*savoir*) that man is only an insignificant being on the cold earth. The moon is also crucial to the Italian tango by G. Malgouyres' *Guarda che luna* (1959), *Hopeinen kuu* 'The Silvery Moon' which deals with the sentimental and romantic idea of jealousy: *toinen nyt kuutas kansass' katsoo*, 'somebody else is looking now at the moon with you', and in the traditional Finnish tango such as *Täysikuu* (1953) 'The Full Moon' by Kärki and Helismaa in which the moon is a miracle in the sky.

L. Forbes' tango *Passion* (1954) *Liekki* (1956, 1957)<sup>78</sup> represents the European tango which has acquired Finnish lyrics written for the instrumental version. The Finnish lyrics contain an image of the pressure required to form a diamond. In spite of the title, the lyrics do not follow the passionate example of Gade's *Tango Jalousie* (1933) in which the Finnish lyrics by Kullervo are: *Järjen veit / ja minusta orjan teit!* 'You took my sense / and made a slave of me!' In Forbes' tango the fire metaphor is combined with the diamond and gives a somewhat mythical feel to this text. It tells about the greatest force on the earth, love: *Se uskoa uutta valaa*, 'It gives new hope', the main thematic cue in the text. Even though love ends like a fire, it renews everything: *Jos lailla liekin / se kaiken viekin, / myös maailmaa se kaunistaa*, 'If like a fire / it takes everything away / it also makes the world more beautiful'. While the external descriptions (e.g. expressions where the subject compares the eyes of his beloved with the moon or the stars) are few in the Argentinean tango lyrics, the European romantic and sentimental tango uses many natural and celestial metaphors to describe love and longing. While the Argentinean tango uses psychological introspection in discussing the existence of man, the European tango uses nature and the cosmos to describe the internal landscape of romantic and sentimental love.

<sup>78</sup> Virta (1983). Cf. *Sinitaivas, Olavi Virta*, pp. 45-47. Fazer (notes).

### 3 The setting of the Nordic tango

The Swedish tango is repetitive and sentimental, the only exceptions being Evert Taube's texts, which differ from the other Swedish, Danish and Norwegian so-called hit tango texts. A contrastive analysis of Nordic tango texts shows clearly that the Finnish tango is different both musically and in its lyrics. This has also been pointed out by Åhlén even though he has not discussed the Finnish tango lyrics in detail.<sup>79</sup> The Hispanic features (*pampa, señorita, gaucho*, etc.), sentimental and romantic text fragments or sentimental happiness being described through a dance are typical of the Swedish tango, an example being Jules Sylvain and Åke Söderblom's tango *Tangokavaljeren* (1932), 'The Tango Cavalier', *Tangokavaljeeri* (1949)<sup>80</sup> which describes the dance and the moment when the couple dance; happiness lasts only for a couple of minutes. Åhlén's research on the European and Swedish tango shows that the tango as a genre has not been very strong in Sweden.<sup>81</sup> One reason for this can be found in the Swedish mentality, which Åke Daun has discussed in his *Svensk mentalitet* ('Swedish Mentality').<sup>82</sup> The Swedish tango shows a completely different approach compared with the Finnish tango lyrics, not having the same depth or seriousness as the Finnish texts in combining the internal and external world, i.e. in discussing joy and sorrow through nature and the cosmos. The Swedish texts are optimistic and joyful like the Swedish people. Daun claims that one reason for the Swedish mentality is that Sweden was not involved in the war like Finland.

The Swedish author and troubadour Evert Taube is one of the most charismatic creators of the Swedish tango. In *Den dubbla scenen. Muntlig dikning från Eddan till Abba* (1978) Lars Lönnroth discusses Taube's best-known tango *Fritjof och Carmencita* (1936) analysing the interaction using the term *den dubbla scenen*, 'the dual setting' to cover a performance text.<sup>83</sup> Lönnroth shows how the setting of oral poetry has changed with time from the domestic milieu to the urban; two hundred years ago the setting in a text was the home region or home village, whereas now they are usually situated in exotic or urban places. The centre of Taube's universe is Argentinean, it is the village Samborombon, an exotic place. It opens with a description of the actual place where the narrator comes to dance a tango. A characteristic feature in these tangos is the dialogue form with two actants. The story is typically a narration with actants set in a place (Samborombon) and time ('an evening in April'): Fritjof (*subject*), Carmencita (*receiver*). He wanted (*désir*) to dance a tango (*object*). After having heard the story we can say, "this happened":

<sup>79</sup> Åhlén (1987: 64-82).

<sup>80</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 20).

<sup>81</sup> Åhlén (1987: 69); The Argentinean tango is strong in Sweden today due to the activities at the institute *Argentinska Tangoakademien* in Stockholm.

<sup>82</sup> Daun (1989) in his study *Svensk mentalitet* ('Swedish Mentality').

<sup>83</sup> Lönnroth (1978: 260-263).

<p>Fritjof och Carmencita<sup>84</sup></p> <p>Samborombon, en liten by för utan gata,</p> <p>den ligger inte långt från Rio de la Plata, nästän i kanten av den blåa Atlanten och med pampas bakom sig många hundra gröna mil.</p> <p>Dit kom jag ridande en afton i april för jag ville dansa tango. [...]</p> <p>Jag bjöd upp och Carmencita sa: – Si gracias, señor, vamos a bailar este tango!</p> <p>– Carmencita, lilla vän, håller du utav mig än? Får jag tala med din pappa och din mamma, jag vill gifta mig med dig, Carmencita! – Nej, Don Fritjof Andersson, kom ej till Samborombon, om Ni hyser andra planer när det gäller mig än att dansa tango! [...]</p> <p>– Carmencita, lilla vän, akta dig för rika män! Lyckan den bor ej i oxar eller kor och den kan heller inte köpas för pengar. Men min kärlek gör dig rik, skaffa mig ett jobb i er butik! Och när vi blir gifta söta ungar ska du få,  som kan dansa tango! Music and lyrics Evert Taube, <i>Ultra Marin</i> (1936)</p>	<p>'Fritjof and Carmencita'</p> <p>'Samborombon, a little village without a street, not very far from Rio de la Plata, almost on the blue Ocean and it has many hundreds of green miles of pampas behind it.</p> <p>I arrived there one evening in April because I wanted to dance the tango. [...]</p> <p>I asked her to dance and Carmencita said: – Si gracias, señor, vamos a bailar este tango!</p> <p>– Carmencita, my little friend, Do you still love me? Can I talk to your mother and your father? I will marry you, Carmencita! – No, Don Fritjof Andersson, do not come to Samborombon, if you have other plans concerning me than to dance a tango! [...]</p> <p>– Carmencita, my little friend, do not trust rich men! Happiness does not mean oxen and cows and one cannot buy it for money. But my love makes you rich, please, get me a job in your shop! And when we are married you will have beautiful kids who can dance tango!</p>
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The semantic structure of this tango is accompanied by the music in the form of a dialogue. The thematization of this couple is that the cavalier can identify himself with Fritjof/the singer, and his partner with Carmencita. The couple is actually shifted to an unreal mythical world through a process which Lönnroth calls *derealization*,<sup>85</sup> by which the *receiver* is taken from everyday reality to a strange place in order to be rid of "normal" inhibitions which are determined by social rules. This change is possible only if the setting is remote. In the first lines this exotic place is described. Time is also mentioned but no information about where Fritjof came from. *Fritjof och Carmencita* is, as Lönnroth mentions, chauvinistic. The cavalier can play the great conqueror of hearts, the woman can be Carmencita for a while. The intrigue and events of this tango are a pastiche context, at the same time both idyllic and romantic.<sup>86</sup>

The typical feature of the Swedish tango created by Taube is humour and narrative joy. This does not mean the parody which also can be found in the otherwise serious Finnish tango. The Swedish tango is a light, romantic and sentimental genre. The scene is fantastic with a *señorita* who is seventeen years

<sup>84</sup> Taube (1972: 189-190).

<sup>85</sup> Lönnroth (1978: 284).

<sup>86</sup> Lönnroth (1978: 290).

old. The dream is that Fritjof and Carmencita, will marry each other and have children who can dance tango! Taube's tangos combine elements from abroad with domestic Swedish elements and associations or names; *krog* is a Swedish pub where the Swedish *dragspel*, *fiol och mandolin*, 'accordion, violin and mandolin' are played. Taube's idea seems to be a combination of the familiar-foreign juxtaposition. Fritjof Andersson is a Swede who meets the beautiful girl in Samborombon. Their dialogue is the story of this tango. Its narrative structure makes it difficult to dance, but it provides a setting for day-dreams with the mythical Evert Taube/Fritjof Andersson and his South American *señorita Carmencita* who also appears in Taube's tango *Tango i Nizza* (1937),<sup>87</sup> 'Tango in Nice'. Here she has become an adult woman who owns land and has high social status. She is no longer the young girl from his youth. The story ends with the girl from the pampas getting back her friend Fritjof from Bohuslän, Sweden. The setting of this tango is Nice, where the couple meet each other. Carmencita says in the first line: "*Säj minns ni mej ännu, Don Fritjof Andersson ...*" 'Excuse me, can You / remember me still, Don Fritjof Andersson'. Fritjof and Carmencita were recalling their youth when they first met in 1932; place and time are mentioned at the beginning of the text. Then Fritjof says how he longs for the pampas, the mysterious nights and the smell of the ground so pure and strong. The text has a happy ending with all the naive, romantic and sentimental ingredients. Carmencita sighs: "*Fritjof, o, du för mej i himmelen in, där jag för alltid blott är din!*" 'Fritjof, oh, take me to heaven, where I will always be yours only!' Typical features include emotional expressions with pragmatic particles characteristic of a dialogue. The romantic ingredients include stars, palm trees and the sound of the Mediterranean Sea, a little house with two candles, red wine, grapes and flowers and the nightly-wind coming from Provence and playing its song in a tree somewhere, in another setting. The drama of these tangos includes all the romantic features people need for escapism and day-dreams – an exotic place and a foreign milieu.

In *Fritjof och Carmencita* (1936) the man is a typical chauvinist, but in *Tango Rosa* (1940)<sup>88</sup> the roles have changed; now the woman is independent. *Tango Rosa* also has dialogue in which the characters use formal address when they dance a tango described in the last lines; 'the tango is different at different places'. Rosa and Fritjof Andersson meet each other. She is a independent woman who seeks a man intelligent enough for her. These three tangos are like plays performed on stage. They are a typical example of the modality of doing (*faire*) when the actants meet, dance and talk to each other.

Taube has mainly composed and written tangos with Hispanic features, but in his oeuvre includes the tango *Min älskling* (1943) 'My Love'<sup>89</sup> which reflects pure and real love in the mirror of nature. The Finnish lyrics are by Reino

<sup>87</sup> Oy Yleisradio Ab, Finnish Broadcasting Company, Gramophone Library; Taube (1972: 110-111).

<sup>88</sup> Oy Yleisradio Ab, Finnish Broadcasting Company, Gramophone Library; Taube (1972: 231-232).

<sup>89</sup> Taube (1966: 36-39).

Helismaa in various recordings since 1973 (an instrumental version) entitled *Rakkaani*. The first sung version in Finnish appeared in 1975.<sup>90</sup>

## Min älskling

Min älskling, du är som en ros,  
en nyutsprungnen, skär.  
Ja, som den ljuvaste musik,  
min älskade, du är!  
Så underbar är du, min vän,  
och ser så vacker ut!  
Och älska dig, det skall jag än  
när havet sinat ut.

När hela havet sinat ut  
och bergen smälts till glöd!  
Ja, älska dig, det ska jag än  
när jorden ligger död.

[...]

Music and lyrics Evert Taube (1943)

## Min älskling

Min älskling, du är som en ros,  
en nyutsprungnen, skär.  
Ja, som den ljuvaste musik,  
min älskade, du är!  
Så underbar är du, min vän,  
och ser så vacker ut!  
Och älska dig, det skall jag än  
när havet sinat ut.

När hela havet sinat ut  
och bergen smälts till glöd!  
Ja, älska dig det ska jag än  
när jorden ligger död.

[...]

Music and lyrics Evert Taube (1943)

## Rakkaani

Oot kauniimpi kuin suven maa,  
kun ruusut puhkeaa.  
Oot sävel onnellinen,  
kaiku kauniin rakkauden.  
Vain valoon se johtavi tie,  
mi luokses, rakkain, vie.  
En nähnyt taivaan sinisyyttä,  
ennen kuin sun näin.

Kun illan varjon aika on,  
luot uuden auringon.  
Kun tuulen kylmän syksy tuo,  
sun katsees lämmön luo.

[...]

Finnish lyrics Orvokki Itä (Reino Helismaa)

## 'My Love'

'My love, you are like a rose,  
a rose just in bloom.  
Yes, like wonderful music,  
you are my love.  
So wonderful you are, my friend,  
and look so beautiful!  
And I will love you, until  
even the sea dries up.

When the sea has dried up  
and the hills have melted to cinders!  
Yes, I will love you, until  
when the earth is dead.

[...]

A comparison of the Swedish and Finnish versions of this tango shows that the music and dynamics are different. The Finnish lyrics have the typical sadness *varjon aika*, 'the time of shadows', and *Kun tuulen kylmän syksy tuo*, 'When autumn brings the cold wind', while Taube's lyrics are positive and optimistic, talking about love which lasts to the end of the world, when the hills and the sea have vanished. Taube's lyrics describe the beauty of nature and the beloved, joy and delight in life.

The Swedish tango material shows that Taube is actually the only Swedish tango lyricist who has literary and artistic ambitions in the texts.<sup>91</sup> Romance, sentiment and joy are also seen in the Danish tangos (cf. Jacob Gade's *Tango Jalousie*, 1933; Sven Ulrik's *Et lille hjertesuk*, 1957, Finnish lyrics by Orvokki Itä, *Vain pieni huokaus*, 1958 'Only a Little Sigh') and Norwegian tango lyrics (cf. Henry Skilbred's *Han var en munter spillemann*, 1956, *Hän oli soittoneikka*,

<sup>90</sup> Haapanen 1972–1979, 1980 (1982: 540); *Kultainen tangokirja 1* (1994: 114–115).

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Swedish tangos, e.g. Sven Aspelin, Nils-Gustaf Holmquist, Margit Lagerheim-Romarc, Leon Landgren, Jules Sylvain, Gösta Westerberg and other Swedish composers; *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).



*hän*, Finnish lyrics by Helena Korpela, 1957, 'He Was a Joyful Musician'). In Sweden the tango texts assimilated influences from various parts of Europe which made them impersonal, but in Finland the tango lyrics produced after the war especially in the 1950s and 1960s established their own identity. According to Åhlén, one reason for the poor status of the European tango is the quality of their lyrics, the other being the great amount of escapism and sentimental exoticism, but Åhlén claims that the repetitive aspect gives the tango an important role in offering security.<sup>92</sup> The European tango makes it possible to escape from reality, it is like a substitute theatre.

Gösta Westerberg's and Eric Sandström's *Tango di concertino* (1947), *Klovni soittaa* (1948),<sup>93</sup> Finnish lyrics by Kullervo, is actually the only one of the Swedish, Danish and Norwegian tango texts which has a serious message. Mihail Bahtin's concept of carnivalism allows this tango to be interpreted as a serious view of life.<sup>94</sup> In film Federico Fellini employs the theme of carnival, circus and clowns similarly, the joyful surface structure having a serious deep structure; joy and sorrow, for instance, being handled in *La Strada* or *Clowns*. The question is, as mentioned earlier, how much laughter is needed for this sadness? Even though the idea is good in this text some of its lines trivialise it.

The European tango flourished in the 1930s and 1940s especially. Its languishing, escapist, sentimental and romantic lyrics entertained, especially during the war when people needed a way out of reality. We have seen that nostalgia is a serious concept at Peirce's *Thirdness* stage.<sup>95</sup> Nostalgia in its original sense has been reserved for the basics of man's mental landscape; i.e. *das Man* is capable of reflecting his *Dasein* and *In-der-Welt-Sein*. The European tango constructs a double drama, the first setting being literal the other the escapist, consisting of the sentimental and romantic *Firstness* spontaneity of falling in love or being rejected. The European tango lyrics actually are an entertainment tango without the serious content of their Argentinean counterparts, or the traditional Finnish tango lyrics developed especially in the 1950s and the 1960s as a mirror of Finnish culture, nature, and man's joyful or painful nostalgia. The Argentinean tango became a genre of its own in Europe; its sentimental, romantic, escapist or humorous aspects developed mainly during the war. The tango as music and lyrics tried to provide a setting other than reality through music in records and on films. The European tango lyrics mostly trivialise love, freedom is represented as gypsy romance, and death becomes a melodrama. Beside the sentimental, romantic, and escapist themes, comic themes are also popular in the European tango. The Argentinean tango was acculturated in Europe in different ways with some specific culture-bound features. The tango in Finland is an example of a unique genre both as music and lyrics, expressing the signs of *Finnishness*.

<sup>92</sup> Åhlén (1987: 55-63).

<sup>93</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes), cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 207).

<sup>94</sup> Bahtin ([1965] 1991; [1981] 1988; 1988; 1991).

<sup>95</sup> Peirce (1940).

## *V The context of Finnish culture*

### *1 The spirit of place and time in a national culture*

In the Finnish national epic the *Kalevala* (1835)<sup>1</sup> the roles of music, song, and the word have pride of place. The hero, Väinämöinen, is a singer who believes in the power of the word. In his foreword to the *Kanteletar* (1840–1841), Elias Lönnrot (1840) states that '*the song and music are in a way another, holier language through which one can express one's joy and delight, sorrow and cares, anxiety, one's happiness and contentment, one's hope and yearning, calmness, silence and other feelings better than in this usual, everyday language.*' Song and poetry were actually the mother-tongue of the human race, the romantics claimed.<sup>2</sup> Folk poetry offers the spirit of place and time, in the flow of time; the mythical content of man's memories and traditions, which everyone touched by its myths and stories can interpret in his/her own way. In modern urban life we have almost lost the mythical power of the word. When singing and reading poetry are rare, people listen to music and its lyrics, making the lyrics of popular music all-important in mass culture.

The aim of what follows is to illuminate the concept of *Finnishness*, the Finnish national soul, through the folk poetry collection the *Kanteletar* since it is a good national representation of those phenomenological concepts, which also inform Finnish tango lyrics. The *Kanteletar*, based on oral tradition, represents poetry, the first mother tongue of man, the first artistically handled language (cf. Herder). Folk poetry was long the main genre of literature, the novel emerging much later. The language of the *Kalevala* and the *Kanteletar*, the language of poetry and myth, is a language of its own with its own special form and structure, in which alliteration and repetition constitute the most visible elements. They function as phonetic and aesthetic incantations, magic formulas and verses, easy to recall. Elias Lönnrot meant his collections to be a testament to old times, a forgotten life style and everyday life, a picture of the society which produced it, including its religious beliefs. Metaphorically speaking, the *Kanteletar* is a place of many roads with indexical force,<sup>3</sup> having been translated into thirty-five languages. It has inspired many composers, most notably Yrjö Kilpinen and Jean Sibelius. In the mid-nineteenth century Europe was already acquainted with many collections of folk poetry that owed their existence to the Romantic concept of folk culture as a repository of national identity. Among these were J. G. Herder's *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* (1778–1779), which first embodied the concept.

The *Kanteletar's* full title is *Kanteletar taikka Suomen kansan Wanhoja Lauhuja ja Wirsiä*, '*The Kanteletar, Being Some Old Songs and Ballads of the*

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<sup>1</sup> Finnish folk poetry gathered by Elias Lönnrot. The *Kalevala*, and The *Kanteletar*, English translations by Bosley (1989; 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Kuusi (1994: 93).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Peirce's (1940) signs icon, index and symbol.

*Finnish People'*, is a collection of 662 lyrics and ballads based on Finnish oral tradition, first published in 1840–1841, and edited by Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884). The collection is divided into three parts consisting of (I) general songs, songs sung by both women and men, (II) songs sung by girls and women, songs and lullabies for children, and songs sung by boys and men, (III) ballads and legends. It represents Finnish myths and mentality embodying the idea of the Romantic concept of folk culture as a repository of national identity. An overriding concern of Romanticism is traces of history, tradition, the memory of man, his identity and his roots.<sup>4</sup> I explore how the concept of place, *locus*, and especially the concept of road, way ('tie') realised various places, concrete as well as abstract, in the *Kanteletar*, investing the lyrics as signs of Finnish culture. The central concept concerning the spirit of place is Mihail Bahtin's concept of time and place (*chronotopos*).<sup>5</sup>

## 2 The road as a metaphor: life is a journey

A recurrent image used in many cultures is the metaphor *life is a journey or life is a road*. The places in the *Kanteletar* which give spirit to this collection is man in nature or in the forest speaking to trees and birds. In Finnish mythology the forest, the domain of the forest-lord Tapio (cf. Sibelius' *Tapiola*), the trees and the birds have a central meaning. As metaphors they represent man's inner landscape and state. The linguist Ray Jackendoff states that semantic or conceptual structure can be organised according to the localistic and spatial idea that "time is location, being possessed is a location, properties are locations, events are locations."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, place and space is an essential category both concrete and abstract; knowledge, feelings, and mental properties are located in mind, representing a locus. Hence the spirit of place cannot be seen simply as some particular place, but also as an abstract place in the human mind. Language, music and lyrics join these two dimensions. The place of human mind can be seen as reflections of the external world, as in the *Kanteletar* together with the *kantele*, the traditional zither-like instrument found among most eastern Baltic nations; the feminine suffix *-tar* in *Kanteletar* denotes a resident spirit in Finnish folklore, and is roughly 'zither-daughter', a kind of lyric muse. This is a central myth in Finnish culture,<sup>7</sup> *Kantele* being the symbol of the hero who created the world as well as a myth, a tool of transformation, a more sophisticated shamanic drum. It is the instrument with which one can cross the gulf between culture and nature. In the enchantment of the music, the meanings typical of man's everyday life, such as social values, status, permanency and temporality, goodness and evil, acceptability and non-acceptability, what is allowed and forbidden all lose their meanings. *Kantele* according to the myths

<sup>4</sup> Segerbank (1993: 11).

<sup>5</sup> Bahtin (1988).

<sup>6</sup> Jackendoff ([1983] 1985: 140-141).

<sup>7</sup> Sarmela (1994: 197-198).

makes possible the image of something holy, a place where the elements are not separated, the first chaos where no categories exist, and which is the origin of culture and its values and meanings from which everything is created.<sup>8</sup> *Kantele* also appears in the Finnish tango lyrics, which shows its indexical force in Finnish culture.

Although the *Kalevala* (1835) describes the magical origin of the instrument and calls it 'a joy for ever' (*ilo ikuinen*),<sup>9</sup> the first song in the *Kanteletar* states, "no, music was made from grief / moulded from sorrow".<sup>10</sup> Music, song and poetry are the essential elements of the spirit of the *Kanteletar*, which deals with man's deepest dimensions. The *Kanteletar* is in a way a polyphonic<sup>11</sup> collection of men and women's songs, songs for children, and narrative ballads. In many oral cultures epic poetry is for men, lyric for women. Bosley asks whether the *Kanteletar* is the feminine companion to the masculine *Kalevala*, answering affirmatively to some extent, but sexual roles in life (men did not look after children, women did not hunt) were not always reflected in art.<sup>12</sup> Men would sing 'women's' songs however if they wanted to express tender feelings; women used 'men's' narrative style to sing about shocking events. The lack of grammatical gender in Finnish, 'he' and 'she' being the same word, *hän*, doubtless helped this two-way traffic, as Bosley puts it. Nature reflects both human knowledge and feelings as well as man's eternal longing for something; goodness, love, and truth, or longing for Tuonela, the place of Death where all sorrows have gone. In Finnish tango lyrics death is not mentioned explicitly but through nature metaphors or as a longing for a happy land, the land of Heaven. Tuonela is a central theme in the old Finnish lullaby:<sup>13</sup>

Rock the child to Tuonela  
the child to the planks' embrace  
under turf to sleep  
underground to lie  
for Death's children to sing to  
for the grave's maidens to keep!

For Death's cradle is better  
and the grave's cot is fairer  
cleverer Death's dames, better  
the grave's daughters-in-law, large  
the cabin in Tuonela  
and the grave has wide abodes.  
The *Kanteletar* II: 178; Bosley (1992: 64)

This theme returns in the first Finnish novel, *Seitsemän veljestä* (*Seven Brothers*, 1870) by Aleksis Kivi, in which one of the brothers' wives 'who had seen wondrous visions' says to her child: "Ah! this world is false and stormy, and many a sailor has sunk for good in the eternal depths of its seas. Tell me,

<sup>8</sup> Anttonen (1993: 33-34).

<sup>9</sup> The *Kalevala* ([1835] 1989: 40: 234).

<sup>10</sup> The *Kanteletar* (1840-1841: I:1); cf. Bosley (1992: 9).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Bakhtin's (1991) terms *dialogical* and *polyphonic*.

<sup>12</sup> Bosley (1992: xvi-xvii).

<sup>13</sup> The *Kanteletar* (1840-1841: II:178); cf. Bosley (1992: xxii; 64).

*my child, my summer-bright, tell me: wouldst thou not sail away from here to a haven of everlasting peace, while the white pennant of childhood still flies clean? On the shore of a misty, tideless lake stands the dark manor of Tuoni: there in the heart of a shadowy grove, in the bosom of a dewy thicket a cradle is prepared for thee with snowy linen and wrappings. Hear therefore my song; it wafts thee to the land of the Prince of Tuoni. O hear the song of my heart!*<sup>14</sup> Kivi then lets the mother sing a lullaby of her own in the same spirit as the *Kanteletar*, the *Sydämeni laulu* (*Song of my Heart*).<sup>15</sup>

## Song of my Heart (1)

"Grove of Tuoni, grove of night!  
There thy bed of sand is light.  
Thither my baby I lead.

Mirth and joy each long hour yields  
In the Prince of Tuoni's fields  
Tending the Tuonela cattle.

Mirth and joy my babe will know,  
Lulled to sleep at evening glow  
By the pale Tuonela maiden.

Surely joy the hours will hold,  
Lying in thy cot of gold,  
hearing the nightjar singing.

Grove of Tuoni, grove of peace!  
There all strife and passion cease.  
Distant the treacherous world."  
English transl. Alex Matson (1929: 405-406)

## Song of my Heart (2)

Grove of Death, grove of night's land!  
There's a cradle of fine sand,  
There I will bring my baby.

There 'tis merry for a child,  
With Death's lord upon his field,  
Tending the herd of Deathland.

There 'tis merry for a child,  
When day closes to be lulled,  
Folden by Deathland's maiden.

Merry for a darling child,  
In a golden cradle sprawled,  
Listening to the nightjar.

Thicket of Death, place of peace!  
There pursuit and quarrel cease,  
Far from the word's betrayals.  
English transl. Keith Bosley (1994: 45)

Positive death-wish lullabies appear to occur mainly in the Baltic-Finnish and north Russian traditions. The theme of Tuonela in lullabies in which the mother wishes her child to be carried off to the otherworld, or to be buried in the church graveyard, is typical of Finland; the language available for this was that of death, a baby's death being considered nothing more than a premature return home. An alternative explanation draws on historical, economic and social conditions. Infant mortality was common, and the end of an ailing child's suffering must have been seen as a welcome release. A third explanation seeks to explain the death-wish lullabies in terms of the physical and psychological hardship of women's life in the north and interprets the child death-wish metaphorically as a veiled protest at the harshness of the mother's life.<sup>16</sup> This tradition of longing for an otherworld which is 'a place of peace' and where 'pursuit and quarrel cease', a place 'far from the world's betrayals' is central to the Finnish tango lyrics as metaphors for Heaven, a Happy Land and the Land of Dreams, even though death is not mentioned directly. Hence the longing for

<sup>14</sup> Kivi ([1870] 1929: 405).

<sup>15</sup> (1) Matson's (1929: 405-406) translation; (2) Bosley's (1994: 45) translation in Kivi, *Odes*. Set to music by Sibelius as Op. 18 No. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Timonen (1993b: 344-345); Bosley (1992: xxii).

the Land of Death exists as implicit structures in the Finnish tango lyrics (such as *Satumaa* (1955) 'The Happy Land').

The concept of the *road* is a focus in my study because the place is what roads lead to and from. The road can be seen as a spatial metaphor in the life of a human being. The road combines the external and internal aspects, forming a bridge between man's concrete and abstract world. In the poems of the *Kanteletar* the singer's centre is a place where his roots are, the home region. From a semiotic point of view, the spirit of place and time can be understood as Bakhtin's *chronotopos* in which time implies place. The road is one of instance, as are castles, ballrooms, rural towns and door steps, all incorporating the spatiality of time through the idea of dichotomies.<sup>17</sup>

The *Kanteletar* originated in the oral songs, poems and psalms of the agrarian people but the collection also reflects the universal themes of man, central themes in life like walking along the road of life towards Tuonela or Manala, 'the realm of Death', On this road we meet the joys and sorrows of a human being. Evidence for the indexical force of the *Kanteletar* is the fact that it has inspired Finnish culture and literature as well as music to produce new iconic signs for Finns, who can recall their national roots and their identity. As Eero Tarasti states, a national culture creates iconic artistic symbols which must have indexical force to reproduce itself as an icon over and over again. The signs of *Finnishness* are repeated in art as different interpretations.<sup>18</sup> Lotman's concept national *semiosphere*,<sup>19</sup> that is, how cultures differ from each other, is derivable from the cultural texts which every culture represents or produces using *text*, in Lotman's broader sense.<sup>20</sup> One example is the *Kanteletar* themes used in the music of Kilpinen and Sibelius.

Which are then the themes of Finnish folk poetry, especially in the *Kanteletar*? They are man's eternal longing, yearning, and searching for something; love, marriage, peace, the role of home and mother, the coldness of one's relatives, homelessness, orphanhood, being an outsider, an orphan in one's own home or homeland, being the object of evil and gossip, sorrow, and anxiety. The songs are sung working or while walking in the open, in the deep forests, in the meadows and glades.<sup>21</sup> The silent Finn, lacking communication with another human being, talked to trees and birds as a part of nature: 'the trees do not tell anybody'; they are the faithful friends of man.<sup>22</sup>

Even though the Finnish lyric songs are rural poetry, their content shows a highly developed intellectual culture, even though their milieu is modest. The songs have joyful musicality and delight. The love songs are about longing and yearning, sometimes great passions; the pain of love with its utopian yearning

<sup>17</sup> Bakhtin ([1981] 1988; Bahtin 1988; 1991).

<sup>18</sup> Tarasti (1990: 197-208).

<sup>19</sup> Lotman (1980: 151-156).

<sup>20</sup> Peirce (1940); Tarasti (1990: 197-208).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Haavio (1935: *passim*); Kuusi (1985: *passim*; 1994: *passim*); Honko (1993a-c); Timonen (1993a-b).

<sup>22</sup> Lönnrot (1840: xxxvi). Cf. also the role of the forest in Finnish culture; Hägglund (1994: 151-163) and Virtanen (1994: 134-140).



and disappointments can also turn to profound wisdom. Time in the childhood home is idealised, a mother's love is prized. Feelings explored such as Finnish nostalgia and melancholy, 'the eternal yearning', *iankaikkista ikävää*. The major theme in the *Kanteletar* is man's loneliness, solitude, isolation, homelessness or orphanhood, and both joy and sorrow, as Elias Lönnrot states in his foreword.<sup>23</sup> In the rural culture environment man lived in isolation and solitude far from his neighbours, unable to communicate with other people for this reason, or used silence as a language. Nature was and still is the place which gives Finns consolation and calmness, peace and silence.

The road, the way, and the path are central in the *Kanteletar*; the road from *x* to *y*, and back, or further on. It is an actual pathway.<sup>24</sup> The road acquires various abstract meanings which are difficult to extricate from literal senses, since the road epitomises man's psychological stage and place. For instance, *Girl in love*, in which the girl compares her feelings with berries, birds, a tree and a squirrel describes joy and love. This song is a good example of the dialogue between the internal and external landscape of man.<sup>25</sup>

## 31. Onpa tietty tiettyssäni

Onpa tietty tiettyssäni  
mesimarja mielessäni,  
Lempilintu liittosani,  
Sinisorsa suojassani,  
Jok' on mieltynyt minuhun,  
Minä mieltynyt hänchen;  
Hänell' on ihanat silmät,  
Minulla syän suloinen.  
Ei hän heittänyt minua,  
Eikä yksin jättänyttä;  
Omaksensa on ottanunna,  
Kullaksensa kutsununna,  
Kaunoksensa katsonunna,  
Valkiaksensa valinnut.  
Niin minä hänessä riipun, jotta kiikun,  
Niinkun lintu lehtipuussa,  
Kuusen oksalla orava.  
The *Kanteletar* (1840-41: II:31)

## Jag vet en som är den rätta

Jag vet en som är den rätta,  
som ett hjörtrön i mitt hjärta,  
som en kärligt fångad fågel,  
som en vänligt vårdad gräsand.  
Han har lärt att hålla av mig  
liksom jag fått lust för honom;  
blida blåa ögon har han  
och jag har ett givmilt hjärta.  
Mig har han inte förkastat.  
övergett mig åt mitt öde,  
nej, han tog mig till sin egen,  
har sitt gods gull mig kallat,  
valt mig till sin vackra flicka,  
till sitt klara ljus mig korat.  
Därför hänger jag vid honom,  
hänger om hans Hals och gungar  
som bland lindens löv en fågel,  
som ekorm i granens grenar.  
Swedish transl. Torvaks (1989: 84)

## Girl in Love

There's a certain one I know  
a honey-berry I like  
a pet bird I'm attached to  
a wild duck I hold on to  
who is keen on me  
and I'm keen on him.  
He has lovely eyes  
I have a warm heart;  
he has not thrown me over  
nor left me alone: he has  
taken me to be his own  
called me his treasure  
looked me out as his fair one  
chosen me as his white one.  
I'll hang on to him  
both hang on and swing  
like a bird in a green tree  
a squirrel on a spruce bough.  
English transl. Bosley (1992: 40-41)

The road is also a metaphor for man's continuous process in searching for knowledge, poetry, truth, beauty and love. In Finnish the words *tieto* 'knowledge' and *tiede* 'science' are based on the expression *kulkea tietä pitkin* 'go along a road'. *Tietäjä* means 'a wise man', literally 'a knower' of secret lore, hence a magician or wizard, a shaman like Väinämöinen, the great singer in Finnish mythology. In Greek *meta hodos* means 'along a road'; to choose a scientific method is to go along many roads in order to get results, testing theories and coming to new theories.

The semiotic aspects of the road concept in the *Kanteletar* can be interpreted through the dichotomies: home-village, home-strange place, freedom-slavery, life-Tuonela (the Land of Death). Time is located in childhood-youth, youth-

<sup>23</sup> Lönnrot (1840: xxxiv-xxxv).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. The *Kanteletar* (1840-1841: II:29); Bosley (1992: xxii).

<sup>25</sup> The *Kanteletar* (1840-1841: II: 31); *Visor och ballader ur Kanteletar* (1989: 84); Bosley (1992: 40-41).

age, then–now, present–future, the past–present–future. In these oppositions both loneliness and sadness, and joy and delight are the main motifs. Music and song used both in joy and sorrow have mythical force; music–silence ('why I cannot sing'), joy–sorrow, good luck–bad luck. Birds such as the cuckoo are used as images of man's deepest feelings.

The spirit of place is realised in many songs and poems in such places as the road, home, the village, the forest and trees, the sauna, Manala ('Death's place'), time, music and song. Man's mental place is reflected in almost every song through metaphors correlating the physical environment with the inner one. Pohjola, 'the Nordic place', and its magic spirit is described through nature, as Pekka Jalkanen, who has studied Finnish popular music, says of a well-known Finnish waltz *Pohjolan yössä* ('In Pohjola's Night'), '*Pohjola represents the distant isle of Finnishness, a happy land* [cf. the well-known Finnish tango *Satumaa* 'The Happy Land'], *a lucky place, Impivaara* [allusion to Finland from Aleksis Kivi's novel] *and the last refuge. It is also the place for folk poetry and songs, the land of magic and magician drums, a land living of nature ... and the magic light, the night that is not night but day*'.<sup>26</sup> The oppositions of light and shadow are an expressive metaphor for Finns as is sung in the *Kanteletar*; music is made of sorrow, moulded from grief. The iconicity of the *Kanteletar* appears nowadays in for instance the lyrics of Finnish popular music texts, especially the role of nature in the basic and traditional Finnish tango lyrics written since the 1950s; they are, so to speak, folk songs of our time.<sup>27</sup>

In Finnish, the abstract meanings of *tie*, 'road', are many; 'Life is a road', 'I am the way and life' (Christ), 'The road is still in front of me' ('to have difficulties').<sup>28</sup> We are on our road, in both a literal and an abstract sense, as Martin Heidegger states: 'on the road we are on our road home'.<sup>29</sup> *Road* metaphors are therefore many, because the language joins these two poles. The meanings fall into both categories, forming so-called *fuzzy* rather than explicit categories.<sup>30</sup> *Life is a road* or *life is a journey* shows how man organises his/her environment as a spatial metaphor. The road is literal, life is abstract; we bridge the gulf between the physical and the intellectual, the non-material side through metaphorical language. It is an *ontological metaphor* expressing how we see the phenomenon, the causal relations and so on, an *orientational metaphor* expressing direction. Metaphors make a comprehensible whole of reality.<sup>31</sup> A spontaneous expression or feeling for landscape is Peirce's *Firstness*, past and present *Secondness*, and *Thirdness* which give one a fuller understanding of the internal or external landscape. The function of the road can be similarly interpreted. The concept of road (in Finnish *tie*, cf. *tao* of the Eastern cultures) as a locus of time and place, as Bahtin states, is an essential part of human life, both literal and

<sup>26</sup> Jalkanen (1992: 7).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Kukkonen (1992b–e; 1993a; 1993d; 1995); Jalkanen (1992; 1993); Häggman (1994).

<sup>28</sup> *Suomen kielen perussanakirja* (1994: 544); Heikkinen (1993: 8–9).

<sup>29</sup> Heidegger (1991: 103).

<sup>30</sup> Jackendoff ((1983) 1985).

<sup>31</sup> Heikkinen (1993: 8–10).

abstract.<sup>32</sup> To choose a way, a road, is to make a picture of oneself and the surrounding reality; this is a semiotic interpretation. In the tango texts the road theme is repeated in numerous variations.

*Tao* also expresses the meaning in 'Life is a road' formed by man's world view, incorporating space, time, values, ideology, the existence of man, relations between the natural and supernatural, man himself, the various phases of life, happiness, life and death and the life after death, society, nation, history, and the essential features of culture, including aesthetic and ethical values, not merely ontological values.<sup>33</sup> In the *Kanteletar* the value is nature, and the mythical dimension; man relies on a pantheistic view of life in which nature and one's home region are the centres. The road lies before, the road to Tuonela and Manala (the Land of Death) being the object of yearning and longing, a form of *Sehnsucht* or *Heimweh* ('longing, yearning') for *heimgehen*. The German word means 'return home'<sup>34</sup> like the euphemistic Finnish expression *kaivata tai päästä taivaalliseen, ikuiseen kotiin*, 'to long for or to come to the heavenly or eternal home'.<sup>35</sup> The Greek word *nostalgia* expresses this very strongly.<sup>36</sup> In every literal or figurative departure or "death" pain is present. Melancholy means an almost pathological and psychological state, depression, distress, a feeling that everything is useless. It is anxiety and anguish, agony, hate, *die Angst*,<sup>37</sup> while I understand *nostalgia* as an essential existential life preserving state of man, combining both joy and sorrow in the state of longing.

Spatiality is a primary category, both an abstract and physical locus. Place and time belong together and give each other a specific spirit. The road begins at some place, goes somewhere and back again, or further on. Language joins the literal and abstract paths of man. Language, as well as music and song, are the essential *genius loci* for man which give meaning to external and internal places. Along a road, physical or mental, we visit places located in different times over and over again, places people before us have been to and left their signs and traces. The spirit of place, *genius loci*, means the spatiality of time, i.e. a place implies time, or time is always present in a place (cf. Bahtin's *chronotopos*). The spirit of place and road in the *Kanteletar* realises this at many levels of time and place. As Marcel Proust writes in *A la recherche du temps perdu* ([1919] 1988), a scent, a taste, or a madeleine cake, can set off a massive of memory train. Tango lyrics are also concerned with memories, longing and yearning.

### 3 The Finnish tango

The great mythical story as the hit or popular music is shaped by its lyrics, not least the tango. To sing this mythical story needs repetition in a schematic or

<sup>32</sup> Bahtin (1988: 84-258).

<sup>33</sup> Pentikäinen (1994: 11).

<sup>34</sup> *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1992: 397).

<sup>35</sup> *Suomen kielen perussanakirja* (1990: 544).

<sup>36</sup> *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque. Histoire de mots* (1968).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Kristeva ([1987] 1989: 3-30) on depression and melancholia.

ritual form. Art music puts new questions, and is progressive in its demand for new perspectives. The Argentinean tango has developed itself musically in the *tango nuevo* (e.g. Astor Piazzolla). The hit on the other hand feeds on repetitive, permanent and familiar structures and, like the folk tradition, one of its functions is to provide security, to give therapeutic consolation. The hit and the tango repeat the old stories of paradise lost. The Hungarian folklorist Elemér Hankiss has noticed that hit lyrics can be roughly categorized as: (1) be mine, (2) you are mine, and (3) why aren't you mine any more/now/yet.<sup>38</sup> The hit songwriter has to use small solutions in a very limited space. Often a new style is developed from a fusion as Toivo Kärki (1915–1992), the great Finnish tango composer did, using Slavic romances, jazz influence and the remote form of the Argentinean tango to create the Finnish tango genre.<sup>39</sup>

The tradition of Finnish popular music is built on three traditions: Finnish folk music, the European classic and romantic art music in popular versions, and Afro-American music. The mythical instrument, *kantele*, acquired competitors in the violin, clarinet, and horns. In the middle of the 19th century, the Finnish popular culture assimilated the new dances, the polka and the waltz. The old Kalevala song tradition was compensated with new songs. In Finland during the period of autonomy, new ideas from European culture were transformed to create a new national culture. Finland got new musical traditions; new dances, comic songs and revues (in Finnish *kupletti*), varieties and revues were performed, and many hotels had saloons where new dances such as the tango could be done. The first performance of the tango as a dance took place in the Hotel Börs in 1913. The two predominant musical directions before the jazz era in Finland were the Central European and the Eastern from St. Petersburg. The accordion, imported from Italy, was the functional element of both these influences. The Eastern influence provided the gypsy romances, while the Russian romances with its roots in central European music and the German *Lied*, developed its own typically pathetic melancholy from its folk tradition and language in minor keys. The Russian romance appeared in various types of Finnish music; in the 1920s in foxtrots and waltzes, in the 1940s in Toivo Kärki's tangos, and during recent times in Juice Leskinen and Edu Kettunen's compositions.<sup>40</sup> Finnish popular music is, as Jalkanen states, a fusion of disparate elements from Central and Eastern Europe. This is the background to the Finnish tango music and its texts. Is there anything Finnish left however? The Finnish language gives its special Finnish character, for instance, with nature metaphors, alliteration and repetition as stylistic figures already characteristic of folk poetry.

In the 19th century the Kalevala music disappeared quickly, but Jalkanen claims some features remained, as in the tango *Satumaa* (1955), 'The Happy Land', by Unto Mononen.<sup>41</sup> A typical feature is the melancholy expressed in

<sup>38</sup> Hankiss in Apo (1974: 174) and in Jalkanen (1993: 16).

<sup>39</sup> Jalkanen (1992: 15–16).

<sup>40</sup> Jalkanen (1992: 9–11).

<sup>41</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 2–3.

psalms maintaining the Kalevala character in folk songs and in Finnish popular music.<sup>42</sup> Toivo Kärki is the developer of both the Finnish tango, the melancholic song, and the so-called *rillumarei*, the joyful carnivalistic and comic song genre containing social and cultural criticism. According to Jalkanen Kärki's tangos *On elon retki näin* (1940) 'Such Is the Journey of Life',<sup>43</sup> *Liljankukka* (1945), 'The Lily Flower', *Siks' oon mä suruinen* (1944), 'Therefore I Am Sad',<sup>44</sup> composed during the war, have the same status as Oskar Merikanto's and Georg Malmstén's songs, having become modern folk songs. Kärki's tangos are a synthesis of two traditions, one being the Russian waltz and romance tradition, the other the tetrachord harmony of jazz, combining to form the Finnish musical tradition in the structure of the Argentinean tango with its forms and rhythms. Good examples are *Täysikuu* (1953) 'The Full Moon',<sup>45</sup> and *On elon retki näin* (1940), in which the appoggiatura, the typically expressive device of romantic music is apparent. According to Kärki, this means that the tetrachord in jazz forms the melody, the appoggiatura occurring when a sound which does not belong to it is added. The result is a musical sound consisting of features from the Russian romance. These melancholic sounds have affected folk song in the 19th century as well as the Finnish hit in the 1920s and 1930s. Kärki has put these into the Finnish tango with new functions and meanings.<sup>46</sup> The Finnish feature in Kärki's tangos is the lazy triol (*laiska trioli*, as in *Hiljainen kylätie* (1955), 'The Quiet Country Road'.<sup>47</sup>

In the tango *Liljankukka* Kärki has used sequence repetitions as did baroque composers; Jalkanen compares this tango with the theme in Heitor Villa-Lobos's baroque-nuanced *Bachianas brasileiras* no 5. This makes Kärki's style different from the tango composer Unto Mononen (1930–1968) whose tangos resemble Finnish psalms.<sup>48</sup> As Jalkanen states, the difference between these two great Finnish tango composers is that Kärki represents the romance during Finland's tsarist era, but Mononen the Protestant chorale, along with the sin of man, the dream of heaven, and the fear of hell.

Finnish music combines minor and major keys – minor with joy and major with sorrow, as Lars Huldén (1981), a Finland-Swedish professor and author, has pointed out in his translation of Finnish songs into Swedish. This feature is apparent in the folk songs, and the Finnish people develop own dances like the Finnish tango and the so-called *humppa*, a foxtrot like dance developed from the onomatopoeic sounds *um-pap-paa* towards the end of the 1950s. The major key is used in the carnivalistic *rillumarei* music culture (e.g. *humppa*, foxtrot, waltz, polka, *jenkka*, in revues and comic songs), while the minor key is used for the nostalgic Finnish tango, with its melancholic Slavic features, German march

<sup>42</sup> Jalkanen (1992: 14).

<sup>43</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>44</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 6-7, 38-39.

<sup>45</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 3 (1979: 206).

<sup>46</sup> Jalkanen (1992: 77), cf. also Koivusalo (1994) on the Finnish tango as music.

<sup>47</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot* p. 13.

<sup>48</sup> Jalkanen (1992: 77-78; 1993: 48-54); cf. also Sjöblom (1994a: passim; 1994b).

sounds, and distant Argentinean influences, an original phenomenon typical of Finland with no resemblance to other tangos and with lyrics of its own. It is thus a unique genre, a rare national representation of the tango in the world and in the international tango semiosis.

#### 4 The tango as culture and communication

The typical national characteristics often ascribed to Finns include *silent, slow, dull, introverted, humourless, sad, melancholic, joyless, not spontaneous* and so forth.<sup>49</sup> Sorrow, pain and a melancholic attitude are obvious in Finnish tango texts as well as in Finnish folk poetry, but is this always only a negative feature of the Finnish mentality? Sadness can also be interpreted as a further dimension of man representing a *Thirdness* awareness according to Peirce's scheme. For instance, love in Finnish tango lyrics is mainly transitory, mystical and desiring, usually a state of longing and yearning for love, i.e. "the effects in man of a power which possesses him, a physiological, psychological, or mythical force."<sup>50</sup>

A. J. Greimas' model of actors (*le modèle actantiel mythique*) and his modalities form the methodological structure of this study.<sup>51</sup> The first modality is *désir*. The tango can be seen as play, with its actants in place and time expressing different thematic relations between the actants.<sup>52</sup> This analysis consists mainly of a study of the philosophy of concepts of love in tango discourses. Following the hypothesis of communication in the silent Finnish culture,<sup>53</sup> the metaphors and paraphrases for 'love' and 'loving' are the essential part of the study. The hypothesis of the present study is the statement by Åhlén that when the tango is both a musical and a verbal form of communication between people for whom the verbal communication of such things as emotions raises problems, lyrics are of crucial importance.<sup>54</sup> They function as communication, discussion, silent dialogues or even proposals. Åhlén refers to Lars Lönnroth's research on various settings in oral poetry, especially in two tango texts by the Swedish author Evert Taube. Lönnroth talks about *the dual setting (den dubbla scenen)*, namely the real and the fictitious setting which enables the tango dancers or listeners an escapist trip to some exotic and foreign milieu free of inhibitions. Actually, these stories function as fairy-tales for adults.<sup>55</sup>

The social anthropologist Julie M. Taylor ends her article *Tango: theme of class and nation* (1976) with a quotation by one of her informants on the

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Daun (1989: passim); Laine-Sveiby (1991: passim); Safer's TV film *Tango Finlandia* (1993).

<sup>50</sup> *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (1973: 94-107).

<sup>51</sup> Greimas (1966: 180-181).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Rimmon-Kenan (1983: passim).

<sup>53</sup> Oksaar (1988: 52-59); Kukkonen (1991 et seq.).

<sup>54</sup> Åhlén (1987: 69).

<sup>55</sup> Lönnroth (1978: passim).



Argentinean tango in Buenos Aires, Pehuajó and Mar del Plata: "I do not like the woman to talk to me while I dance tango. And if she speaks I do not answer. Only when she says to me, 'Omar, I am speaking,' I answer, 'And I, I am dancing.'<sup>56</sup> The tango is a serious thing in Argentina, as it is in Finland in our silent culture,<sup>57</sup> where it became famous particularly for its texts about love and longing. The tango texts and music together function as some kind of substitute for verbal communication between the tango dancer and listener, which is why the Finnish tango dancers do not talk while they dance either. The tango is the silent language of love.<sup>58</sup> In Japanese culture, where the tango is also popular, silent communication is of central importance, especially in the wordless communication, *haragei*, where profound emotion cannot be manifested verbally. In *keigo*, the Japanese language of politeness, silence also has its own meaning.<sup>59</sup> This is an interesting aspect – in Japan the tango is also strong, and the tango lyrics are especially important. Strong feelings and emotions, deep musical experiences or experiences of beauty cannot find exact verbal expression; the language is insufficient to describe emotion or perception. The language of passion is actually a paradox, encompassing the silence of the music and the silent communication of the tango lyrics.

Argentina, the home land of the tango, and Finland are two very different countries from a cultural point of view. The different landscape shapes the people; the Argentinean pampas and the Finnish plains of Ostrobothnia, in Finland-Swedish called "pampas", where the Finnish tango festival in Seinäjoki has taken place every summer since 1985, choosing a new Finnish tango king and tango queen each year. Do the Argentinean and the Finnish tango have anything in common but the name? In the Argentinean tango, the *bandoneón* provides the sorrow and the tragic themes, the *tristeza*, and the right sound. In our Finnish tango the rhythms and sounds are our own, played on an accordion. The Argentinean *tristeza* and the Finnish *melancholy* have proved to be comparable as human universals.

In Argentina the tango is today still strong in arts, literature and music as an expression of *argentinidad*, the most characteristic feature of the Argentinean nation. Ernesto Sábato for instance, has done sociological studies on the tango, and many Argentinean poets write tango lyrics.<sup>60</sup> "To dance a tango is to feel oneself a part of the land, a part of Argentina," as one of Taylor's informants puts it.<sup>61</sup> The tango in Argentina was first a cultural symbol, strengthening the identity of the poor, while in Europe the tango was first purely a middle class dance. According to Åhlén, tango texts became banal in Europe. He shows how the tango acculturated itself in Europe and

<sup>56</sup> Taylor (1976: 290).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Kukkonen (1991a-b; 1992d; 1993a-c).

<sup>58</sup> Åhlén (1987: 69).

<sup>59</sup> Kukkonen (1993a: 58).

<sup>60</sup> Sábato (1965).

<sup>61</sup> Vilarino (1965); Taylor (1976: 289).

how the Rioplatensian tango and the European tango have only very little left in common. Åhlén's study consists of an analysis of the three tangos *El Choclo* (1905), *Adiós muchachos* (1927) and *Uno* (1943) in different cultural adaptations. The change in style is so different that Åhlén talks about two genres of music. In Europe the real Rioplatensian tango was rare, compared for instance with jazz; while jazz was a lifestyle, the tango in Europe was only a dance.<sup>62</sup>

In Finland the German tango replaced first the difficult Argentinean model at the beginning of our century, especially in the 1930s and the 1940s. Finland very soon developed its own melancholic tango however, and in the 1950s and the 1960s the traditional Finnish tango got its special feature, as a result of the war years; i.e. melancholic texts in minor keys, reflecting the sadness and gloominess in the Finnish people as the Finnish music sociologist Pekka Gronow (who was an official opponent of Åhlén's doctoral thesis in 1987) states, quoting the American sociologist Charles Osgood who points out that Finns are an enormously melancholic people who experience negative feelings strong, but positive feelings weakly.<sup>63</sup>

The clear boundaries of the Finnish *semiosphere* are our solitude, our people, our languages, our geopolitical position between the East and the West, our climate, our mentality, which have made the Finns slow, sad and silent,<sup>64</sup> from the viewpoint of other cultures and mentalities. As I see it, the real Finnish tango reflects the personality, mentality and identity of the Finnish people in the same way as folk poetry does.

From the traditional dancing pavilions, the tango in Finland has also gone to the concert stages, for instance, Argentinean *bandoneón* orchestras and the theatre tango performer, Susana Rinaldi, have visited the Ikaalinen festival, and Kuhmo Chamber Music festival has hosted by Argentinean tango orchestras and dancers in summer 1984 and 1993. Whereas the tango in Sweden became dance music, it created its own identity in Finland with specifically Finnish texts based on nature and folk poetry. After the war Finland got basic tangos such as *Liljankukka*, 'The Lily Flower' (1945) and *Hiljainen kylätie*, 'The Quiet Country Road' (1953), both still popular in Finland.<sup>65</sup>

Both the Argentinean tango and the Finnish tango are hard to understand if one does not see them in their right context. Taylor describes the tradition that the tango has its origins in, *el arrabal* ('suburbs') in Río de la Plata, to which the immigrants came in 1870. Argentinean tango themes were born from the Argentinean national character, *argentinidad*, which the Argentines describe as "Somos un pueblo gris", 'We are a dull (grey) nation', as Taylor states, adding that many pessimistic features like this are

<sup>62</sup> Åhlén (1987: 11-16); cf. also Jalkanen (1989: passim).

<sup>63</sup> Gronow & Bruun (1968: 116).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Tarasti (1990: 198); Broms (1984: 156-175). Cf. also Broms (1994: passim).

<sup>65</sup> *Tunnetuinmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 6-7, 13.

strengthened in the real *el hombre tanguero*, when it becomes bitterness.<sup>66</sup> The sociologist Ernesto Sábato says that "that discontent, that ill humour, that vague bitterness, that undefined and latent anger against everything and against everyone which is almost the quintessence of the average Argentine."<sup>67</sup> The man in the Argentinean tango has to understand the deepest philosophy of life, love and suffering. The culturally bound nominal *tristeza* ('sorrow', 'depression', 'melancholy') in the Argentinean tango texts, can only be understood by putting the tango in the appropriate context and tradition of *argentinidad*. The fundamental Argentinean character is an unhappy and a melancholic person "*el mufarse*" in *lunfardo* slang. Taylor mentions the English word *to mope* 'to be depressed', which expresses not only hate and unhappiness, but also the fact that one enjoys this feeling. "It is the entire complex of actions and emotions involved sitting alone at a table with a drink, sipping it slowly while contemplating the totality of one's misfortunes and underlying basic bad luck, and *enjoying oneself*." In the world of the tango love and suffering are inseparable entities.<sup>68</sup>

A parallel with the Finnish culture and character can be drawn. Finnish melancholy has become almost a concept; the mythical Finnish mentality consists, for instance, of such attributes as silence and slowness, introversion and sadness.<sup>69</sup> Every culture has culture-bound words which are difficult to explain briefly; many specific cultural features in the experience of the relation with nature exist, for instance, in the Finnish words *tosikko* ('a person without humour'), *ruska* ('autumn colours in Lapland'), *halla* ('coldness'), *kuura* ('frost'), *kaamos* ('the sunless period in winter') *sisu* ('inner substance', 'guts', 'will power', 'strength'), and *sauna* (a whole philosophy in the Finnish culture) or *kaiho*, *kaipuu* which are longing, but also something else, something typical of *Finnishness*. My view is that the *Finnishness* also reflects the other extreme of joy and delight, however seldom discussed. In Finnish longing and yearning man's relation to nature is strong, a major concern of the traditional Finnish tango text. The state of joy and delight is realised in nature or in the nostalgic memories of the past in relation to the present and the future. The Finnish mentality is perhaps best described by Huldén. He has described the typical Finnish tangos, waltzes and *humppas* which he has translated into Swedish and through them our Finnish mentality; Finns use their own dance steps, even for imported dances like the tango. Huldén compares the feelings of joy and sorrow in tangos, waltzes and *humppas* with the feelings expressed in the Finnish folk tradition (cf. The *Kalevala*, The *Kanteletar*).<sup>70</sup> Our sad and slow attitude to life has partly come from the East. The imported tango has been acculturated as a slow variant of the Argentinean or the German tango with influences from the Russian

<sup>66</sup> Taylor (1976: 276-281).

<sup>67</sup> Sábato (1965: 16).

<sup>68</sup> Taylor (1976: 278); Barreiro (1985: 68-69).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Daun's (1989) research on the Swedish people.

<sup>70</sup> Huldén (1980; 1981).

romances, but in spite of such influences the Finnish tango has a strong national originality.

The Finnish tango has almost become a national dance, danced with its own steps, rhythms and dynamics. The Finnish tango has, by tradition, been a male culture, performed by men as it was in Argentina, until the tango performer Susana Rinaldi broke the tradition as the Finnish artist Arja Saijonmaa did, forcing her way into the sanct male Finnish tango "in i den heliga manliga finska tangokulturen"<sup>71</sup> as she said when she sang the tango *Kotkan ruusu* ([1941] 1969, 1980), 'The Rose of Kotka' (Kotka being a harbour town in eastern Finland) about a girl waiting in Kotka harbour for a sailor, and her love, or when she sang the archetype of the Finnish tango, *Satunmaa* (1955), 'The Happy Land,' both in the Finnish original, and in Swedish.<sup>72</sup>

As mentioned earlier another central theme of the Argentinean tango texts besides *tristeza* is woman. Taylor mentions on the one hand *la madre*, the mother, who represents stable values in life, and on the other hand, *la milongita*, a dancing girl, the girl who in the hope of a better future becomes a prostitute.<sup>73</sup> In the Finnish tango this juxtaposition *la madre-la milonguita* does not exist. The Argentinean tango stresses the dream of social mobility, the dream of a better life, out from the poverty in *el arrabals*, and the *barrio* life in the suburbs of Buenos Aires. The tango could mean either a new life, or destruction. The Argentinean tango is an urban phenomenon. The Finnish tango began its history in the 1910s and 1920s as an urban tango, representing a new wave, *la vie moderne*, from the big world, and Europe, but it became rural especially since 1950s and a phenomenon of the countryside with its themes of nature combined with love and longing. Since the 1980s the Seinäjoki Tango Festival has been an urban popular mass phenomenon.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. p. 31 and note 30 above. Saijonmaa (1981).

<sup>72</sup> Swedish translation by Huldén (1980; 1981).

<sup>73</sup> Taylor (1976: 278-279).

## VI The spirit and the themes of the Finnish tango lyrics 1915–1939

It is crucial to the present work that the tango is seen as a cultural phenomenon which has developed in a specific genre in its own environment, its own culture. The interesting point is the divergent acculturation processes in the countries where the tango has established itself. In Finland it became a genre of its own, very different from the original Argentinean tango. The Finnish tango was influenced mostly by either the German march tune, the Russian and Eastern tangos or Russian romances, or the American jazz tradition, and the softer tango beguine style. A specific feature of the Finnish tango is that it lives on its lyrics, continuing the tradition of folk poetry in Finnish, so different from the urban Argentinean tango. The original Argentinean tango only had some influence on the Finnish tango in the 1930s and 1940s, while Argentinean tango rhythms are being increasingly adapted in the modern Finnish tango.<sup>1</sup>

The tango began its history in Finland in 1913, when a Danish couple introduced it at the Hotel Börs in Helsinki. The first Finnish tango with Finnish lyrics is a parody of the tango enthusiasm of that time; the tango had been accepted in Paris about 1913, which caused a tango boom in Europe. The Finnish tango *Tanko (Tango-) laulu* 'Tango Song' (*tanko* 'pole'),<sup>2</sup> was performed by Iivari Kainulainen in 1915. The Finnish tango is actually a paradox since it deals with the extremes of both the seriously nostalgic and melancholic and the parodic and comic. The latter appears in the first Finnish tango. A genre of comic song, called *kupletti* in Finnish, and which used parody and humour in telling stories about contemporary life flourished at this time; these songs are in a sense social history, were performed in variety and in revues, and were a different genre from the romantic songs or folk songs.<sup>3</sup> The parodic tango genre appeared in the 1940s and flourished in the 1950s and 1960s, when the Finnish tango was at its height.<sup>4</sup> In the *Tankolaulu* Iivari Kainulainen parodies the urban life of Paris and the rural life of Finland through ten verses. I quote a few lines.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the 1940s one of the Finnish composer George de Godzinsky's tangos was entitled *Tristezza, tango argentino* (1946), cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 93).

<sup>2</sup> In spoken Finnish *ng* can be pronounced as *nk*, especially by Finns who speak a dialect. In the text the word *tanko* allows some word-play.

<sup>3</sup> Jauhainen (1985: Introduction).

<sup>4</sup> For instance, Reino Helismaa's *Parodiatango* (1949) 'The Parody Tango', Veikko Lavi's *Hunajainen tango* (1952), Erik Lindström and Martti Inananen's *Elsa, kohtalon lapsi* 'Elsa, the Child of Destiny', *Esteri, tyttö sadepisarain* 'Esther, the Girl of Rain Drops', and Kari Kuuva's *Tango Pelargonia* in the 1960s, the most played song in Finland in 1965, cf. Nyman (1989: 13).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 110, 128). The lyrics are from a copy of the record Gramophone A. L. 234/78-5934, Gramophone Library, Oy Yleisradio Ab, Finnish Broadcasting Company. I am grateful to Pekka Gronow who has provided me with copies.

## Tanko (Tango-) laulu

Rakkaat sanankuulijani elkää pahaks' panko,  
jos mä laulan laulun teille nimeltänsä tanko.  
Ja kun se kerran Ranskassa muodissa on,  
kuinka silloin Suomi olis' tankoton?

Pariisissa kaikki muodit maahan luodaan.  
Sieltä sitten hissunkissun Suomchenkin tuodaan.  
Kaikki mikä Ranskassa muodissa on,  
kuinka silloin Suomi olis' muoditon?

[...]  
Nyt meilläkin jo raivoopi tämä tankotauti.  
Ja tuskin niitä monta lie, ken tankosta ei nauti.  
Ja kun se kerran Ranskassa raivonnut on,  
kuinka silloin Suomi olis' tauditon?

Nyt jo meillä tankotankin päivällä ja ööllä.  
Kohta sitä opetetaan koulun penkkilöillä.  
Ja kun sitä Ranskassa opetettu on,  
no kuinkas meidän koulu ois' oppimaton?  
[...]

Music and lyrics Iivari Kainulainen (1915)

## 'Tango Song'

'My dear listeners, please don't mention it,  
if I sing a song called *tanko* [tango].  
And when it is the rage in Paris;  
how then could Finland be without a *tanko* [tango]?

In Paris all fashions are created for France.  
From there they get little by little to Finland.  
Everything which is fashion in Paris,  
how then could Finland be without fashion?

[...]  
Now this *tanko* [tango] disease rages here in Finland.  
And there can't be many who don't enjoy *tanko* [tango].  
And when it has raged in France,  
how then could Finland be without this disease?

Now people do the tango here day and night.  
Soon it will be taught at school.  
And if it has been taught in France,  
so, how then would our school be unlearned?  
[...]

If the first tango written in Finland is a long parodic narrative, the first truly Finnish tango *Mä muistan sua* (1930) 'I Remember You'<sup>6</sup> with music and lyrics by E. Karjalainen is only a few lines long, but contains the essential of the nostalgia and sentimental of the Finnish tango of this period; the subject, usually a male, remembers the time he was with his beloved. She left him and gave him only pain and sorrow. Time, memory, love and pain are its characteristics, but this tango lacks the distinctive nature descriptions reflecting the feelings of the Finnish tango.

## Mä muistan sua

Oi mennyt on se aika armain,  
kun luonas suoja oli mulla parhain.  
Sä lähdit pois mun luotain  
ja tuskan tuskan mulle jätit vain.  
Music and lyrics E. Karjalainen (1930)

## 'I Remember You'

'Oh, the time is gone, dear  
when my best shelter was by you.  
You went away from me  
and you left me only the pain, the pain.'

The Finnish tangos from the early 1930s have usually short texts while the instrumental parts are long. My hypothesis is that in these early tangos the texts were less important than in those of the 1950s and 1960s. The few lines of the tango above express the sense of rejected love, emphasised by the repetition of *ja jätit mulle tuskan tuskan vain*, 'and you left me only the pain, the pain.'

Finnish tangos were thus first composed in the 1930s with original Finnish lyrics, mainly presented by the popular Finnish accordion orchestra Dallapé, founded in 1925. In 1926 the steamship *s/s Andania* came to Finland from

<sup>6</sup> Karjalainen (1930), Homocord 4-23118, Gramophone Library, Oy Yleisradio Ab, Finnish Broadcasting Company.



America with a new concept of entertainment and jazz, the new music.<sup>7</sup> Dallapé had jazz, fox-trot, and tangos in its repertoire, a minority of tangos in the 1930s and the 1940s, but in its song booklet number 15 in 1932 the first Finnish tango: *Unelma-tango, Drömm-tango* (1932) 'The Dream Tango' composed by Arvo Koskimaa (1912–1972) with lyrics by Erkki Ranta,<sup>8</sup> appears in nine lines of both Finnish and Swedish lyrics on a very escapist love theme:

## Unelma-Tango

Onnestain mä unelmoin,  
 armaani autuutta soin,  
 tummien silmien taa  
 viittoopi kultainen maa.  
 Toivottein kultainen tie  
 armaani luokse mun vie.  
 Viel' rakkaiden haaveiden,  
 unelmain ruusuisten  
 täytyä nähdä mä saan.  
 Music Arvo Koskimaa  
 Lyrics Erkki Ranta (1932)

## The Dream-Tango

I dream about my happiness,  
 I am filled with the bliss of my love;  
 dark eyes  
 tell me about a golden land.  
 The golden road of hopes  
 leads to my beloved.  
 Again I will see  
 the lovely dreams  
 fulfilled!

This shows how sentimental and romantic the tango scene was in the 1930s. These are fairy-tales for adults enabling the listeners to escape to the land of dreams for a while.

Among the first Finnish tangos is *Salme* (1932), a girl's name, with Finnish and Swedish lyrics, composed by Esko Ahokas with lyrics by Ulle Manninen. Foreign names and places provide an exotic setting as in *Donna Bella* (1932), music by Georg Malmstén, lyrics by R. R. Ryyänen, and *Monte-Carlo* (1932), music by V. Tuominen, lyrics by H. Puttonen. Finnish tango texts in the 1930s are concerned with simple and trifling; romantic love and escapist themes.<sup>9</sup>

The following overview aims to show the central themes in the traditional Finnish tango culture. The Helsinki University Library National Collections consisting of notes, songbooks and booklets published in Finland includes 865 original Finnish tangos mainly from the period 1915–1993.<sup>10</sup> They can be classified into the following main categories and themes.

<sup>7</sup> Jalkanen (1989: passim). In the song booklet *Uusia tanssisävelmiä 5* (1938: 1–2) the editor-in-chief Tauno Marttinen writes about 'the importance of domestic music in the Kalevala spirit' and warns against 'dangerous jazz music with its wild rhythms' with degenerate foreign elements; he does not comment on the new music and dancing the tango!

<sup>8</sup> *Dallapé 15* (1932: 19). *Helsinki University Library Collections*. The first booklet was published 1928, number 68 in 1962.

<sup>9</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 224).

<sup>10</sup> This is a deposit collection and thus representative of popular music lyrics in Finland, material which not thoroughly investigated before.

## 1. LOVE, NOSTALGIA AND LONGING IN THE MIRROR OF PLACE AND TIME

- The spirit of place: Finnish nature and landscape, Pohjola 'The North', Lapland, the rural milieu, home.
- Nature as metaphor for nostalgia: longing, yearning, memory, sadness, grief, sorrow, anxiety.
- Nature without connotations for human love.
- Silence, peace and harmony in nature.
- Nature or birds as communicators.
- Cosmic themes.
- Urban themes (rare).
- The spirit of time: time following the different seasons: spring and summer reflecting joy and happiness, autumn and winter coldness, sorrow and death.
- War (seldom; only in the 1940s).
- Death or nature and its processes as metaphors for death (death is seldom mentioned explicitly).
- Longing for the Happy Land.

Longing and yearning in the tango lyrics can be a profound *Sehnsucht* for the realm of Death, Tuonela and Manala, as described in Finnish folk poetry. The word death (*kuolema, kuolo*) however is almost taboo, the yearning being expressed through various comparisons and symbols, a longing for the home of heaven, or for a better place than this earth.

## 2. LOVE

- The Finnish man sings to a Finnish woman (the beloved) or mother (a rare theme).
- The Finnish man sings to a woman representing other nationalities or ethnic groups.
- The Finnish woman sings to a man (unambiguous examples are rare owing to the lack of grammatical gender in Finnish).
- Pure love, innocence (a girl, a woman, mother).
- The family: mother, father, child (seldom).
- Nostalgia and melancholy addressed to a person: longing, loneliness, solitude, rejection, oblivion (a distinctive theme in almost every Finnish tango).
- Values in life (richness–poverty, love–money).
- Destiny, fate, providence (*helper* or *opponent*).
- Dream, delusion, or illusion.
- Futility (man's efforts and struggles).
- Joy or/and sorrow.
- Attributes of love and longing (nature, the human body, the tango itself).
- Humour and parody.
- Pragmatic and communicative aspects (tangos with dialogue or narration).
- Religious aspects (rare themes).
- Destruction and alcohol (rare themes).

Nostalgia is typical of Finnish tango lyrics using nature descriptions and metaphors for man's mental states. Melancholy or depression appears especially in

those tangos where the subject reflects on his loneliness, homelessness, orphanhood or rejection in love.

For instance, the tango *Valkovuokot* (1950) 'Wood Anemones',<sup>11</sup> composed by Kaarlo Valkama with lyrics by Usko Kemppi, talks about these white and innocent flowers in spring which can be interpreted as symbolising Finland after the difficult war years. As in folk poetry the Finnish tango uses birds, the trees, and the juxtaposition of lightness–darkness: the moon, the sun, the stars, the sky, day and night. For instance, the well-known R. R. Ryytänen (1891–1963),<sup>12</sup> had roots going back to the *runo* singers, as did Toivo Kärki (1915–1992), who composed the most Finnish tangos, especially from the 1950s on. Even though the tango is a male genre, the first Finnish tango lyrics were mostly written by female writers such as Kerttu Mustonen, and Dagmar Parmas who also used the male pseudonym Ari Saarni.

The relation to one's homeland as a country and environment has been strong in Finnish national mythology, the songs and poems in the *Kalevala* (1835) and the *Kanteletar* (1840–1841). Other examples of this are Runeberg's pictures of the landscape, the *Finnishness* built up from the agrarian and rural culture and the culture and lifestyle of Karelia (*Karelianism*) at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>13</sup> According to Daun the same affection for nature is found in the Swedish culture.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. EROS, SENTIMENTAL AND TRIVIAL THEMES

- More common in international tangos in Finnish translations or with Finnish texts than in original Finnish tango lyrics, but some Finnish original texts are about Eros, passion, and jealousy.
- Melodrama.
- Illusion or dream: sentimental, escapist, trivial and nostalgic aspects generate triviality.
- A special theme or word makes the tango banal.
- Romantic love, marriage and the unrealistic existence of continuous happiness incorporating exoticism and escapism.
- Everyday life; happiness–routine.
- Fairy-tales for adults with words such as king, queen, prince, princess, fairyland, wonderland, castle towers and pillars.
- The amount of information is too great, creating a confusion.
- Humorous and parodic narrative.

<sup>11</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 40–41, Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992); cf. another tango *Valkovuokkoja* Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 379), and B. Martin's waltz *Valkovuokot* (1931) (op. cit.: 173).

<sup>12</sup> v. Bagh & Hakasalo (1986: 103).

<sup>13</sup> Anttonen (1993: 111); Daun (1989: 182–185); Kukkonen (1986: 77–100).

<sup>14</sup> Daun (1989: 182–185).

The lyrics of these tangos present sentimental and romantic happiness with superficial comparisons and clichéd symbols. The lyrics offer daydreams and romance in another setting.

#### 4. ALLUSIONS TO EARLIER TEXTS

- Intertextual aspects: tango lyrics are in a dialogue with earlier tango texts.
- The carnivalistic tango, parodies or humorous aspects of the traditional Finnish tango; the opposition of young-old, lyrics or allusions to international tango texts.

My interpretations of these tangos are grounded in the concepts of intertextuality, dialogue and carnivalism.<sup>15</sup>

#### 5. ETHNIC, CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, AND SOCIAL THEMES

- Exile, orphan hood, homelessness, loneliness, alienation (1930s, 1940s).
- Global themes (1960s).
- Mixed Argentinean and Finnish tango themes (1980s and 1990s).
- The structural change in society, urban change, after the war years (since the 1950s).
- Social, historical or cultural themes (since the 1950s).
- Finnish tangos composed to the lyrics of Finnish poetry (since the 1970s).
- Prostitution (rarely; in [1941] 1969)
- Ethnic groups: Slavic, Russian themes, violins, balalaikas, *puszta*, steppes, Cossacks, gypsy romanticism, Spanish themes, pampas, gauchos, *señoritas*.
- Ethnic or cultural attributes.
- Exotic places.
- Other places.
- The Finnish tango is traditionally a male culture, but does not have the macho tradition of the Argentinean tango.
- War is mentioned seldom, but metaphors can allude to it.
- Narrative (male/female stories: seamen stories telling about exotic adventures, women reflect on everyday life situations with humour, parodies).
- Cosmic and celestial aspects.
- Myths and legends.
- Fairy tales for adults.
- Vagabond life.

In what follows my aim is to discuss some of the recurrent themes in Finnish tango lyrics history in three phases: (1) the first period is the early history of the Finnish tango genre during the period 1915–1939, (2) the second period is the war time, the 1940s, (3) the third period is the 1950s and 1960s, the golden era of the Finnish tango, and (4) the most recent period, the 1970s to the 1990s.

<sup>15</sup> Bahtin ([1965] 1991; Bahtin 1988; Bakhtin [1981] 1988).

*I Love and longing*

The themes of the Finnish tango from the 1930s can be illuminated by Walter Rae [Valto Tynnilä, 1904–1940] and Tatu Pekkarinen's (1892–1951) tango *Pieni sydän* (1939) 'Little Heart',<sup>16</sup> in which a state of the human heart is described. *Pieni sydän* (1939) 'Little Heart' is a brief prototypical description of the contraries joy–sorrow, good–evil in the human heart. It was war-time and this tango acquired a nickname: *surujen summa* 'the sum of sorrows'. Its modality of being (*être*) shows the human heart as a state where all the human feelings and passions are found. More usual is that the text has a subject who describes his state:

## Pieni sydän

Niin pieni ihmissydän on,  
niin avara ja pohjaton.  
Se kätkee suuret unelmat  
ja vihan, lemmen maailmat.  
Riemujen rikkaus,  
ja surujen summa,  
onnekas rakkaus,  
ja tuskakin tumma.  
Syömmehen pienehen mahtua voi,  
Onnea iloa. oi.  
Aatosta jaloa,  
ja alhaista mieltä,  
tunteiden paloa,  
ja kylmyyttä sieltä  
syömmestä pienestä löytyä voi,  
kaiken mi kohtalo toi.  
Walter Rae [Valto Tynnilä]  
Tatu Pekkarinen

## 'Little Heart'

'So little is the human heart,  
so wide and bottomless.  
It hides great dreams  
and the worlds of hate and love.  
The richness of joys,  
and the sum of sorrows,  
a happy love,  
and also the darkest grief.  
The little heart can have room for  
Happiness, joy, oh.  
The most noble thoughts,  
and the lowest mind,  
the passion of feelings,  
and coldness there  
in the little heart can be found,  
everything that destiny gave.'  
Walter Rae [Valto Tynnilä]  
(1939)

Destiny is the main actor in the Finnish tango; it is either a *helper*, or an *opponent*. The human heart has all the qualities and events which destiny gives. The disappointments in life and sorrows are a rule, which is the message of the following tango. When the subject in *Lasihelmiä* ([1938] 1939) 'Pearls of Glass',<sup>17</sup> thinks he has found a real pearl, it turns out to be false, a pearl of glass only:

## Lasihelmiä

Mä löysin helmen hohtavan;  
sen säilytin kuin aarteen kalleimman,  
mutt' vihdoin viimein  
huomata mä sain,  
se oli helmi,  
mutt' lasihelmi vain.

## 'Pearls of Glass'

'I found a shining pearl;  
I kept it like a precious treasure,  
but then at last  
I noticed,  
it was a pearl,  
but just a pearl of glass.

<sup>16</sup> *Dallapé* 46 (1939: 4-5), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot* pp. 16-17 *Kultainen tangokirja* 1 (1994: 108-109); Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 261).

<sup>17</sup> *Dallapé* 45 (1939: 10-11), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 254).

Kun sinut tyttö kohtasin,  
niin aattelin, oot helmi puhtahin,  
mutt' katkerasti  
huomata mä sain,  
sä olit helmi,  
mutt' lasihelmi vain.  
Music Lalli = Lauri Lindstedt  
Lyrics M. Maja ([1938] 1939)

When I met you, girl,  
I thought, you're the purest pearl,  
but very bitterly,  
I noticed,  
you were a pearl,  
but just a pearl of glass.'

The Finnish tango texts reflect the idea of longing for pure and real love, but the reality turns out to be something else. In this tango the subject has seen that he represents the modality of knowing (*savoir*); he has realised that his beloved was false. The message of this tango is that beauty can be false; a beautiful pearl turns out to be false, and this has provided the major concern of the Finnish tango since the 1930s, i.e. the subject directing his love and longing to a "domestic" girl or a woman; she is good, kind, lovely or a pretty Finnish girl called *Salme* (1932), *Aila* (1937), *Aira* (1935), *Hellevi* ([1937] 1938), or *lines* (1939).<sup>18</sup> Finnish tango language typically contains fervent sighs and longing (e.g. *Oh!*, *oo!*) and archaisms; the expression of emotions required a different register in the 1930s compared with today.<sup>19</sup>

The "international" aspects concern names such as *Donna Bella* (1932), *La Libella* (1936), *Meksikon tyttö* ([1937] 1938) 'The Girl in Mexico',<sup>20</sup> words like *sombrero*, *zarape*, *Chiquita*, *señorita*. Further exoticism and escapism is supplied by using foreign names such as *Anielka* ([1938] 1939), or Aatos Palin and Aarne Salonen's popular tango *Amazonlaakson señorita* (1933) 'The Señorita of the Amazon Valley',<sup>21</sup> and many others. Domestic settings use heaven and the stars, while the international ones talk about *señoritas*, chestnuts, or fire in her eyes in order to emphasise the effusiveness. Places such as India in *Rajahin poika* (1933) 'The Son of Rajah' is about Allah's wish concerning the subject, who is the son of Rajah, and the white maiden who cannot possess each other. Sometimes God is just mentioned as a *helper* who helps the subject to meet his beloved, but otherwise religious themes do not exist. The international themes in tangos composed by Finns suggest unrealistic and escapist elements by using the names of foreign women and places as in *Monte-Carlo* (1932), suggesting gambling; happiness is like gambling.<sup>22</sup> The composer Usko Hurmerinta wrote many tangos with exotic themes in the 1930s: *Havannan hurmiossa* ([1932] 1933) 'In the Ecstasy of Havana', *Etelän yö ja tango* (1933) 'The Southern Night and Tango', *Shanghain teehuoneessa* ([1933] 1938) 'In the Tea Room in Shanghai', *Rio de Janeiron Rita* ([1934] 1937). 'Rita from Rio de Janeiro'. The Hispanic themes as in Georg Malmstén and R. R. Ryyänen's *Barcelonan ruusu* ([1933] 1934) 'The Rose of Barcelona' are escapist. Names such as Matti Jurva's *Alcazar-tango* (1934), or *Poseidon ruusut* (1934) 'The

<sup>18</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 247, 250).

<sup>19</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections.

<sup>20</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 42).

<sup>21</sup> *Viimeisiä levysäveleitä* 1 (1933: 16–17); Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 304).

<sup>22</sup> *Orkesteri Amarillo* 6 (1932: 8–9); Helsinki University Library Collections



Roses of Poseidon' invoke faraway places, with personal names like *Donna Isabella*, and the rare use of the male name *Pablo* in the text.<sup>23</sup> The concept of love is unrealistic and romantic.

The idea of marriage does not exist in the sense that the subject is in a state of continuous happiness. In the tango *Hääkellot* ([1936] 1937) 'Wedding Bells',<sup>24</sup> music by Alvar Kosonen with lyrics by M. Maja, the bell chimes for the wedding but not for the subject. This unhappiness has to exist since romantic love songs require longing to realise the idea of love; man longs for what he does not have (cf. Plato *The Symposium*). The tango *Anneli*, *Anneli*, *Anneli* (1965) in which the subject recalls his beloved from childhood is an exception, being about the wedding.

In the Finnish tango texts of the 1930s some rare themes occur. Whereas the mother is central in Argentinean tango texts, she seldom appears in Finnish tango lyrics. In M. Maja and M. Jäppilä's tango *Onnen lapsi, Ett lyckobarn* (1933) 'A Lucky Child',<sup>25</sup> however, the subject says *oi harmaa hapsi sa Äiti mun*, 'oh grey-haired Mother of mine'. Mother gave him life so that it would be beautiful. He blesses his mother who has suffered and sacrificed herself, believed and dared so much. *Sun toivees' täytyi, nyt tiedän sen / siunaten sua ain' muistelen*, 'Your hope was fulfilled, I know it now / I always remember you with blessing', remembers the dead mother and the goodness she represents in life.

The other unusual feature in Finnish tango lyrics is the lullaby, first found in *Nuku lapsonen* (1939) 'Sleep My Little Child'.<sup>26</sup>

## Nuku lapsonen

Nyt hyvää yötä  
 nuku armahin lapsonen.  
 Unhoita pois jo  
 huolesi kaikk' unehen.  
 Nyt hyvää yötä  
 uinu lapsonen pienoinen  
 sä unten maille  
 käy seuras' enkelien.  
 Siä siellä seuran leikkiystäväs' jäät  
 ja paljon uutta, outoakin näät.  
 Nyt hyvää yötä  
 nuku armahin lapsonen,  
 sä unten maille käy  
 seuras' enkelien.

Music and lyrics by M. Maja [Martti Jäppilä] (1939)

## 'Sleep My Little Child'

'Now good night,  
 sleep my dear little child.  
 Forget  
 all your problems in your dream.  
 Now good night,  
 sleep little child, my little one,  
 go to the land of dreams  
 together with the angels.  
 There you will be among your playmates  
 and you will see many new and even strange things.  
 Now good night,  
 sleep dear little child,  
 go to the land of dreams  
 together with the angels.'

In the Finnish folk poetry collections the lullabies are represented, for instance, in *The Kanteletar*.<sup>27</sup> According to the Kalevala tradition the mother sang for her

<sup>23</sup> Hurmerinta (1932-1935); *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 33, 42, 227, 234, 345).

<sup>24</sup> *Dallapé* 37 (1937: 6-7); *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 243).

<sup>25</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 176).

<sup>26</sup> *Dallapé* 46 (1939: 5); *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>27</sup> *The Kanteletar* (1840-1841), for instance in the songs II:172, II:173, II:174, II:175, II:176, II:178.

child and wished it to Tuonela, the realm of Death, which was a better place for a child than the world.<sup>28</sup> Death is not usually mentioned directly in the Finnish tango lyrics of the 1930s but Valto Tynnälä's *Ruhtinaan viulu* (1937) 'The Prince's Violin'<sup>29</sup> with lyrics by Tatu Pekkarinen and the melodramatic tango *Tappavat suudelmat* 'Killing Kisses' ([1935] 1936) by A. Koski [Arvo Koskimaa] and Ari Saarni [Dagmar Parmas] belong among the few during this period in which death is clearly mentioned.<sup>30</sup> During the 1930s and 1940s death was a taboo reality avoided in the texts. In *Ruhtinaan viulu* a person is lying on his death bed holding the violin which he adores, which he had got from a prince. The violin is the sign of pain and freedom (cf. gypsy themes); the sounds of a violin can exactly imitate human anguish and pain. In *En voi sua unhoittaa* (1933) 'I Cannot Forget You'<sup>31</sup> the subject speaks of *sen raskaan kaipuun, mi raataa sieluain* 'the heavy longing, which tears my soul to pieces'. The verb *raataa* has a very strong sense here and his beloved will always be in his mind: *vaikk' joutuisinkin pian tuonelaan*, 'even though I soon get to Tuonela, Death's realm'.

## 2 Love and nostalgia – 'a longing to return'

The dual character of the Finnish tango shows in both exotic themes and loneliness, homelessness, orphanhood, or longing for one's childhood and the old country road as in A. Koskimaa and P. Sammalisto's tango *Mä hänet muistan ain* (1933), 'I Always Remember Her'<sup>32</sup> in which exile also recurs. This last had already appeared in Finnish folk poetry, for instance in *Kanteletar* where people long for their homeland or local places.<sup>33</sup> The opposition of local place–foreign place is clear in this tango.

Mä hänet muistan ain

En unhoittaa mä saata,  
tuot aikaa lapsuuden.  
En konsa kotimaata,  
mä sinne kaipaillen.  
Ain muistan ajan siellä,  
kuin eilen ollut ois,  
oi jospa kylätiellä,  
taas olla vois.  
Music Arvo Koskimaa  
Lyrics P. Sammalisto (1933)

'I Always Remember Her'

'I can never forget,  
that time of childhood.  
Not my homeland,  
I long for it.  
Always I remember the time there,  
as if it were yesterday,  
oh if I could be  
on the country road again.'

<sup>28</sup> Timonen (1994: 343–345).

<sup>29</sup> *Viimeisiä Levysäveleitä* 4 (1937: 4–5), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 247).

<sup>30</sup> *Viimeisiä Levysäveleitä* 30 (1936: 4–5); *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 382).

<sup>31</sup> *Tanssisäveluutuuksia* 10 (1933: 6–7), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>32</sup> *Orkesteri Amarillon säveluutuuksia* N:o 7 (1933: 6–7), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>33</sup> *The Kanteletar* (1840–1841: 1:26; 1:61, 1:75).

Alienation pervades several tangos of the 1930s. In *Maanpakolaisen kaipaus* (1934), 'The Longing of the Exile' by Walter Rae and Veikko Virmajoki<sup>34</sup> who wrote many Finnish tangos during this time, is a pathetic, exalted and nostalgic text. It is painful to remember one's lost country. The subject longs for his native country:

## Maanpakolaisen kaipaus

Oi maa, missä kerran minä synnyin,  
olet ainaaksi pois, olet muisto vain,  
sinä isien maa.  
Oi pois ovat kukkivaiset kunnaat,  
poissa koti armas on, poissa ystävät,  
mitä sydän kaihoaa. –  
Sinne jäi päivät kultaiset,  
sinne jäi nuoruutein,  
nurmetkin varmaan itkee nyt  
kentillä lapsuutein. –  
Oi maa, missä kerran minä synnyin,  
ilo kaikki multa jäi,  
kun sa kauas jäit,  
minun isieni maa.  
Music Walter Rae  
Lyrics Veikko Virmajoki (1934)

## 'The Longing of the Exile'

'Oh, land, where I was once born,  
you are gone forever, you are only a memory,  
you native country [my fathers' land].  
Oh, gone are the blooming hills,  
gone is my dear home, gone are my friends,  
which my heart longs for. –  
The golden days were left there,  
my youth was left there,  
and the grasses will now surely cry  
in the fields of childhood. –  
Oh, land, where once I was born,  
all joy is gone,  
when you were left far behind,  
my native country [my fathers' land].'

Nostalgia is centred on the subject either longing for a real place, or more normally an abstraction. The object of the longing and yearning is the land of memories, the Land of Nostalgia. In life one has to go through many deaths in memories; the death of one's childhood, youth, places and people which one has loved, nature which is the basic object of longing. Death is not only the last and irrevocable death, the end of man's existence on earth, but also the many deaths which are a part of life, its essential resignation. This theme of home, local places, the village is especially strong in the Finnish folk poetry, for instance, in the *Kanteletar*,<sup>35</sup> and distinguishes the tango in the 1940s and 1950s (e.g. *Kotiseutuni* (1952), 'My Home Region', *Hiljainen kylätie* (1955), 'The Quiet Country Road'). Being an orphan is a recurrent motif in Finnish folk poetry. The tango *Iloton polku* (1935), 'The Path without Delight',<sup>36</sup> music by Valto Tynnälä [Walter Rae] and lyrics by A. Sihvola catches this up:

## Iloton polku

Sun ohdakkeinen tiesi  
ei kuki yhtään onnen kukkaa,  
outo sulle kotiliesi, –  
oi sua pientä orporukkaa.  
On puhe vierahan työkeää,  
käsi kylmä, – katsekin peljättää.  
Ei säälä sua kenkään,  
niin harvoin sulle ilo suodaan,

## 'The Path without Delight'

'Your road is filled with thistles  
not a single flower blooms there,  
home is not familiar to you, –  
oh you little poor orphan.  
The words of a stranger are harsh,  
the hand is cold, the glance is frightening.  
Nobody feels pity for you,  
so seldom is delight afforded to you,

<sup>34</sup> *Viimeisiä Levysäveleitä* 14 (1934: 4-5); *Helsinki University Library Collections*; cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 308) gives E. Kujala as the composer's name.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *The Kanteletar* (1840–1841: 1:32, 1:33, 1:34, 1:35, 1:36, 1:38).

<sup>36</sup> *Viimeisiä Levysäveleitä* 22 (1936: 9); *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

ohut leipäpala sentään  
joskus sun kätehesi tuodaan.  
Sä kuljet polkujas  
ja elät muistoissas,  
vain taivaan tähdet seuranas.

Sua armahiset muistot  
vie usein kotitanhuoille,  
äitikulta, – isä armas –  
ja retket metsihin ja soille ...  
Ne kaikki aatoksiin kangastaa,  
ne kaihonkyyneleet silmiin saa.  
Kun onni oli parhain,  
niin tuli turma, tehden työtään,  
meni tummaan tuonen tarhaan,  
pois vieden isän, äidin myötään.  
Niin yksin maailmaan  
jäi raukka kulkemaan, –  
raskahat murheet seuranaan ...  
Music Valto Tynnälä  
Lyrics A. Sihvola (1935)

a small piece of bread is however  
sometimes put into your hand.  
You walk along your paths  
and live in memories,  
only the stars in the sky accompany you.

Precious memories will  
often take you to your home region,  
dear mother, dear father –  
and the trips into the forests and marshes ...  
They all come into your memories,  
they bring the tears of longing into your eyes.  
When happiness was as its best,  
death came, doing its work,  
went to the dark garden of Death,  
taking away father, and mother.  
So the poor one was left to walk  
alone in the world –  
with heavy sorrows as his companion.'

As the title suggests life is loneliness and sorrow. In this text there are hints about society, i.e. the alienation of man in changing circumstances when mother and father are dead. Death appears – *meni tumman tuonen tarhaan*, 'went to the dark garden of Death' – the alliteration recalling folk poetry. In *Unohtumaton koti* (1939), 'Unforgettable Home', music by Arvo Koskimaa, lyrics by Pertti Paakkanen,<sup>37</sup> the subject talks about his longing for his childhood home, repeating the verb *jäi*, 'left behind', several times.

## Unohtumaton koti

Jäi lapsuusvuodet,  
jäi hetket nuoruuden.  
Jäi veljet siskot  
mä heitä muistan.  
Jos joutuis aika  
kotiin kun saisin  
palata luokse lapsuusmuistojen.  
Jäi äiti armas isä huolinen.

Unhoita konsaan mä heitä en.  
Oi jospa kerran  
mä heidät kohdata saan,  
jäis kaikki huoleni unholaan.  
Music Arvo Koskimaa  
Lyrics Pertti Paakkanen (1939)

## 'Unforgettable Home'

'Childhood years were left behind,  
the moments of youth were left behind.  
Brothers and sisters were left behind;  
I remember them.  
If only the time would come  
when I could return home  
to my childhood memories.  
Mother dear and father were left behind  
with their worries.

I will never forget them.  
Oh, if I  
could just meet them,  
all my worries would be left in oblivion.'

These tango lyrics are melancholic, but follow the spirit of the folk poetry collected by Elias Lönnrot at the beginning of the 19th century. This theme has seldom been pointed out in popular music, but it flows through into tango lyrics. As I have mentioned above, tango lyrics are in a way the folk poetry of today in sung form. Song and music are used in two essential human states, namely, in

<sup>37</sup> Virta, Olavi (1938-1942). *Olavi Virta. Unohtumattomat. Kootut levyt osa 1*. [The Unforgettable. Collected Records I]. CD 450012; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 68).

joy and in sorrow. As Lönnrot says song and music can express our deepest feelings and inner states, our relations to nature and to other people better than our normal verbal language. The nostalgic theme of time and the contraries youth-age, now-then, here-there can be found in almost every tango text, especially, for instance, in *Nuoruus* (1930s) 'Youth', and in Aimo Mustonen's *Vanha soittaja* (1938) 'The Old Violinist'.<sup>38</sup>

### 3 Eros and passion

The erotic theme is unusual in the Finnish tango today, but in the 1930s the tango *Tamara tanssii* ([1933] 1934, 1936), 'Tamara Dances' by Walter Rae and Veikko Virmajoki became a popular tango both in Finland and abroad as is stated in a song booklet, where this tango is reprinted.<sup>39</sup> 'Tamara Dances' represents very clearly the concept of the dual setting; the scene is the steppes and the lyrics tell about a passionate and fascinating girl Tamara, and the free love for one night she symbolises. The lyrics evoke longing for freedom through the gypsy setting: gypsies, the violin, the boy from *puszta*, the wind of the steppe, as the translation shows:

#### Tamara tanssii

Veripunahuulin ja katsein kuumiin  
käy tanssiin öisin aron villi tyttönen.  
Poveansa polttaa kuin hehku viinin,  
kun vie hän kanssaan tutun hevospaimenen.  
Hän pustan poikaa sitä tulisesti lempii,  
veri sydämessä soittaa aron myrskyunelmaa.  
Tamara on kaunis, ja pustan poikaa  
ain silloin oottaa ilot kaikki kevätyön.

Tamara on kaunis kuin pustan ruusu,  
kun tanssiin öisin häntä villi veri vie.  
Moni poika rintaan sai oudon kaipuun,  
mut luokseen turhaan kävi pustan yli tie.  
Vain arotuulin hän veripunahuulin  
salat sydämensä kuiskii, ketä nyt hän rakastaa.  
Mustalaiset soittaa ja pustan poikaa  
ain silloin oottaa ilot kaikki kevätyön.  
Music Walter Rae  
Lyrics Veikko Virmajoki (1933)

#### 'Tamara Dances'

'With lips red like blood and hot glances  
the wild girl of the steppe begins to dance every night  
Her bosom burns like the glow of wine,  
when she dances with a boy from *puszta* she knows.  
She loves passionately that boy of *puszta*,  
the blood in her heart plays the stormy dream of the steppe.  
Tamara is beautiful, and the boy of the steppe –  
all joys of the spring night always await him.

Tamara is beautiful like the rose of *puszta*,  
when her wild blood takes her to dance every night.  
Many boys have a strange longing in their hearts,  
but in vain they made their way to her over the steppe.  
Only in the winds of the steppe with lips red like blood  
she whispers the secrets in her heart of whom she loves.  
The gypsies play and the boy of *puszta* –  
then all joys of the spring night always await him.'

*Tamara tanssii* ([1933] 1934, 1936) represents a seldom encountered Finnish tango theme, namely eroticism and passion, not so apparent in traditional Finnish tango texts as in this. This passionate Russian girl Tamara has 'red lips like blood and hot glances' *veripunahuulin ja katsein kuumiin*. The 'strange longing in the spring night!', the *aro*, *puszta*, *hevospaimen* 'steppe, *puszta*, the

<sup>38</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 252).

<sup>39</sup> *Viimeisiä Levyjäveleitä* 8 (1934: 5-6), *Viimeisiä Levyjäveleitä* 29 (1936: 18-19); Helsinki University Library Collections; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 103).

boy with a horse from *puszta*, are quintessential gypsy myths, playing on Eastern exoticism.

The one night stand is described in Kalle Kauko's *Rio de Janeiron Rita* (1934) 'Rita in Rio de Janeiro', where Donna Rita walks on the street early in the morning: *rauhani, rahani minulta vienyt hän on*, 'my peace, my money she has taken from me', *Yön enkeli* (1934) 'The Angel of the Night' and H. Osmo and J. Kukkonen's tango *Kadun lapsi* (1934) 'The Child of the Street' are about passion and a night of sinful love. The foreign names take the tango listener to another escapist scene.<sup>40</sup>

Another melodramatic tango text is *Tappavat suudelmat* ([1934] 1936) 'Killing Kisses' composed by A. Koski [Arvo Koskimaa] with lyrics by Ari Saarni [Dagmar Parmas].<sup>41</sup> These lyrics were so sensational as to be rewritten in 1960s with the title *Vaaralliset huulet* (1964) 'Dangerous Lips' by Solja Tuuli [Sauvo Puhtila]. Another example is *Valehtelevat huulet* (1936), 'Lying Lips' by Valto Tynnälä [Walter Rae] and Veikko Virmajoki, who also wrote 'Tamara Dances'.<sup>42</sup> 'Killing Kisses' is very fiery, and it is no wonder that the Finnish Radio censored texts using words such as *tappavat*, 'killing', *turmio*, 'ruin', 'destruction', and *kuolo*, 'death'.

## Tappavat suudelmat

Huuliltas sun kun suuteloita juo,  
niin lailla viinin päihdyttävi nuo.  
Sun suuteloissas onni, autuus on,  
vaan veren näin myrkyttäin,  
tuopi turmion.  
Kyllä ma tiedän sen,  
valhe on tää,  
suutelet pettäen,  
se kirveltää.  
Mut näin kun huuliltas  
myrkyn ma juon,  
kuoleman siitä saan;  
ma tiedän tuon.

Valasi kaunihit valhetta on,  
valasi kallihit jää unbohon.  
Usko et itsekkään rakkauteen,  
lemmelläs vain leikit ain,  
petät uudelleen. –  
Mutta sua kuitenkin ma rakastan,  
siks kunnes huuliltas ma kuulla saan:  
Hyvästi, ystäväin, nyt eroo tie. –  
Silloin, oi, tiedä, mun kuolo vie. –  
Music A. Koski [Arvo Koskimaa]  
Lyrics Ari Saarni [Dagmar Parmas] ([1934] 1936)

## 'Killing Kisses'

'From your lips I drink your kisses,  
like the wine they make me drunk.  
In your kisses there is happiness, bliss,  
but they poison the blood so;  
they cause destruction.  
I know it well:  
this is a lie,  
you kiss me with betrayal,  
it smarts.  
But when I thus drink the poison  
from your lips  
I die from it,  
I know it.

Your beautiful oaths are a lie,  
your precious oaths will be forgotten.  
You don't even believe in love yourself,  
you only play with your love,  
you betray again.  
But after all I love you,  
until I hear from your lips:  
farewell, my friend, now we will part.  
Then, oh, you must know, I will die.'

Such lyrics are in a minority, but they show that erotic themes do exist in the Finnish tango lyrics.

<sup>40</sup> *University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 42, 83).

<sup>41</sup> *Viimeisiä Levysäveleitä* 30 (1936: 4–5), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>42</sup> *Viimeisiä Levysäveleitä* 37 (1936: 4–5), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.



#### 4 Freedom and the vagabond theme

Love in the tango lyrics is usually addressed to a woman. In a few lyrics the subject is totally free, representing freedom as a gypsy or using the violin, as the symbol of freedom and love as in *Yksinäinen ratsastaja* (1936), 'The Lonely Rider',<sup>43</sup> music by Valto Tynnilä [Walter Rae] and lyrics by Veikko Virmajoki. The subject represents the modality of being (*être*), being free, and the modality of doing (*faire*), showing his independence and freedom through his lonely riding:

##### Yksinäinen ratsastaja

Pustan poika olen huimapää,  
kuutamoon mua villi ratsu kiidättää;  
enkä kaippaa yhtään ystävää,  
orhi vain jos seurakseni mulle jää.

Ma kiidän minne mieli vie  
ja sydän halajaa.  
En kysy missä kääntyy tie  
ja mihin palajaa;  
enkä kaippaa yhtään ystävää  
ratsu vain kun seurakseni mulle jää.  
Music Valto Tynnilä [Walter Rae]  
Lyrics Veikko Virmajoki (1936)

##### 'The Lonely Rider'

'I am the daredevil of the *puszta*,  
in the moonlight my wild horse will hurry me,  
and I don't long for a friend,  
while my horse is my companion.

I hurry anywhere my mind wants me to go  
and my heart will go.  
I don't ask where the road goes  
or where it returns to;  
and I don't long for a friend  
while my horse is my companion.'

This defiant attitude is not common in the lyrics. This is a powerful image of longing for freedom expressed through the gypsy theme and the violin. Alienation appears in some urban themes, since the Finnish tango is a rural phenomenon. The infrequent urban theme occurs in M. Maja's tango *Miljoona-kaupunki* ([1936] 1937) 'The City with a Million Inhabitants'<sup>44</sup> which contains social comment on the changing human environment.

#### 5 The joy of life

As the traditional Finnish tango took shape from the 1940s to the 1960s, the themes of happiness, joy and delight were seldom heard. In the 1930s some tangos with these notions are found, such as V. Tynnilä and M. Jäppilä's tango *Onnellinen* (1933) 'The Happy One',<sup>45</sup> entitled in Swedish *Lyckan* 'Happiness'. This tango opens with: *On onni rauhaa vaikk' myrsky pauhaa*, juxtaposing happiness and unhappiness 'Happiness is calm even though the storm roars'. In M. Maja's *Iloitse ain* ([1938] 1939) 'Be Delighted Always'<sup>46</sup> we find joy and

<sup>43</sup> *Viimeisiä Levysäveleitä* 29 (1936: 4-5), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>44</sup> *Dallapé* 36 (1937: 14-15), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 240).

<sup>45</sup> *Dallapé* 22 (1933: 22-23), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>46</sup> *Dallapé* 45 (1939: 4-5), no information about who wrote the music or lyrics is available; *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 256).

delight in life, even though happiness is impossible. Such texts give practical advice on how to live, especially in the lyrics of the 1940s.

### 6 The memories and the dream

Memories are central to the nostalgic tango. This existential state occurs in many Finnish tangos from the 1930s and 1940s. The colour *white* and *snow* suggest nostalgic memories or oblivion, for instance, in Georg Malmstén and Siiri Albrecht's tango *Valkea satu* (1940) 'The White Fairy-Tale', in M. Maja's tango *Lumihuualeita* (1937) 'Snowflakes', or in the popular international tango *Fallande snö, Lumihuualeita* by M. Stephien.<sup>47</sup> In Georg Malmstén's tango *Muistelo* ([1938] 1939), 'Memories',<sup>48</sup> the subject reflects on his mental landscape through the actual landscape. The boundaries between reality and dream are indistinct (cf. *fuzzy categories*). Memories are the focal point. The tango begins with *Kas, lehdet putoo kuin kyynleet, mi silmistäni vuotaa*, 'Look, the leaves are falling like tears from my eyes'. The second line is: *Kas, lunta sataa ja muistot kaikki unhon kinos peittää*, 'Look, the snow is falling and all memories are covered by the snow-drifts of oblivion.' This text is a prototypical one; the subject is left alone with his memories; the happiness of summer is followed by the time of oblivion, autumn, and winter. Happiness is as short as summer, and is followed by death. As in nature, autumn is painful, but snow then covers the memories. The best memories are dreams. *Kaikk' kerran katoo, kaikki unhoon joutaa*, the *Thirdness* awareness means that everything in life vanishes, that there is a time for everything and man's life on earth will be obliterated, a reference to the *Bible*.<sup>49</sup> This awareness that *en tahtois olla vailla tätä tuskaakaan*, 'I would not like to be without this pain' means that the pain and anguish of life are means to the awareness of the most essential phenomena of life. This is a *Thirdness* stage where *Firstness* (a spontaneous feeling) and *Secondness* (reason-effect) are understood.<sup>50</sup> It is a profound insight: *Se mulle näytti paremmin kuin riemut / kuin olit kallis mulle, armahin. / Ja vaikka koskee eron pitkät varjot, / on kuvas mulle nyt vain kirkkahin*. '[Pain] showed me better than delights / how dear you were to me, my love, / And even though the long shadows of separation hurt, / the picture of you is now the brightest for me'. The deep structures of life are manifested through this pain and anxiety which, according to Heidegger's concept of *das Man*, means that in silence and anxiety *das Man* finds new possibilities, coming to a new understanding of *Dasein, inder-Welt-sein*.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: ).

<sup>48</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, p. 18–19; *Kultainen tangokirja I* (1994: 190–191); Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 259).

<sup>49</sup> Eccles 17 8:6; Jer 8-7; Ps 39:5, 89:48; Song 31:30; Rom 1:23; 1 Cor 9:25, 15:54; 2 Cor 3:7, 11, 13.

<sup>50</sup> Peirce (1940: passim).

<sup>51</sup> Heidegger ([1929] 1959).

Love and joy are brief; the dream and the memories stay. Antero Vartia and Martti Jäppilä's tango *Aila* (1937),<sup>52</sup> also a prototype of the Finnish tango in which the subject addresses his love to a woman by name, is first of all an escapist tango which talks about *pilvilinnan*, 'a castle in the air', a fairy-tale element. The music emphasises the inconsequential love in the word *muistan* 'I remember'; the subject longs for the girl Aila in the first line, while the deeper aspect of life is revealed in *Haaveet kuin uni häipyvät unholaan*, 'the illusions vanish like a dream' and *Toiveet miksi turhiksi jäivät vaan ainaaan?* 'Why were my hopes always pointless?' All is however in the present. Questions are frequent, since the subject does not know (*non-savoir*): 'My hopes, why were they always in vain?' The pressing concerns are *illusion* and *dream*. The biblical allusion to the futility of human achievements is again apparent.<sup>53</sup>

The tango *Elommepäivät* (1936) 'The Days of Our Lives',<sup>54</sup> can be said to begin the existential tradition in the Finnish tango lyrics, providing a philosophical view of life, different from the most Finnish tango texts of the 1930s with their sentimental, trivial and banal romantic love fantasies. The lyrics are by Tatu Pekkarinen who wrote both joyful and melancholic lyrics. The following tango highlights time combined with joy and sorrow:

## Elommepäivät

Oi, älä soita laulua  
tuota surullista mulle.  
Se muistuttaa, kuin katoovaa  
on elon ilo tää.  
Kuin päivä iltaan painuva  
kaunis unennäkö vaimen  
on nuoruus tuo  
kuin virranvuo  
mi mereen kiihuhtaa.

Elomme tään, oi kalliit päivämme nää  
miks vietät tuhlaten oi  
ei ne palata voi.  
Oi, älä soita laulua  
tuota surullista mulle.  
Se muistuttaa, kuin katoovaa  
on nuoruus, elo tää.  
Music Matti Jurva  
Lyrics Tatu Pekkarinen (1936)

## 'The Days of Our Lives'

'Oh, don't play that sad  
song for me.  
It reminds me of how perishable  
this joy of life is here.  
When day turns to evening  
a beautiful dream  
is youth  
like a stream  
which hurries to the sea.

These dear days of our life –  
why do you waste time, oh,  
they can never return.  
Oh, don't play that sad  
song for me.  
It reminds me of how perishable  
youth and life is here.'

The dream has a prominent role both in life and the tango. The dream is discussed by Calderón in his play *La vida es sueño*, 'Life Is a Dream' in the 17th century. In the 1950s Kullervo Linna and Pentti Raunio's tango *Unikuva* (1951) 'The Dream',<sup>55</sup> asserts the centrality of dreams: *Kas, unelmista parhaat on unta vain*, 'Look, the best reveries are only a dream'. A prototypical tango is *Ma unta*

<sup>52</sup> *Kultainen tangokirja* 1 (1994: 6-7).

<sup>53</sup> Eccles 1: 2, 2: 17, 12: 8, 8: 10, 3: 19, 12: 8.

<sup>54</sup> *Jurva* 4 (1936: 3), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 241).

<sup>55</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, p. 22-23; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 157, 264).

*näin* (1938) 'I Had A Dream',<sup>56</sup> composed by J. Kauhanen in which the dream and nature are described as parallel:

Ma unta näin

Ma unta näin, ett' vierelläin  
sa kuljit hämyssä kesäisen yön.  
Sa katsoit mua, ma katsoin sua,  
ja onnen-täyhteisnä sykki nyt syön.  
Niin hiljaa metsä huminoi  
ja laulu rastaan niin surullisna soi ...  
ja hellään vain sun kättäs' sain  
ma hetken hyväillä nyt omanain.

Ja koivut nuo, ne varjon luo  
nyt ylle lähtehen hopeaisen.  
Mun vierelläin sa istut näin,  
ja kuulet kun sulle nyt laulelen.  
On rauhaisaa, niin hiljaisaa ...  
Oi onnenhetkeä näin ihanaa! –  
Mut' untahan tuo oli vaan,  
ei muutu todeksi se milloinkaan.  
Music J. Kauhanen  
Lyrics R. Raudus (1938)

'I Had A Dream'

'I had a dream that beside me  
you walked in the twilight of the summer night.  
You looked at me, I looked at you,  
and my heart filled was with happiness.  
The forest hummed quietly  
and the song of the thrush was so sad ...  
and I could caress your soft hand  
for a while as mine.

And the birches stretched their shadows  
over the silvery pond  
You sit by my side now,  
and hear how I now sing for you.  
It is so calm, so silent ...  
Oh this wonderful moment of happiness!  
But that was only a dream,  
it will never be true.'

The tango *Muisto* (1939) 'A Memory'<sup>57</sup> composed by Walter Rae and lyrics by Onni Salomaa,<sup>58</sup> utilises the role of memory, spring and summer as joy of life, autumn, and winter and the frost as the end of love:

Muisto

Taas kukkii kauniit  
kesän kukat meille jälleen.  
Muistot kuolleet  
sai taas kesäpäivä mieleen.  
Kauneinta untaan uinui  
ne alla talven jään.  
Sai auki haavat –  
itkee siksi syömme in illoin.  
Muistan, kun kerran –  
Olin onnellinen silloin.  
Viell' yhä syömme in itkeä saa,  
kun muistan onnen,  
jonka kauncimmillaan,  
pois riisti halla,  
syksyn tuuli kylmä vei ...  
Music Walter Rae  
Lyrics Onni Salomaa (1939)

'A Memory'

'Again the beautiful flowers  
of summer bloom for us once more.  
The dead memories  
brought the summer day to mind again.  
They had the most beautiful dream  
under the ice of winter.  
It opened the wounds –  
therefore my heart cries in the evenings.  
I remember, when once –  
I was happy then.  
Still my heart may cry,  
when I remember  
the most beautiful happiness.  
The frost stole,  
the cold wind of winter took away ...'

Memories and dreams seen through metaphors with snow, frost and cold wind express romantic feelings and oblivion. For romanticism, nature as well as sentimentality, melancholy, exoticism, religiosity, and individualism were

<sup>56</sup> Jurva 8 (1938: 8), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 50).

<sup>57</sup> *Tanssisäveluutuuksia* 10 (1939: 12–13), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>58</sup> *Tanssisäveluutuuksia* 10 (1939: 12–13), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

central themes.<sup>59</sup> The tango *Margetta* [*Muistelen sinua Marketta*] ([1939] 1965) 'Margetta [I Remember You, Marketta]<sup>60</sup> was composed by Arvo Koskimaa with lyrics by the male lyricist Jouko Kukkonen (who is not a male pseudonym for Kerttu Mustonen but a real existing person). The tango talks about *suuri kaipuu*, the great longing. The subject asks the existential question, *Pois miksi katoaa se minkä saavuttaa ja miksi onni viipyy hetken vaan?* 'Why does what one has attained vanish and why does happiness stay only for a moment?' Loss is the rule of life.

One of the most popular tangos in the 1930s was Eugen Malmstén and Kerttu Mustonen's tango *Kun sun mä näin* (1937)<sup>61</sup> with the Swedish title *När dig jag såg*, 'When I Saw You'. This tango turns on the repetition of *Kun sun mä näin*, 'When I saw you', and the contraries *elon murhe-lohtu*, 'the sorrow of life-consolation', joy-sorrow, spring-autumn. The crucial lines are: *Kun sun mä näin, niin sulle armas silloin / mä annoin kaiken kauniin, min' tunsi sydämmeiin*. 'When I saw you, then for you my love / I gave all the beauty which my heart felt'. In the Swedish text the contrasts are: *mörker-sol*, 'darkness-sun'. The main idea of this popular tango, reprinted at the end of the 1930s, is longing for the beauty of life, which is actualised in love.

The Finnish tango texts of 1930s are usually very short compared with the Argentinean tango lyrics which are long narratives. An exception is *Kuihtuneita kukkasia* ([1937] 1938), 'Withered Flowers'<sup>62</sup> of 48 lines, composed by Georg Malmstén, lyrics by Marjana & Joska, which mentions Finnish flowers such as the lily of the valley, wood anemone, blue anemone, and cornflower. The text mentions Finnish nature as against the streets and the stone walls where beautiful forest flowers cannot grow. The subject wants to return: *Palata, oi, mun sallikaa, / tuntea taas taikas, / oi, metsäpolku raikas, / kun sielussain soitto soi.* 'Oh, let me return, / feel again your magic, / oh, fresh forest path, / when the music plays in my soul'. It talks also about death and life's dark shadows: *kun pilvet kuolon varjot luo / ja surman tuo*, 'when clouds shape the shadows of death / and bring death'. It is not usual for Finnish tango lyrics to mention death specifically: *Kuihdut pian, kukkanen, / umpu, oi, keväimen*. 'Little flower, soon you will wither / oh, the flower of spring'. This once more emphasises the law of nature: birth, life, decay and death; the natural seasonal processes.

The overview at the beginning of this chapter has shown that interjections and sighs, requests and questions, are common in the tangos of the 1930s and the 1940s, because the language of passions and feelings is more sentimental compared with modern Finnish. In Antero Vartia and M. Maja's tango *Miksi?* ([1936] 1937) 'Why?',<sup>63</sup> and Eugen Malmstén's tango *Siksi* ([1938] 1939) with

<sup>59</sup> Tarasti (1992: 8-9, 186-192).

<sup>60</sup> *Kultainen tangokirja I* (1994: 86-87); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1975: 334).

<sup>61</sup> Malmstén, Eugen 1 (1937: 6-7), reprinted in Malmstén, Eugen 3 (1938: 18-19), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 41).

<sup>62</sup> Malmstén, Georg 17 ([1937] 1938: 4-5), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 249).

<sup>63</sup> *Dallapé* 36 (1937: 6-7); Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 240).

the Swedish title *Därför* 'Therefore',<sup>64</sup> the subject discusses the existential dimensions of life as in the tango *Särkynyt unelma* (1938), *Bruten lycka*, 'The Broken Dream',<sup>65</sup> whose second stanza consists of insistent questions directed to the beloved. This applies to *Minkä vuoksi?* (1952) 'Why?' in the 1950s as well.

Särkynyt unelma	'The Broken Dream'
[...]	[...]
Armas miksi tiemme kauas jäivät?	'My dear, why were our roads so far apart?
Armas miksi hylkäsit mun?	My dear, why did you reject me?
Armas multa loppui onnen päivät;	My dear, the lucky days ended for me;
tuskaa tuo muisto sun.	your memory brings me sorrow.
Miksi suru mailla taasen kulkee?	Why does sorrow walk here again?
Miksi elo iloton on?	Why is life joyless?
Miksi riemu multa ovet sulkee?	Why does delight shut the door in my face?
Miksi taivas pilvessä on?	Why is the sky clouded?'
Music and lyrics M. Einola (1938)	

The pragmatic tangos, i.e. those with a dialogue between the subject and the receiver of the feeling, are rare in the Finnish tango tradition. These occur in the 1960s in what I call carnival themes. From the 1930s there is a comic tango belonging among the first of this genre, entitled *Anoppi tanssii tangoa* (1938) 'Mother-in-law Dances Tango'<sup>66</sup> by F. Voitto and U. Hurmerinta with requests and answers to questions. In Georg Malmstén and M. Maja's tango *Tyttö Argentiinasta* (1939), 'The Girl from Argentina'<sup>67</sup> the subject wants to take his girl far away – *En lähde, hän vastas' näin mulle. / – En lähde vaik' sua rakastan. / Jään tänne ja aatoksein vain sulle, / vain sulle, mä yksin omistan ...* '– I won't go, she answered me. / – I won't go even though I love you. / I stay here and my thoughts, / I dedicate only to you, only to you.' This narrative element occurs in Usko Hurmerinta's *Yö Rioassa* (1937) 'A Night in Rio'<sup>68</sup> which is the story of a seaman in Rio's sinful night-life in the Old Pirate's Pub. This theme is repeated in Salamanteri [Juhani Pohjanmies] and Unto Koskela's tango *Kuubalainen serenaadi* (1943) 'Cuban Serenade',<sup>69</sup> a story about three seamen and their love adventures in Cuba. These narratives offer an exotic and escapist setting which probably made these tangos especially popular during the war.

<sup>64</sup> Eugen Malmstén 6 (1939: 8-9); Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 56).

<sup>65</sup> *Tanssisäveluutuksia* 2 (1938: 2-3), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 56, 240).

<sup>66</sup> *Sointu* 7 (1938), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 372).

<sup>67</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 263).

<sup>68</sup> *Sonora* 4 (1937: 4-5); this song is one of the most popular "hit records", as is mentioned in the song booklet, *Helsinki University Library Collection*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 385).

<sup>69</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 385).



7 *The longing for paradise*

A recurrent image in Finnish tango lyrics is the happy land, exemplified by *Onnen maa* (1938) 'The Land of Happiness'. The same title has also been used in A. Kosonen and M. Maja's waltz (1931),<sup>70</sup> in R. Tuomi's waltz (1938),<sup>71</sup> in Toivo Kärki and Reino Helismaa's beguine (1956), while in the 1960s Unto Mononen (1930–1968), the great Finnish tango composer and lyricist composed the tango *Onnen maa*, published and performed in 1971. This forms a parallel to his *Satumaa* (1955) 'The Happy Land', Finland's best-known and most played tango. The tango *Onnen maa* has also given its title to Markku Pölonen's 1993 film describing the nostalgia for the past and the Finnish countryside in the 1960s through Finnish tango texts. This shows the indexical force<sup>72</sup> of the theme of longing in Finnish tradition and culture; it produces so-called national icons in the form of former cultural phenomena. In the first version of the tango *Onnen maa* (1938)<sup>73</sup> there are only four lines:

Onnen maa

Nyt tuikkii tähdet nuo kirkkaat yksin loistossaan,  
ne kuiskaa meille taas haaveet sadun ihmemaan.

On kaikki siellä niin kumman kiehtovaa,  
pois katoa tiemme tään onnenmaan.

Music Arvo Koskimaa  
Lyrics Reino Raudus (1938)

'The Land of Happiness'

'Now the bright stars twinkle alone,  
they whisper to us the dreams of the wonderland of  
the fairy-tale.

Everything is there so strange and fascinating,  
the road to our land of happiness will disappear.'

The expression *sadun ihmemaan* 'the wonderland of the fairy-tale' is repeated in many tangos as a happy land, a land of fairy-tale, an Atlantis, the earthly or heavenly Paradise, which forms an essential part of Finnish tango lyrics. This paradise can be an internal or external place, man's existential state of joy and happiness, an actual place to long for in the past, or the perfect place in the future; a place where summer and light last forever.

<sup>70</sup> *Dallapé* 15 (1932: 16–17), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 173).

<sup>71</sup> *Uusia tanssisäveleitä* (1938: 14), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>72</sup> Peirce (1940).

<sup>73</sup> *Jurva* 9 (1938: 10–11), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 53) mentions Ari Saarni [Dagmar Parmas] as the lyricist, not Reino Raudus.

## VII The Finnish tango lyrics during the war in the 1940s

An overview of the themes of the Finnish tango lyrics in the 1940s, the war years, shows that the same themes occur as in the 1930s, but that the tango also becomes a socio-cultural phenomenon. During the war in 1940–1944 the tango was actually not as popular as, for instance, waltzes and foxtrots, which expressed more joy. The purpose of the so-called entertainment groups during the war was to give the soldiers some sense of joy, delight, and hope, not merely the gloom of the tango texts. "Ikäväntorjunta", the concept of 'averting sadness and gloominess' was paramount.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of 1940s the great composer of Finnish jazz, tangos and waltzes Toivo Kärki (1915–1992) appears with his female lyricist Kerttu Mustonen (1891–1959). In this section I allude only to the most representative types of this period.

Even though our Finnish folk poetry emphasises melancholy and sorrow, the tangos of the 1930s did not express the sorrow and sadness so typical of the Finnish tango very clearly. It is a fact that the war influenced and gave the Finnish tango its particular lugubriousness, for instance, *Siks' oon mä suruinen* (1944) 'Therefore I Am Sad', composed by Toivo Kärki at the front. Melancholy is characteristic of his works.<sup>2</sup> He was a productive composer, who composed and wrote Finnish tangos in his own name or under different pseudonyms, depending on which aspect he wanted to give the tango in question [Pedro de Punta, Orvokki Itä, Karl Stein, W. Stone, Kari Aava, C. Caparov]. Since the 1950s especially Reino Helismaa (1913–1965) who used various pseudonyms [Orvokki Itä, Rauni Kouta], wrote lyrics for Kärki's tangos. The great Finnish tango legend is Olavi Virta (1915–1972), who sang, composed, wrote and translated tango lyrics. The name Olavi Virta means the same for the Finnish tango as Carlos Gardel does for the Argentinean tango.<sup>3</sup>

### 1 Existence: the road of life

The first Finnish tangos from the 1940s are interesting; the most important idea is actually the theme of man's road, the very short time of man on this earth, and man's dreams. A new psychological and existential profundity arises through Finnish natural symbolism. Life is only a short road, a journey, or a dream. This idea of life as a road is an allusion to the *Bible*.<sup>4</sup> The road metaphor provides an orientation for life but also an ontological view of it, as mentioned earlier. The

<sup>1</sup> M. Niiniluoto (1994: passim).

<sup>2</sup> M. Niiniluoto (1993: 15-20).

<sup>3</sup> von Bagh and Hakasalo's book *Iskelmän kultainen kirja* (1986) 'The Golden Book of the Hit' gives an popularised overview of persons and their contributions to the Finnish *iskelmä*, or hit. The word is based on the word *iskusävelmä*, first used by R. R. Ryyänen. The first Finnish *iskelmä* is Georg Malmsten's *Särkynyt onni* (1930) 'Broken Happiness'.

<sup>4</sup> Ps 16:11; Jn 14:4; Prov 2:19; 4:11; 16:31; Heb 10:20; Acts 19:19, 23; 16:17; 22:4; 2 Pet 2:20-21.

metaphor of the road includes the actants and the places during the journey of life (cf. chapter V).<sup>5</sup>

Toivo Kärki and Kerttu Mustonen's *On elon retki näin, Så leder livet vår färd* ([1940] 1944),<sup>6</sup> 'Such is the Journey of Life', is the tango Kärki liked most himself. Its lyrics represent life as a journey. The lyrics begin with a beautiful nature description in the morning with birds waking in the forest, morning representing man's fleeting life and happiness. Summer is short and autumn is soon here, a metaphor for age. Time and life vanish quickly, so that the brief rare moments of happiness in one's morning have to be enjoyed. Life vanishes like a shooting star; man's time on earth is short, in life as in death you have to abandon all the dearest things. As the beauty of nature in summer decays, so one must be able to leave the most precious in life. This tango was composed and written during the war, when death was everywhere reminding people of mortality. The Finnish and the Swedish lyrics of this tango are semantically and stylistically close to each other. The Swedish title emphasises the idea that life directs our journey, while the Finnish suggests that the journey of life is like this.

On elon retki näin  
'Such is the Journey of Life'

Yön yltä päivä ajaa  
pois usvat pilven rajaan,  
metsän linnut kaikki heräsi nuu,  
tuuli tuoksujansa tuo.  
Näin kesä lyhyt kulkee,  
syys ilon ovet sulkee.  
Kaikki sulle mikä rakasta ois,  
anna se luotas pois.  
Kuin tähden lento vaan  
on kulku onnen parhaan.  
Vain kiitävän hetken  
se välkkyi vierelläin,  
on elon retki se näin.  
Siks' nauti silloin kun  
näet luonas onnen aamun.  
Jo ennen kuin tiedät, on ilta riemut jäi,  
on elon retki se näin.  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Kerttu Mustonen

Så leder livet vår färd  
'So Life Directs Our Journey'

Morgonens dimmor glida  
ut emot rymder vida,  
glatt i skogen klingar fåglarnas kör,  
vinden blomdoft med sig för.  
Sommarens glöd försvinner,  
höstljuset bleknat brinner.  
Allt du ägde, allt som kära dig var,  
måste du lämna kvar.  
Lätt som en stjärnas flykt  
din lycka från dig glider.  
En skimrande stund blott den dröjer vid din härd,  
så leder livet din färd.  
Så njut den morgonstund,  
då dagen mot dig glimmar,  
ty innan du anar,  
din sommar flyktad är,  
så leder livet vår färd.  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Swedish lyrics Joel Rundt

The English translation of this tango emphasises the idea of life as a journey.

On elon retki näin

Yön yltä päivä ajaa  
pois usvat pilven rajaan,  
metsän linnut kaikki heräsi nuu,  
tuuli tuoksujansa tuo.  
Näin kesä lyhyt kulkee,  
syys ilon ovet sulkee.  
Kaikki sulle mikä rakasta ois,  
anna se luotas pois.

'Such Is the Journey of Life'

The day drives away the night  
the haze to the border of the clouds;  
the birds in the forest wake,  
the wind brings its scents.  
The short summer passes by,  
autumn closes the door of joy.  
Everything which would be dear to you,  
give it away.

<sup>5</sup> Nikanne (1993: 61-63, 60-78; Lakoff & Johnson (1980); Lakoff (1990: 47-48).

<sup>6</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 185, 197).

Kuin tähden lento vaan  
on kulku onnen parhaan.  
Vain kiittävän hetken  
se välkkyi vierelläin,  
on elon retki se näin.  
Siks' nauti silloin kun  
näet luonas onnen aamun.  
Jo ennen kuin tiedät,  
on ilta riemut jäi,  
on elon retki se näin.  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Kerttu Mustonen (1940)

The road of the best happiness is  
just like a falling star.  
Only a fleeting moment,  
it shone by my side,  
such is the journey of life,  
Therefore enjoy life when  
you see the morning of happiness by your side.  
Before you even realise,  
it is evening - the joys are left behind,  
such is the journey of life.'

The themes of time and place, and the roads of our memories filled with sorrows and joys also occur in *Muistojen tie* (1944), 'The Road of Memories',<sup>7</sup> music by Toivo Kärki, lyrics by Kerttu Mustonen. The short tango *Elomme tie* (1940) 'The Road of Our Life',<sup>8</sup> music and lyrics by N. Viiki mentions the journey, the childhood home, youth, and the road finally leading 'to the lap of my native country'.

## Elomme tie

Elomme tie  
tuntematon  
pitkähkö lie  
arvoitus on.  
Lapsuuskodin,  
muistelot nuo,  
miehen miettehet,  
hartaimmat tuo.  
On nuoruusaika ruusuinen  
ei huolta huomenen.  
Sä kulkenetko uhmaten  
kun vaanii vaarat sen.  
Elomme tie  
kauvas johtaa,  
vihdoinkin vie,  
helmahan synnyinmaan.  
Music and lyrics N. Viiki (1944)

## 'The Road of Our Life'

'Whether the road of our life  
is unknown  
or long  
is a secret.  
The childhood home  
and its memories  
brings memories to my mind;  
the most ardent ones.  
The time of youth is rosy  
with no problems about tomorrow.  
Would you wander with defiance  
when its dangers lurk?  
The road of our life  
leads far away,  
at last it leads,  
into the lap of my native country.'

This theme also occurs in Matti Jurva and Tatu Pekkarinen's tango *Elomme päivät* (1936) 'The Days of Our Life'. The road of life leads finally both to the actual and the abstract home in the last line. The other important theme is time as seen above. War reminds people of how short life is. In *Syyslaulu* (1940), 'The Song of Autumn',<sup>9</sup> music by Arvo Koskimaa (1912–1972), an important tango composer, with lyrics by P. Seijola, the setting of the tango describes life as autumn and yellow leaves, the air filled with *raskas kaipuu*, 'a heavy longing'. When youth has passed, we have travelled *elon tiellä*, 'on the road of our life' to autumn. In the last line the subject states that *syksyn taika on mun sielussain*, 'the

<sup>7</sup> *Kristalli iskelmiä* 1 (1944: 22-23), Helsinki University Library Collections.

<sup>8</sup> *Uusia Tanssisävelmiä* 8 (1940: 6), Helsinki University Library Collections.

<sup>9</sup> *Tähti Tanssisävelmiä* 1 (1940: 8-9), Helsinki University Library Collections; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 184) mentions Toivo Kärki as composer, Arvo Koskimaa as lyricist.

magic of autumn is in my soul', which means that when life turns to its evening, he understands it entirely, both past and present, and has achieved a *Thirdness* insight. This theme of autumn leaves is repeated in many of the war-time tangos. *Syysillan muistelo* (1940), 'Memories in the Autumn Night',<sup>10</sup> music and lyrics by Olavi Karu, has the same idea as Georg Malmstén's tango *Muistelo* ([1938] 1939), 'Memory' from the 1930s. *Syysillan muistelo* (1940) states that *Elonhetket on kuluneet iltaan, / muistot menneet vain nuoria on, /* 'The moments of life have come to their evening, / only past memories are young'. The pivotal word in this tango is *tuska*, 'anguish', 'pain', a very strong word in Finnish. *Viimeiset jäähyväiset* (1940), 'The Last Farewell' also says that 'my road of life will be at its end'.

In opposition to the heavy war experiences however, there are lyrics with escapist themes with fairy-tales and elf-land: *Satu* (1940), 'The Fairy-tale'<sup>11</sup> by Kalevi Kataja tells a story about the beloved who was 'an elf in a fairy-tale', *Kesäillan satu* (1940), 'The Fairy-Tale of a Summer Night'<sup>12</sup> allows the same escapist fairy-tale setting for adults, an opportunity to forget sombre reality, and be somewhere else for a while.

According to ethnomusicologists the effect of the popular music has been very important in that people relive their personal history through the words of songs and tangos. Every song is a reflection of its own time and concept of culture. The dual setting of a tango has its myths, longing, disappointments, love, life and death. In many of the Finnish pop songs and tangos the Nordic environment, and the emptiness of city life and love are crucial. In Finnish culture the themes of sorrow and death derive from our folk-music tradition, and from the Kalevala tradition of mourning women. The tango especially typically combines sorrow, nostalgia and melancholy with the theme of love.

One of Toivo Kärki's most popular tangos, a prototypically wistful tango is *Siks' oon mä suruinen* 'Therefore I am sad',<sup>13</sup> which the Finnish tango legend Olavi Virta sang in 1944 and Eero Väre in 1945. The lyrics are Kerttu Mustonen's, actually her first tango text, where Finnish despondency gets its first real expression, introducing the lament tradition of Finnish folk poetry to Finnish tango lyrics. This tango talks about the Finnish sadness and longing, *tristeza*, and it has also been translated into Swedish by the Finland-Swedish author Joel Rundt. I present the three versions of the actual tango, including the Italian translation (some of the Finnish tangos were translated into Italian by the tango singer Umberto Marcato in the 1960s):

<sup>10</sup> *Uusia Tanssisävelmiä* 9–10 (1940: 4), Helsinki University Library Collections.

<sup>11</sup> *Sointu* 9 (1940: 4–5), Helsinki University Library Collections.

<sup>12</sup> *Dallapé* 48 (1940: 12–13), Helsinki University Library Collections.

<sup>13</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 38–39.

Siks'oon mä suruinen

[...]

Siks'oon mä suruinen,  
 kun Sua nyt muistelen:  
 niin paljon meni kanssas kaunista pois.  
 Siks'oon mä suruinen,  
 kun päivä huominen  
 niin toisenlainen mulle olla nyt vois.  
 Ne kulkevat unikuvin  
 edessäin vieläkin,  
 nuo hetket, mi kerran yhdessä vietettiin.  
 Siks'oon mä suruinen,  
 kun sua nyt muistelen,  
 niin paljon meni kanssas kaunista pois.  
 Niin kaunista pois.  
 Music Toivo Kärki  
 Lyrics Kerttu Mustonen (1944)

Nu går jag sorgsen här

[...]

Nu går jag sorgsen här,  
 vad morgondagen bär  
 det vet jag icke, då du ej mer är kvar.  
 De dagarna ser jag glida  
 stilla i drömligt tåg,  
 de leva så ljuva,  
 gå icke ur min håg.  
 Nu går jag sorgsen här  
 med minnena jag bär,  
 jag saknar vad med dig  
 nu mistat har.  
 Jag nu mistat har.

The Swedish text Joel Rundt

## Domani

[...]

Domani torneró,  
 domani ti vedrò,  
 felice io sarò, domani.  
 Stringendoti al mio cuor  
 coi baci ti dirò  
 che tutto sei per me, amore.  
 Per noi splenderà il sole,  
 e ci riscalderà,  
 e andremo felici verso l'immensità...  
 Domani tornerò,  
 domani ti vedrò,  
 felice io sarò, domani.  
 Music Toivo Kärki, Italian lyrics Umberto Marcato (1964)<sup>14</sup>

*Siks'oon mä suruinen* is an archetypical war-time Finnish tango text. It talks about the future, *domani*, as the Italian title of 1964 says. The war inevitably changed the future of many young people. The very doleful atmosphere is fundamental to Finnish tango texts, typical of the sorrow and melancholy expressed in so many of Toivo Kärki's tangos composed and written during the Winter War, in the 1940s and later.

While the Finnish tango texts in the 1930s represent superficially sentimental, romantic or escapist love themes, the war-time Finnish tango lyrics go deeper. The war seems to have stimulated new directions in the tango lyrics; the time is short, the loss of the beloved is reality, so that one has to live for the moment. Naturally love predominates, but the texts offer a diversity of interpretations. *Siks'oon mä suruinen* describes Finnish nostalgia and melancholy in the deepest and darkest colours. The hit is the art of daydreams, escaping everyday life and its problems, Mustonen's lyrics being a good example. In her earlier lyrics Mustonen had used motifs from folk poetry. Mustonen has said in 1941 that the Finnish language is flexible and rich in words, there is a great number of

<sup>14</sup> Haapanen 1902–1971 (1973: 48).



beautiful words which sound like echoes of music. 'If I manage to use these kinds of words in the right places with music, my joy is doubled'.<sup>15</sup> The tango setting is usually the evening, memory, longing, the night, and then the bitterness of the separation. This tango concludes with the realisation that memories are valuable to us and we live with them. The subject repeats his endless longing for his beloved.

## 2 Time: the war

The birth-place of the Finnish tango was the war, and this fact is naturally one reason for its gloom. In comparing Swedish and Finnish melancholy (*tungsinne*) Daun points out that Sweden had not been at war.<sup>16</sup> The Finnish dejection can be seen through Finland's fate in the war. *Syyspihlajan alla* (1942) 'Under the Autumn Rowan Tree' composed by Arvo Koskimaa (1912–1972) with lyrics by Arvo Kalliola [Veikko Virmajoki] was, besides *Liljankukka* (1944),<sup>17</sup> composed by Toivo Kärki (1915–1992) and *Satunmaa* (1955) 'The Happy Land' composed by Unto Mononen (1930–1968), a prototype of Finnish nostalgia in tango texts.<sup>18</sup> *Syyspihlajan alla* could also be a metaphor for the war. The colour red is mentioned at the beginning denoting war, death and wounded soldiers. The red berries mean war: *Punertaa marjat pihlajain / kuin verta niillä ois, / on kurkiaurat lentäneet / jo yli pääni pois*, 'The berries of the rowan are turning red / as if they had blood, / the cranes have flown away / already over my head'. The rowan tree is a holy tree in Finnish mythology and tradition.<sup>19</sup> The red berries, the berries of war in the mythology,<sup>20</sup> denote the loss of life in the war and the cranes denote freedom in Finnish myth.<sup>21</sup> The next lines are: *Mukaansa ei mua ottaneet / ne maihin kaukaisiin, / saa siivettömät tyytyä / maan kylmän kahleisiin* 'They did not take me with them / to distant lands, / those without wings have to acquiesce / with the cold bonds of the ground'. The bird represents freedom, since the bird flies to a warmer country, to a happy land without sorrows or worries. This happy land can be, as so frequently in Finnish tango lyrics, the land of heaven, the realm of death, called Tuonela or Manala in Finnish folk tradition, the *Kalevala* and the *Kanteletar*. The mother could sing to her little child of Tuonela which is a better place for it than life; only with the maidens of Tuonela is the child safe.<sup>22</sup> At the frontier the soldier wishes himself away from the hell of war to this safe place, Tuonela, where he would have no fears, no sorrows, no pains. A longing for distant places, a heaven or a paradise helped

<sup>15</sup> von Bagh & Hakasalo (1986: 173–175).

<sup>16</sup> Daun (1989: 152, 176–192).

<sup>17</sup> This tango was also translated into Italian as *Resteria* (1963), sung by the Italian singer Umberto Marcato on the same record as *Harhakuva, Una melodia d'amore*, also a Toivo Kärki tango of the 1960s.

<sup>18</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 2–4, 6–7, 44–45.

<sup>19</sup> Turunen (1979: 180, 267); Timonen (1993: 345–346); Guenat (1994: 120–133).

<sup>20</sup> Kokko ([1944] 1983: 10).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. birds and trees in Finnish folk poetry, especially in the *Kalevala* and the *Kanteletar*; Turunen (1979: 180, 267).

<sup>22</sup> Timonen (1993: 343–344).

one to survive. Some day he might meet his beloved on the shore of this lovely land or isle.

Syyspihlajan alla<sup>23</sup>

Punertaa marjat pihlajain  
 kuin verta niillä ois,  
 on kurki-aurat lentäneet  
 jo yli pääni pois.  
 Mukaansa ei mua ottaneet  
 ne maihin kaukasiin,  
 saa siivettömät tyytyä  
 maan kylmän kahleisiin.  
 Jää siskokseni tuuliyö  
 ne laulaa laulujaan,  
 ja sade kylmin kyynelcin  
 lyö tummaan ikkunaan.  
 Nään monta mieron matkaajaa  
 ohitse rientävän,  
 jotakin kerran odotin  
 ei saavu koskaan hän.  
 Music Arvo Koskimaa  
 Lyrics Veikko Virmajoki (1942)

Under höströnnen<sup>24</sup>

Så röda lyser rönnens bär  
 som om de var av blod.  
 En tranplog flög nyss söderut  
 förbi mig där jag stod  
 men ingen bad mig att följa med  
 dit bort till fjärran land.  
 En vinglös måste stanna kvar  
 På Nordens kulna strand.  
 Nu har jag hos mig nattens blåst  
 som nynnär på sin låt.  
 Och fönsterrutans svarta fält  
 är vått av regnets gråt.  
 Här färdas många resande  
 på vägen som jag ser.  
 Men den jag en gång väntade  
 skall aldrig komma mer.  
 Swedish lyrics Lars Huldén (1981)

The Finnish and the Swedish versions are rather faithful equivalents, and the English translation shows the theme in this tango.

## Syyspihlajan alla

Punertaa marjat pihlajain  
 kuin verta niillä ois,  
 on kurki-aurat lentäneet  
 jo yli pääni pois.  
 Mukaansa ei mua ottaneet  
 ne maihin kaukasiin,  
 saa siivettömät tyytyä  
 maan kylmän kahleisiin.  
 Jää siskokseni tuuliyö  
 ne laulaa laulujaan,  
 ja sade kylmin kyynelcin  
 lyö tummaan ikkunaan.  
 Nään monta mieron matkaajaa  
 ohitse rientävän,  
 jotakin kerran odotin  
 ei saavu koskaan hän.  
 Music Arvo Koskimaa  
 Lyrics Veikko Virmajoki (1942)

## 'Under the Autumn Rowan Tree'

'The berries of the rowan tree are turning red  
 as if they had blood,  
 the cranes have flown away  
 already over my head.  
 They did not take me with them  
 to distant lands,  
 those without wings have to acquiesce  
 with the cold bonds of the ground.  
 My sisters are the windy night;  
 they sing their songs.  
 And the rain with cold tears  
 beats against the dark window.  
 I see many travellers on the road  
 passing by,  
 something I once waited for –  
 he/she will never come.'

The Finnish tango *Punaiset lehdet, Höstlöven glöda* (1945),<sup>25</sup> composed by Pentti Viherluoto with lyrics by Harry Etelä [Aimo Viherluoto] repeats the same thematic line as in this tango. In Thure Wahlroos' Swedish text the word *blood* is strong: *Höstlöven glöda ... / glöda liksom blod så röda*, 'The Autumn leaves glow ... glow like blood so red'. The war is not usually directly mentioned in the

<sup>23</sup> Dallapé 57 ([1942] 1944: 6-7), *Helsinki University Library*.

<sup>24</sup> Huldén (1980: 159; 1981); Saijonmaa (1981).

<sup>25</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 14-15.

texts, being merely a metaphorical allusion. This tango repeats the notion: *Lyhyt oli kesän ihana aika. / Muistot jälkeen jäi*, 'Short was the wonderful time of summer. Memories were left'. The red leaves of autumn denote death as in *Kuihtuneita kukkia* (1938), 'Withered Flowers' discussed earlier.

## Punaiset lehdet 'Red Leaves'

Punaiset lehdet vaahterasta maahan leijaa.  
Suvi on mennyt iloni raukenee.  
Punaiset lehdet tuulessa kuiskaa hiljaa:  
Poiss' onko päivyt syksykö soittelee?  
Lyhyt oli kesän ihana aika.  
Muistot jälkeen jäi.  
Nyt se on vain mulle satujen taika.  
mennyt on ystäväin.  
Punaiset lehdet,  
jokainen kuin kallis muisto,  
yksin kun kuljen, polkuain peittelee.  
Music Pentti Viherluoto  
Lyrics Harry Etelä [Aimo Viherluoto] (1945)

## Höstlöven glöda 'The Autumn Leaves Glow'

Höstlöven glöda ... sväva stilla ned till jorden,  
sommarn är svunnen, glädjen har flytt sin kos.  
Höstlöven glöda ... viska i stilla vinden:  
svunnen är solen, vissnad är sommarns ros.  
Allt för fort svann sommarns solvarma dagar,  
minnet blott står kvar,  
minnet av din sång i blommande hagar;  
klar och underbar.  
Höstlöven glöda ...  
glöda liksom blod så röda  
falla mot jorden, minnet av allt som var.

Swedish lyrics Thure Wahroos

The Finnish and the Swedish lyrics are thematically, semantically and stylistically close. The English translation shows its theme clearly.

## Punaiset lehdet

Punaiset lehdet vaahterasta maahan leijaa.  
Suvi on mennyt iloni raukenee.  
Punaiset lehdet tuulessa kuiskaa hiljaa:  
Poiss' onko päivyt syksykö soittelee?  
Lyhyt oli kesän ihana aika.  
Muistot jälkeen jäi.  
Nyt se on vain mulle satujen taika,  
mennyt on ystäväin.  
Punaiset lehdet,  
jokainen kuin kallis muisto,  
yksin kun kuljen, polkuain peittelee.  
Music Pentti Viherluoto  
Lyrics Harry Etelä [Aimo Viherluoto] (1945)

## 'Red Leaves'

'Red leaves from the maple hover down to the ground.  
Summer is gone, my joy is at its end.  
Red leaves whisper silently in the wind:  
Is the summer at its end, will autumn play its song?  
The wonderful time of summer was short.  
Just memories were left.  
Now it is for me only the magic of fairy-tales;  
gone is my friend.  
Red leaves,  
each leaf like a dear memory,  
when I walk alone; they cover my path.'

U. Mattila's *Särkyneitä toiveita* ([1940] 1941) 'Broken Hopes'<sup>26</sup> says that *Mutt' käsi kylmä kohtalon / pois riisti haaveet kauneimmat mun*, 'But the cold hand of destiny / stole my most beautiful dreams.' Fate or destiny are enemies in the texts, *opponents* separating persons from each other. The loneliness of man is expressed in the second verse, where the oppositions of day-night and light-darkness are described as longing (*kaiho*) and yearning (*kaipaus*), two crucial words for nostalgia. The existential question: *Oi, miksi täytyykään mun näin / kulkea tietäni yksinäin?*, 'Oh, why do I have to wander so / my road alone?' is a vital question to which the Great Adventure of life provides no answer. All the melancholic tango texts from the 1940s can be interpreted through the external context of time, and the war. People were separated, death was a perpetual

<sup>26</sup> This tango was published in 1940, cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 267), in *Dallapé* 50 (1940: 14–15), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

companion; life was filled with waiting, separation, longing, waiting and hoping. Music and song gave hope, being a light in the darkness and a way to express one's deepest feelings of joy and sorrow. The modality of believing (*croire*) is present here; 'I once believed in happiness but then destiny, the *opponent*, stole all my wonderful hopes':

## Särkyneitä toiveita

Mä kerran uskoin onnehen  
ja elin haaveillen, toivoen.  
Mutt' käsi kylmä kohtalon  
pois riisti haaveet kauneimmat mun.  
Nyt olen yksin,  
en lohdutusta,  
en hyväilyä saa osaksein.  
Miks' täytyi käydä mulle näin  
ett' osattomaks' onnesta jäin?

Kun päivä päättyy, ilta saa  
ja puut ja pensaat luo varjojaan,  
niin kaiho syömmen valloittaa  
ja mielen täyttää kaipaus vaan.  
Olenhan yksin,  
en lohdutusta,  
en hyväilyä saa osaksein.  
Oi miksi täytyykään mun näin  
kulkea tietäni yksinäin?  
Music and lyrics by U. Mattila (1941)

## 'Broken Hopes'

'I once believed in happiness  
and I lived dreaming, and hoping.  
But the cold hand of destiny  
robbed me of my most beautiful dreams.  
Now I am alone;  
no consolation;  
I can get no caress.  
Why did this happen to me,  
that I was left without happiness?

When the day is at its end, the night comes  
and the trees and bushes throw their shadows,  
so nostalgia conquers my heart  
and my mind is just filled with longing.  
I am just alone,  
no consolation;  
I can get no caress.  
Oh, why do I have to  
walk my road alone?'

The dialogue between the words and phonetic structures in the Finnish text cannot be expressed in English, so that there is a loss of aesthetic information in the English translation. In the 1940 Dallapé song book number 48, the tango *Unohduksen yö* (1940), 'The Night of Oblivion'<sup>27</sup> was published, a short tango of nine lines:

## Unohduksen yö

Unhoittakaamme  
elo taistojen,  
maailman polku  
niin murheinen.  
Kauan ei kestä  
elo ihmisen.  
Me siksi kaiken unhoitamme  
helmahan yön,  
että rauhan löytäisi sy'än ...  
Unknown composer and lyricist (1940)

## 'The Night of Oblivion'

'Let us forget  
the battle of life,  
the path of the world  
so sad.  
The life of man does not last  
a long time.  
Therefore we forget everything  
in the lap of night  
so that heart will find peace ...'

Usually the tango texts do not mention the war, but in the lyrics of the 1940s there are explicit mentions or indirect allusions. War themes are represented in *Ilta Kannaksella* (1942) 'The Night on the Karelian Isthmus' and *Vienan*

<sup>27</sup> Dallapé 48 (1940: 4-5). Information about the composer and the lyricist is lacking; *Helsinki University Library*.

*kuutamossa* ([1942] 1943) 'In the Moonlight of Viena',<sup>28</sup> and in *Pien' Lotta ystäväin* (1942) 'My Little Lotta, Dear Friend', as well as in *Viimeiset jäähyväiset* (1940), 'The Last Farewell' by M. Maja [Martti Jäppilä] with lyrics by K. Karri. *Pien' Lotta ystäväin* (1940), 'My Little Lotta, Dear Friend',<sup>29</sup> composed by A. Kosunen, lyrics by M. Maja [Martti Jäppilä] talks directly about war. The little girl Lotta is working on the frontier, in the middle of the battle:

Pien' Lotta ystäväin

[...]

Käy aatos luoksesi näin,  
pien' Lotta ystäväin.  
Teit' työsi aina hymyillen  
keskellä taistojen

[...]

Music A. Kosunen

Lyrics M. Maja [Martti Jäppilä] (1942)

'My Little Lotta, Dear Friend'

[...]

'My thought goes to you,  
my little Lotta, dear friend.  
You always worked smiling  
in middle of the battle.'

[...]

*Iltta kannaksella* (1942), 'The Night on the Karelian Isthmus'<sup>30</sup> begins with a description of evening on the Karelian Isthmus:

Iltta Kannaksella

Kun Kannaksella iltaan jo päivä kiirehtii,

ja kaakon taivas lieskoissa tulta lyö se vieläkin,  
on korsun liesi lämmin, se mielen saa unohtamaan  
mua taiston tielle huomispäivä taas jo odottaa.

Mä Kannaksella armainta unta näin ystävästäin,  
hän lausui mulle toivomielin näin:  
Sua muistan aina kerran kun saavut, on jo päivä uus,

sua ootan aina, silloinkin vaikka ois se ikuisuus,  
sun kanssa nähdä tahdon mä onnen maan ihanimman,

kun taiston tiellä luoksein sun kerran saan.

Music Ester Seetri

Lyrics Kerttu Mustonen (1942)

'The Night on the Karelian Isthmus'

'When on the Karelian Isthmus the day  
hurries on to the night,  
and the sky in the south-east is still burning,  
the stove in the dugout is warm, it makes me forget  
that tomorrow waits for me again on the roads of  
battle.

I had a dear dream of my friend on the Karelian Isthmus,  
she spoke hopefully to me like this:

I always remember that when you return, it will  
already be a new day,

I will wait for you, even though it is an eternity,  
with you I want to see the most beautiful land  
of happiness,

when on the road of battle I get you back again.'

In the above text the woman lyricist, Kerttu Mustonen, gives a male description of war. The dream is the same as the hope. In *Vienan kuutamossa* (1943), 'In the Moonlight of Viena'<sup>31</sup> the lyrics talk about war and peace, using these words explicitly. The setting is the night and the moonlight; the subject listens to the silence of night as if war was at its end, while in his home village his girl shares the same moonlight. Only with the wings of memory can he be with her, and now he really knows (*savoir*) what happiness means here amid the war in Viena. The subject still hopes and believes (*croire*) in a future as in the internationally-

<sup>28</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 276).

<sup>29</sup> *Dallapé* 50 (1940: 8–9), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>30</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).

<sup>31</sup> *Dallapé* 54 (1942), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

known war-time song *We'll meet again, / don't know where, / don't know when, / but I know we'll meet again / some sunny day.*<sup>32</sup>

## Vienan kuutamossa

Kun päivä raskas yöksi tummentuu  
ja taivahalle nousee täysikuu,  
on aivan kuin ois taasen tullut  
jälleen rauha päälle maan.  
Kuu hopeainen loiste kätkee sen,  
mi päivä tuo taas eteen silmien,  
jyske tykkien kun taas alkaa uudestaan.  
Kuu kimaltavan sillan veteen rakentaa  
mä lähden sille määränäni kotimaa,  
nään edessäni kodin, seudun armahan.  
Kuin yössä ennen valkeassa uinuvan  
Sun yll'es myöskin tyttö, kotimaan

tää kuu on noussut kaihoisassa loistossaan.  
Kuu hohde lankeaa yli Vienanmaan  
kuin sotaa täällä ei ois laisinkaan.  
Kuin olis totta onni hetken hauraan,  
kohta häipyvän.

Nyt kyllä tiedän mitä onni on  
vain hetki loistehessa kuutamon  
kun muiston siivin palaa luokse  
hetket menneen elämän.  
Music Onni Laihanen  
Lyrics M. Maja [Martti Jäppilä] ([1942] 1943)

## 'In the Moonlight of Viena'

'When the heavy day turns to night  
and the full moon rises in the sky,  
it is as though  
peace had returned to the earth again.  
The silvery shine of the moon hides it;  
what the day brings to your eyes,  
the booms of the guns begin once more.  
The moon builds a shining bridge on the water  
I step on it with my native country as my goal,  
in front of me I see my home, the dear place.  
As before, in the sleepy white night  
this same moon will shine over you,  
girl of my native country;  
this moon has risen in its nostalgic brightness.  
The glow of the moon covers the land of Viena  
as if the war not been at all.  
As if the fragile moment of happiness,  
soon vanishing, would come true.  
Now I really know what happiness is  
only for a moment in the brightness of the moon  
when on wings of memory  
the moments of the past life return.'

However, an optimistic and positive attitude and ways to continue life during the war appear in Erkki Salama's tango *Kultainen toivo* (1943) 'The Golden Hope';<sup>33</sup> in autumn flowers die, but hope is left for us and will take us further in life. The same occurs in the tango *Näenhän valoisan taivaan* (1940) 'I See the Bright Sky'<sup>34</sup> composed by Georg Malmstén, lyrics by Reino Ranta from a Finnish film. During the war years music and song tried to give hope to people, offering advice on how to bear the loss of loved ones, and the hard times. What gives hope to go on living?

## Näenhän valoisan taivaan

Kaikki, kaikki minulta mennyt on  
vain yksi: salainen toive, pysyy  
ja kestää käsissä kohtalon.  
Mistä? Mistä avun sä löydätkään? -  
Niin ääni sisäinen multa kysyy,  
mut silloin noston mä pystyn pään:  
Näenhän valoisan taivaan,  
näenhän kauniin maan.  
Valost' on vapahdus vaivaan,  
valolta lohdun saan.

## 'I See the Bright Sky'

'All, all of me is taken away;  
only one thing, a secret wish, remains  
and will last in the hands of destiny.  
Where? Where do you actually get help?  
So my inner voice asks me,  
but then I raise my head:  
I will see the bright sky,  
I see the beautiful land.  
The light helps in my worry,  
from the light I get consolation.

<sup>32</sup> Einiö & Valto (1994: 162-163). Music by Ross Parker, lyrics by Hughie Charles.

<sup>33</sup> *Päivän lauluja* 5-6 (1943: 3), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>34</sup> Malmstén, Georg 20 (1940: 12-13), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.



Siks en mä vaivu valittamaan,  
 edestä esteet kaikki raivaan.  
 [...]  
 Music Georg Malmstén  
 Lyrics Reino Ranta (1940)

Therefore I will not begin to complain,  
 I will get rid of all hindrances.  
 [...]

A very optimistic text is *Päivänpaiste* ([1940] 1941), 'The Sunshine',<sup>35</sup> representing the other side of man's state:

## Päivänpaiste

Nyt saa jo kirkas kevätpäivä paistamaan,  
 nyt on jo riemumieltä sydän tulvillaan.  
 Sen lauluun nyt yhdyin mielellään,  
 on ihana, kaunis elämä edessäpäin.  
 Kas vaan, nyt onnen ovet mulle auki on,  
 ja vain tuo kirkas päivänpaiste loistakoon.  
 Nyt kuulen kuin mua se kutsuu,  
 sä tuletko kanssain, onnehen kutsun mä sun.  
 Music Toivo Kärki & Olavi Karu  
 Lyrics Kerttu Mustonen ([1940] 1941)

## 'Sunshine'

'Now the bright day of spring begins to shine,  
 now my breast is already filled with joy.  
 I willingly join its song,  
 the wonderful, beautiful life is before me.  
 Look, the doors of happiness are open for me,  
 and the sunshine may shine.  
 I hear how it calls for me,  
 come with me; I invite you to happiness.'

During the war years 1940–1944 Toivo Kärki composed many of his traditional evergreen Finnish tangos. These tango lyrics do not often mention war, but the implicit structures communicate the reality. The texts are first of all love songs but a deeper analysis of the texts reveals their philosophical standpoint. The melancholic and pessimistic view naturally predominates in this period. The subject in *Valhehaaveita* ([1939] 1940) 'Delusions'<sup>36</sup> sighs that life is just a beautiful lie, an illusion. As mentioned earlier, the crucial term is the repeated word *uni*, 'dream'. The famous play *Life Is A Dream* by Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681) deals with this familiar theme. Life in the tango is either a dream or a [beautiful] lie which creates a conflict:

## Valhehaaveita

[...]  
 vaikk' valhetta ne kaikki on  
 kuin elommekin lohdoton,  
 se kaunis valhe on kuitenkin.  
 [...]  
 harhakuva vuotten takaa,  
 kuin koko elokin  
 vain valhe kaunehin!  
 Music and lyrics Lasse Laurila ([1939] 1940)

## 'Delusions'

[...]  
 'even though they are just a lie  
 as our inconsolable life is,  
 it is, however, a beautiful lie.  
 [...]  
 a delusion a long time ago,  
 like our whole life;  
 just a beautiful lie!'

The setting in the tango text is frequently some other time, another place than Finland and the war. The Eastern themes with gypsies – a vision of freedom – also appear during this period with images such as *csardas*, violins, or horses.

<sup>35</sup> *Tähti Tanssi Sävelmiä 2* (1941: 4–5), *Helsinki University Library*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 185).

<sup>36</sup> *Hurmerinta* (1940–1941), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 347).

These foreign elements or the dream seem to provide oblivion and a setting different to what reality offers.

### 3 Chronotopos: nostalgia for home and childhood

Love naturally reigns. The tangos *Vain yhtä pyydän* ([1939] 1940) 'I Only Beg for One Thing'<sup>37</sup> by Arvo Koskimaa and Ari Saarni [Dagmar Parmas] and *Kun sinisilmäs' mä nähdä sain* ([1939] 1940) 'When I Saw Your Blue Eyes' composed by Arvo Koskimaa, lyrics by Ari Saarni [Dagmar Parmas]<sup>38</sup> emphasise the discourse of love so frequent in the tangos of the 1940s.<sup>39</sup> But *Kun korpi kuiskaa* ([1939] 1940) 'When the Backwoods Whisper'<sup>40</sup> by A. Virpi deals with the opposition of home and strange places. The subject addresses a girl who wants to go to the big city, an example of social mobility, thus invoking the oppositions of rural–urban, familiar–strange, and centre–periphery:

<p>Kun korpi kuiskaa</p> <p>Tuo ikävä, mi korven lapsen sai sydämeen</p> <p>se polttaa niin, ja mieli ois tuon kultahapsen pois kaukaiseen suurkaupunkiin. Hän kaippaa sinne maailmalle kauas metsän taa, mi houkuttaa, mi kuiskuttaa ja rintaan kaipuun saa.</p> <p>Vaan kuiskaavat nuo vanhat hongat ja korpimaa se laulahtaa.</p> <p>Oi tyttönen, sa varmaan luulet, ett' kaukana vain onni on, vaan maailman on jäiset tuulet, siell' turvaton ain orpo on. Sä onnen salon hongikosta löydät parhaiten</p> <p>se sulle soi ja huminoi, sen tunnet sävelen. Sä kuuntele kun korpi kuiskii, sen laulu soi sua viihtäen. Music and lyrics A. Virpi ([1939] 1940)</p>	<p>'When Backwoods Whisper'</p> <p>'That grief, which the child of the backwoods had in its heart, it burns so, and the little one with golden hair wants to get away to the distant city. She longs for the world far away behind the forest, the world which entices, which whispers and rouses the nostalgia in her heart. But those old tall pines whisper and the deep backwoods sing.</p> <p>Oh, girl, you surely believe, that happiness only exists far away, but icy are the winds of the world, there the orphan is always without security. You will find the most happiness among the tall pines of backwoods they will sing and hum for you, you recall their sound. Listen to the backwoods when they whisper their song sounds to entertain you.'</p>
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The message of this text is that the real spirit of place is not found in the urban environment but in the rural one. *Virvaliekkelijä* ([1942] 1943) 'Fire Flames'<sup>41</sup> composed by Arvo Koskimaa, lyrics by Veikko Virmajoki, also offers the quintessential Finnish tango setting. The dark forest is a metaphor for sorrows, the dark bird and dead leaves are images of sorrow. The subject deals with the

<sup>37</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 64).

<sup>38</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 64).

<sup>39</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>40</sup> *Columbia iskelmiä* 1 (1940: 2-3), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 63).

<sup>41</sup> *Columbia iskelmiä* 5 (1943: 2-3), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 75).

oppositions morning–evening, light–darkness, and the linking image is fire. This tango is a very sombre text sharing the same atmosphere as many of the Kalevala folk songs. The bird *Tumma lintu*, 'the dark bird', means death and sorrow (cf. *Tuonen tumma lintu*, 'the dark bird of Tuoni 'the Land of Death)'), while the swallows and larks mean joys and delights, especially the cuckoo which is called 'a bird of joy'.

## Virvaliekkejä

Suolla syksyn synkeällä  
virvaliekit paloi.  
Musta ilta murheissansa  
usvan maahan valoi.  
Tumma lintu yöhön lensi  
äänettömin siivin.  
Kuolleet lehdet peitti tieni,  
jonka yli hiivin.  
Hiivin kohti virvatulta,  
pilvet peitti tähdet.  
Kysyt multa, tyttö armas:  
"Minne, minne lähdet?"  
Lähden kohti virvatulta,  
uutta päivää vuottain.  
Palvon yössä tulta kylmää,  
aamun tuloon luottain.  
Music Arvo Koskimaa  
Lyrics Veikko Virmajoki ([1942] 1943)

## 'Fire Flames'

'On the marsh in the dark autumn  
the will-o'-the wisps burnt.  
The black evening in its griefs  
covered the ground with haze.  
The dark bird flew into the night  
on silent wings.  
Dead leaves covered my path,  
which I sneaked along;  
I sneaked to the will-o'-the wisp,  
the clouds covered the stars.  
You asked me, dear girl:  
"Where, where are you going?"  
I will go and seek the will-o-the wisp,  
waiting for the new day.  
I worship the cold fire in the night,  
trusting in the coming of morning.'

The marsh and the autumn denote sadness; the dark evening is personified. The subject worships the cold fire, a paradox suggesting for the false values of life. The lullaby theme is rare, as I mentioned in the analysis of the lyrics from the 1930s. This theme appears only once in the 1940s in Kullervo Linna's tango *Lapsuuteni kehtolaulu* (1948) 'The Lullaby from My Childhood',<sup>42</sup> in which the subject recalls the lullaby his mother sang for him, an allusion to Finnish lullabies such as *Uinu, lapsi pienoinen*:

## Lapsuuteni kehtolaulu

Äitini mun lauleli illoin,  
tuutiessa lastansa pientä,  
onnellisna uinahdin silloin.  
Yhä vielä muistan laulun sen.

Uinu, lapsi pienoinen,  
äiti untas valvoo:  
Illan tuuli vienoinen  
käy jo kuiskien,  
ja keijukaiset kanssaansii  
maassa unelmain,  
kunnes saattaa aamunkoi  
äidin helmaan vain.

Vielä nytkin tullessa illan

## 'The Lullaby from y Childhood'

'My mother sang for me in the evenings,  
when she put her little child to sleep,  
I felt happy then in sleep.  
I still remember that song.

Sleep, little child,  
mother will watch by your bed:  
The smooth evening wind  
begins to whisper,  
and the elves dance with you  
in the land of dreams,  
until the morning dawn comes and takes you  
to mother's lap.

Again when evening comes

<sup>42</sup> *Kotimaisia rytmejä* 1 (1949), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 30).

huoleni kun unhoittaa tahdon  
rakennan ma muistoihin sillan,  
äidin laulua näin hyrällen.

Uinu, lapsi pienuinen, ...  
Music Kullervo Linna  
Lyrics Mary Mont (1948)

when I want to forget my problems  
I build a bridge to my memories,  
I hum my mother's song like this:

Sleep, little child, ...'

Life is described here through memories of childhood. Like Proust's "huge construction of memory", here the subject sings that "I build a bridge to the memories" when he is worried. Returning on his journey back to the happy time of childhood offers security and hope gives him consolation and oblivion. Because this lullaby theme is very rare in Finnish tango lyrics, it is worth further consideration. Julia Kristeva<sup>43</sup> talks about *chora*, a term from Plato's *Timaeus*, to denote the point of origin and its central role. Man's memories always try to find this *chora*. When Bahtin uses the term *chronotopos* it covers both time and place. *Chora* comprehends time and memories from childhood. The subject builds a bridge to memories. The place is home and the central figure is the mother. The real values in life are found in this *chora*. It is a mother's love, real and pure love, childhood now past whose memories offer security and shelter.

Human freedom is either explicitly or implicitly present in the tango lyrics. The stress on love and longing shows that man seeks his freedom, since he is usually "a slave to love". Only in the tango lyrics with a gypsy theme is man completely free, the violin symbolising both freedom and joy and sorrow. The road also symbolises freedom. In 1947 Pentti Viherluoto composed a song, *Puhelinlangat laulaa, Telefonråden sjunger* (1947), 'The Telephone Lines Sing',<sup>44</sup> with lyrics by Harry Etelä [Aimo Viherluoto] which is not a tango, but shows the idea of freedom very clearly. The Swedish lyrics were written by Thure Wahlroos, a Finland-Swedish actor who provided many Finnish songs with Swedish lyrics in bilingual Finland. This song tells about the moon and the romantics of the roads. The wanderer is as free as a bird in the sky. This song also uses the social environment familiar from the Finnish film; the vagabond travels on foot from house to house taking temporary jobs at farms or in the North of Finland as timber-floater (*jätkä*). The romanticism of the road is very apparent in Finnish films and their songs. In the 1960s a Finnish tango called *Kulkurin tango* ([1946] 1963), 'The Vagabond Tango',<sup>45</sup> repeated the vagabond theme. Of the polarity joy and sorrow, the latter usually appears in the tango lyrics, and joy in other musical genres. The above song expresses joy, delight and freedom. As already pointed out, joy and delight are found in Finnish folk poetry, the *Kanteletar* often describing joy in dance songs or love songs, even though the songs dealing with longing and sorrow are in a majority.<sup>46</sup>

The rural point of view is found in some tango texts from the 1940s, a new perspective covering everyday life and work. In these nature has a central role in

<sup>43</sup> Kristeva ([1986] 1990: 89, 93-98, 108-109, 115-117, 122); Plato's *Timaeus*.

<sup>44</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (note); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 96).

<sup>45</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 224); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1973: 224).

<sup>46</sup> The *Kanteletar* (1840-1841: I:111; I:117; I:118; I:174), cf. Bosley (1992).

describing the life of the Finnish people during the war years. This new talk of work in the countryside appears in tangos in the 1930s. A nurse in M. Maja's *Valkea Sisar* (1934) 'The White Sister'<sup>47</sup> and a shop-girl in *Pikku myyjätär* (1930s) 'The Little Shop-girl', and the shepherd in the 1940s are almost the only representatives of occupations in Finnish tango lyrics.<sup>48</sup> Usually action (*faire*), i.e. people doing things, is not a common feature. *On syys* ([1940] 1942) 'It Is Autumn'<sup>49</sup> describes the natural Finnish environment.

On syys

'It is Autumn'

On syys – kukat uinuvat maaemon helmassa hiljaa

'It is autumn – flowers sleep silent in the lap of  
mother earth

päivä painuu, iltahan päin ...

the day is turning to evening ...

On syys – ilomielellä on kerran leikattu viljaa  
riemun talkoot ne sinne jäi ...

It is autumn – joyfully the corn has been cut  
the feast of joy was left behind ...

Oli kevätkin kerran kun mä muistelen

It was also spring when I remembered

mennyttä lämmin sävel soi,

the past makes a warm sound,

armas ehkä sydäntä sinunkin nyt syksy vartioi.

perhaps autumn watches your heart too, dear.

On syys – kukat uinuvat maaemon helmassa hiljaa,

It is autumn – flowers sleep silent in the lap of  
mother earth

tuuli laulaa, nyt syksy on.

the wind sings now, it is autumn.'

Music George de Godzinsky

Lyrics Kerttu Mustonen ([1940] 1942)

The expression *riemun talkoot* means 'the work of joy', *talkoot* is a Finnish culturally bound nominal for helping neighbours in their work without charging for it.

#### 4 Birds as metaphors of love, longing and freedom

Birds are a significant image in Finnish folk poetry and mythology, expressing love, freedom and death,<sup>50</sup> as in the tango *Muuttolintujen lähtö* ([1940] 1941) 'The Migratory Birds' Departure',<sup>51</sup> music by Onni Laihanen, lyrics by M. Maja [Martti Jäppilä]:

Muuttolintujen lähtö

'The Migratory Birds' Departure'

Jo lentää muuttolinnut etelään päin,

'Already the migratory birds fly to the South,

en niitä seurata voi,

I cannot follow them,

jään tänne yksinäin.

I stay here alone.

Vain aatos entää kaukomaahan tyttöni luo,

Only my thought flies to the distant land to my girl,

nyt terveisen viellä saa taas linnut nuo.

now the birds can take my greetings with them again.

Mä kerran sieltä löysin onnen,

Once I found happiness there,

sen jospa saisin uudelleen.

oh, if I only could get it again.

<sup>47</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 231).

<sup>48</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections.

<sup>49</sup> *Dallapé* 53 (1942: 8–9), Helsinki University Library Collections; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 266).

<sup>50</sup> Turunen (1979: 180); Timonen (1993: 287–298).

<sup>51</sup> *Dallapé* 51 (1941: 10–11), Helsinki University Library Collections; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 267).

Jo linnut lentää rakkahimman tyttöni luo,  
vaan kerran terveiset taas ne mulle tuo.  
Music Onni Laihanen  
Lyrics M. Maja ([1940] 1941)

Already the birds are flying to my dearest girl,  
but they will return to me with greetings.'

Migratory birds frequently occur as in *Kesämuistelo* (1948), 'The Summer Memory'<sup>52</sup> – 'and flock of birds are flying to the South' ja *muuttolintuparvet / nuo etelään liitelee* is a metaphor for man's longing for freedom. The lark is often a symbol of joy as in Toivo Kärki and Kerttu Mustonen's *Unohtumaton laulu* ([1946] 1948), 'The Unforgettable Song',<sup>53</sup> *Käy kohti taivasta kiuru kertomaan / onnellista näin sanomaa* 'In the sky the lark will tell / this happy message' that *saapunut aika nyt armainen on, / ilon riemun se tuo, nautinnon* 'the wonderful time has come, / it comes with joy and pleasure'. This optimistic view came with the end of the war as Finland began to rebuild its society. The lyrics reflect the changes in society. Nature and birds function as mirrors of man's psychological states, but they also are messengers whom the subject begs to take his message to his beloved. Communication, or rather its difficulty appears in the Finnish tangos of this type, as in Georg Malmstén and E. A. Anttila's tango *Lausu vaikka ilman sanaa* ([1939] 1940) 'Say It Without Words',<sup>54</sup> which considers wordless communication.

### 5 Finnish natural environment: joy of life in the mirror of nature

Tangos usually concern of love addressed to a human being, but one where this does not occur is *Mainingit* (1945), 'The Waves',<sup>55</sup> music and lyrics by Georg Malmstén, in which the subject describes the sea as a metaphor for the unknown. *Muistojen tie* ([1942] 1946) 'The Road of Memories'<sup>56</sup> puts this in the context of the road metaphor.

#### Muistojen tie

Yön helmassa uinuvat salmien suut,  
niin hiljaisna huojuvat rantojen puut.  
Kun aamun koi käy nousemaan,  
niin hehkussa sen satujen maa kirkkauden saa.  
Kun kuljemme muistojen tien entisen,  
niin tunnemme riemut ja tuskankin sen.  
Pien hetki vain! –  
vie uudelleen pois retkemme tää,  
taaksemme jää kaunehin muistojen tie.  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Kerttu Mustonen ([1942] 1946)

#### 'The Road of Memories'

'In the lap of the night the waters slumber,  
so quiet the trees sway on the shores.  
When dawn begins to break,  
so in the shine its land of fairy-tales becomes bright.  
When we walk along the road of memories  
we feel its joys and pains.  
Just a short moment!  
Our travel takes us away again,  
the most beautiful road of memories stays behind us.'

<sup>52</sup> *Dallapé* 63 (1948: 14-15), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>53</sup> *Äänilevyiskelmiä* 1 (1948: 12-13), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 341).

<sup>54</sup> Malmstén, Georg 20 (1940: 6-7), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 268).

<sup>55</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).

<sup>56</sup> *Kristalli iskemiä* 1 (1944: 22-23), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 192).



The silence of nature occurs frequently, and the short moments of joy are described metaphorically through summer, the sun and the sea. *Tule hiljaa, Kom sä stilla* (1945), 'Come So Silent',<sup>57</sup> which has silence in its descriptions of Finnish nature, man's time on earth, and the role of destiny, is one of Toivo Kärki and Kerttu Mustonen's most famous tangos. Nostalgia can be defined as longing for the past (in German *Sehnsucht, Wehmut*), or as an anxious melancholic nostalgia (depression), mournful and poignant. Joy and delight can also be rendered through the silence and beauty of Finnish nature, e.g. in *Laulava sydän* (1948) 'The Singing Heart'<sup>58</sup> or *Toukokuu* (1948) 'May',<sup>59</sup> both composed by Toivo Kärki with lyrics by Kerttu Mustonen:

## Laulava sydän

Ken on nähnyt kevään silloin kun se herää  
uumillansa suven salaisuudet,  
ei voi toisten lailla,  
sieluansa vailla,  
unhoitusta löytää onnelleen.  
Öin päivin ja illoin harmain  
olet laulu mun sydämen.  
Sen lahjoitit mulle, armain,  
sinisilmäis kimaltein.  
Kuin kuiskaus laulu tuo jäi  
huulilles viivähtäin.  
Sen luokse mä aina palaan,  
sydän laulava sua rakastaa.

Saapuessa illan  
teemme sadun sillan,  
hienoimman kuin lukin seittilangan.  
Määränpäähän se kohtaa,  
jos vain sinne johtaa –  
entisaikain onnen valkamaan.

Öin päivin ja illoin harmain...  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Kerttu Mustonen (1948)

## 'The Singing Heart'

'Who has seen the spring when it wakes up  
the secrets of the summer's waists,  
like someone else, one cannot,  
without a soul,  
find oblivion for one's happiness.  
Nights and days in grey evenings –  
you are the song of my heart.  
You gave it to me, my dear,  
with your shining blue eyes.  
Like a whisper that song stayed  
on your lips for a moment.  
I always return to it,  
my singing heart loves you.'

When evening comes  
we build a bridge of fairy-tale,  
more fragile than the spider's web.  
It will reach its goal –  
if it only leads there –  
to the haven of happiness of past times.'

Nights and days and in grey evenings ...'

After the war, people tried to find beauty and consolation in nature and spring, which meant a new hope and promise.

## Toukokuu

Auvo ilon askelteita johtaa,  
auringosta tumma varjo jäi.  
Toivon säde kirkkahimmin hohtaa,  
tähden lailla yössä kimmeltäen.  
Toukokuu. Kevätkiurut ne helkkää  
elon riemua pelkkää rinnassaan.  
Toukokuu. Kesätuulien keinuun  
siniperhosten leijuun – kiiruhtaa.

## 'May'

'Bliss leads to the steps of joy,  
a dark shadow was left by the sun.  
The ray of hope is shining brightest,  
like a star in the night it twinkles.  
May. The larks of spring sing  
only of the joy of life in their heart.  
May. The swing of the summer winds  
hurries to the flight of blue butterflies.

<sup>57</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes).

<sup>58</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes); Palo (1981), on the LP record HLP *Laulava sydän*.

<sup>59</sup> Palo (1981), on the LP record HLP *Laulava sydän*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 30).

Saapui syksy silloin  
yksinäisin illoin  
pois kun luotain lähtivät  
mun unten urvut herkimmät.  
Toivotuin, toki saavuthan vielä,  
meitä oottavi tiellä – toukokuu.  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Kerttu Mustonen (1948)

Autumn arrived then,  
with lonely evenings,  
when they left me;  
the keenest catkins of my dreams.  
You, the most welcome, you will still return,  
there May waits for us on the road.'

These two tangos were composed and written in 1948 after the war. The hard war years are behind and music and songs try to give people hope. For Finns nature has always been vital; the deepest mental states are described through nature, so that mirrors the mental states of man. These two tango texts are good examples of hope and joy. Joy and sorrow follow each other, but spring and May give new hope. Trees and birds have a special mythical meaning in Finnish culture as seen in the Kalevala language and tradition.<sup>60</sup> Among other aspects silence is a specific Finnish sign in its different roles as communication and as an auditive feature, especially in nature. Silence is a *Thirdness* experience in its deepest sense. Toivo Kärki's tango *Hiljaisuus* ([1945] 1947), 'Silence',<sup>61</sup> with lyrics by K. Kirsi [Kauko Käyhkö] describes a state in life:

## Hiljaisuus

On hiljaisuus, –  
vain sirppi kuun käy rakoon pilvien.  
On hiljaisuus, –  
ja lehti puun nyt nuokkuu itkien.  
Ja hiljaa lentäen  
tuoll' liittää lintu yön,  
kuin pelätsen sen siipi raskas lyö.  
On hiljaisuus, –  
jo nukkuu untaan luonto - ikuisuus.

On hiljaisuus,  
– mä lasken pään  
Sun syliis', armaisen.  
On hiljaisuus,  
– Sun silmäs' nään,  
ne katsoo rukoillen.  
Mutt' miksi kyynelvuo  
Sun silmäs' armahat'  
jo täyttää – nuo  
nyt mitä kertovat ...  
On hiljaisuus,  
– tää suru onko  
vai onnekkuus ...  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics K. Kirsi [Kauko Käyhkö] (1947)

## 'Silence'

'It is silent, –  
only the sickle of the moon goes behind the cloud.  
It is silent, –  
and the leaf of the tree nods crying.  
And silent flies  
the bird of the night,  
as if frightened its heavy wing beats.  
It is silent, –  
nature already sleeps - eternity.

It is silent,  
– I put my head  
in your arms, my dear.  
It is silent,  
– I see your eyes,  
they look at me pleadingly.  
But why tears?  
Your dear eyes  
already are filled with –  
now what they tell ...  
It is silent,  
– is this sorrow  
or happiness ...'

This can be seen as a love song, but the words actually communicate a deep aspect of life. Space and the cosmic silence make the subject think of life; joy and sorrow accompany man. It is the 1940s; life after the war is unstable,

<sup>60</sup> Timonen (1993: 287-298).

<sup>61</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 334). Cf. also Pettorosi & Gardel & Le Pera's Argentinean tango *Silencio* (1932) about the war; cf. Barreiro (1985: 94).

provoking the questions: What is our future? How can we manage? A Finnish tango which emphasises both the external and internal side of man's environment is *Iltarusko* (1947), in Swedish *Aftonrodnad*, 'Evening Glow',<sup>62</sup> music by Kullervo Linna (1911–1987), lyrics by Usko Kemppi (1907–1994). The setting of this tango also utilises the silence of nature:

## Iltarusko

Taasen iltaruskohon peittyy  
meren kaukaiset rannat  
kuin kultaan, purppuraan.  
Hiljaa – joka ainoa ilta  
sitä kaihoten katson  
ja vaivun unelmaan.  
On tuolla jossain maa palmujen,  
ja rantaan siellä käy neitonen.  
Hälle kuiskaten, iltarusko,  
tervehdys vie ja peitä  
myös hänet purppuraan.  
Music Kullervo Linna  
Lyrics Usko Kemppi (1947)

## 'Evening Glow'

'Again the sunset glow covers  
the distant shores of the sea  
as in gold and purple.  
With silence – every evening  
I look at it with longing  
and I think of my dreams.  
Somewhere there is the land of palms  
and along the shore walks a maiden.  
To her, the sunset glow,  
gives a greeting and covers  
her in purple also.'

This tango expresses the longing for a paradise, somewhere. The subject begs nature to greet to his beloved and cover her in purple. Here nature functions as communicator. A forerunner of Unto Mononen's *Satumaa* (1955), 'The Happy Land', is Georg Malmstén's tango *Unelmien kaukoma* (1947) 'The Distant Land of Dreams'<sup>63</sup> with lyrics by Raimo Raikas. It has all the attributes of man's longing for an abstraction which consists of love and beauty, peace and silence. A general comment on the language of the 1940s is that it is different from modern Finnish; it has more feeling, more emphatic descriptions and exaggerations:

## Unelmien kaukoma

Niin ihanana kangastaa  
meil' unelmien kaukoma,  
ja sydämemme riemun tuntein,  
oudoin odotuksin aukeaa.  
Vain sydäntämme seuraten,  
sen säveliä kuunnellen  
me ajatusten siivin kirkkain,  
voimme sinne kiiruhtaa.  
Ja kuvat, siellä joita nähdä saamme,  
ne tummu ei, ei häiviy pois.  
Niin ihanana kangastaa  
meil' unelmien kaukoma,  
me ajatusten siivin kirkkain  
voimme sinne kiiruhtaa.

Siel' aukeapi kukkanen,  
se suloisimman loistehen  
saa sätehistä auringon,  
mi loistaa heloittaapi hellien.

## 'The Distant Land of Dreams'

'The far-away land of dreams looms  
so wonderful for us,  
and knowing the happiness of our heart,  
with strange expectations opens for us.  
Only following our heart,  
listening to its sounds  
with bright wings of thoughts,  
can we hurry there.  
And pictures, which we can see there,  
they do not darken, do not vanish.  
The far-away land of dreams looms  
so wonderful for us;  
we with bright wings of thoughts  
can hurry there.

There blooms the flower;  
the sweetest bloom  
gets its shine from the rays of the sun,  
which shines so sweet.

<sup>62</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>63</sup> Malmstén, Georg 26 (1947: 10–11), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

Se kukkanen on rakkaus  
ja sydämemme kaipaus  
sen istuttanut ompi maahan  
unten tositoiveiden.  
Kaikk' kukat, siellä joita nähdä saamme  
ne eivät kuihdu, kuole pois.  
Niin ihanana kangastaa ...  
Music Georg Malmstén  
Lyrics Raimo Raikas (1947)

This flower is love  
and the longing of our heart:  
it has been planted in the ground  
by the real hopes of dreams.  
All flowers which we can see there  
they never wither away.  
So wonderful looms ...'

This wonderful place is a paradise or heaven, an ideal or perfect place, a state of perfect happiness. It can be compared with Paradise, the Garden of Eden, or Shangri La, an imaginary place where everything is perfect and everyone is happy. In the 1940s when the whole of life was affected by the war, the songs tried to provide a setting in which joy, hope and happiness existed. In the tango *Kesäinen muisto* [*Marjatta ystäväin*] (1945) 'A Summer Memory' ['Marjatta, My Friend'],<sup>64</sup> the subject draws a joyful scene of summer memory. In its brightness it gives hope during this dark period of death and the loss of those most dear:

Kesäinen muisto

Kesäisen yön muistathan sen,  
tuoksutkin joita tuuli toi,  
kukkaisten vyön ja autereen,  
lehdon miss' leivon laulu soi,  
ja kasteessaan heräävän maan  
muistaiko hopeassa loistain,  
silmäsi sun lempeästi toistain  
sanan, mi huuliltas sain.

Mun muistoissani leivon laulu vielä soi,  
kanssasi jälleen kun käydä mä saan taas onnelaan.  
Kuin ennen meille koittaa kesäaamun koi,  
tuoksuvat kukkaset kasteessa maan.  
Taas uusi päivä  
tuo aamun kirkkauden,  
aavistus valtaa sydämen onnellisen.  
Mun muistoissani leivon laulu vielä soi,  
kanssasi käydä kun saan onnelaan.  
Music Arvo Koskimaa  
Lyrics Jouko Kukkonen (1945)

'The Summer Memory'

'You remember that summer night,  
the scents brought by the wind,  
the many flowers and the haze,  
the grove where the lark sang,  
and the wakening ground in its dew.  
Do you remember how it shone in silver,  
your eyes repeating kindly  
the word I got from your lips!

In my memories still the lark sings,  
again I can walk with you to the happy land.  
As before the morning dawn comes to us,  
the flowers smell in the dewy ground.  
Again the new day  
brings the brightness of the morning;  
the thought fills the happy heart.  
In my memories the lark still sings,  
again I can walk with you to the happy land.'

When the times were so hard, the dream was the only thing which gave hope, supplying people with the strength to go on and wait for their beloved, even though each farewell might be the last.

### 6 The woman in the Finnish tango

The theme of the woman as representing the duality Madonna-whore is not used in the same way as in the Argentinean tango lyrics. The woman of the Finnish tango lyrics begins to get a particular description during the war when people

<sup>64</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 93).

were separated from each other. The woman is usually beloved in the Finnish tango texts, as in Toivo Kärki and Kerttu Mustonen's *Liljankukka* (1945) 'The Lily Flower'.<sup>65</sup> The *receiver* of the subject's love is a good girl described through Finnish nature, the moon, the sky, the sun or the stars. She represents beauty. The Finnish tango is in fact a homage to the Finnish woman. The *sender* is the force of *désir*, the *object* is *rakkauden liekkiin*, 'the flame of love'. The setting is either the Finnish natural environment, or some warm exotic country. The man, the subject of the tango, who picks up the girl is mostly active; the *receiver* is the patient *Liljankukka lumivalkoinen*, 'the snow-white lily flower, innocent and beautiful', a female archetype in Finnish tangos. The tango is of course nostalgic and melancholic; the subject did not know (*non savoir*) that great love is very brief, and that memories and longing remain. The literal translation goes like this:

## Liljankukka

Ken vois liekin sammuttaa  
silloin, kun se leimahtaa  
alla kuumen auringon.  
Monta tielles lennähtää  
virvatulta viehkeää –  
yks vain niistä kaunein on:  
Liljankukka lumivalkoinen,  
sun kerran poimin,  
mutta tiennyt en.  
Jäi muisto mulle kaunein,  
jäi kaipauskin,  
ja se on yhä sammumaton.  
Liljankukka, arvannetko tuon,  
on aatos lämmin, jonka sulle suon.  
Ei toista löydy koskaan  
niin kuin sinä vaan.  
ystävään, sulle syömeni jäi.  
Music by Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Kerttu Mustonen (1945)

## The Lily Flower'

'Who can kill the flame  
when it flashes  
under the hot sun.  
Many girls have come into my way  
charming will-o'-the-wisps –  
only one of them is the most beautiful:  
Lily flower, as white as snow  
I picked you once,  
but I did not know.  
I have the most beautiful memories  
and I am still longing,  
and I will do so for ever.  
Oh, lily flower, will you ever know,  
my thoughts of you will always glow.  
I will never find anyone  
like you,  
my friend; you took my heart when you went.'

We do not usually hear why love ends, and this naturally provides an element of mystery. The *opponent* of the subject is nobody special, but is implicitly destiny or fate. Jealousy is not mentioned explicitly, usually just through a comment such as 'somebody else got you'. The combinatory semantic features postulated from the context are *+désir*; *+passion*, *+temporary*, *+heart*, *+memory*, *+longing* and *+yearning*. The main inherent feature is, however, *kaipaus* 'nostalgic longing and yearning', *+longing* (cf. *Sehnsucht*).

The archetype of the woman in the Finnish tango is an innocent, beautiful girl, pure as *Liljankukka* (1945) 'The Lily Flower'. In many tango texts the subject directs his dreams and love to a woman who is like Finnish nature. *Anna-Liisa*, *Anna-Lisa* (1947)<sup>66</sup> composed by Toivo Kärki with lyrics by Kerttu

<sup>65</sup> *Tunnetuinmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 6-7; also translated into Italian as *Resteria* (1963) by Umberto Marcato, cf. Haapanen 1902-1971 (1975: 461).

<sup>66</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 27, 256), cf. also another tango with the same name from 1938 by K. Pekola & N. Lehtonen.

Mustonen, recalls Finnish folk poetry forms through the use of alliteration and assonance: *Toiveiden ihmerata rannaton*, 'The shoreless wonder-circuit of hopes.' In *Hän mulle riemu rikkahin*, 'She is for me the richest joy', *syysyössä tähti kirkkahin*, 'in the autumn night the brightest star', where the phonemes /r/ and /k/ express the feeling with the other surrounding co-text. The tango begins with the central theme of time, a biblical allusion; it is time for everything. The time of love is short, it dies as does nature in autumn. The name *Anna-Liisa* gives the subject memories of a happy time. The melancholic atmosphere is established through the blue sky and flying clouds of the first line, a metaphor for man's brief life and the floating time of happiness. The setting of the tango recalls Kärki and Mustonen's other tangos, especially *On elon retki näin*, *Så leder livet vår färd* (1940), discussed earlier, which also begins by describing the sky. The Swedish lyrics follow the Finnish original closely, reproducing the atmosphere with repetitions and alliterations familiar from the *Kanteletar*. The Swedish text was written by Joel Rundt (1898–1971), a Finland-Swedish author who also has translated songs from the *Kanteletar* into Swedish. This tango is also one of the prototypes of the Finnish male singing to women, or the tango addressed to a girl with a special name. The lyrics were written by a woman who actually interpreted the inner state of the Finnish male. The central role of the sky is a metaphor for man's mythical and religious aspects. In the cosmos man compares his state and situation, his inner feelings, the duality of the macrocosm and microcosm world, the here and the there.

The Finnish tango has been considered a "male culture"; the men have composed tangos and have mostly written the tango texts. Furthermore, they usually are performed by men. In Finnish the personal pronoun *hän* is genderless, so that most tango texts can have either a male or a female *receiver* of love and longing. Since by tradition, however, the man sings to a woman, Finnish tangos do not have men's names like *Pekka* or *Jussi* as titles.<sup>67</sup> However, some exceptions where the subject is a female, e.g. *Kotkan ruusu* ([1941] 1969) 'The Rose of Kotka',<sup>68</sup> composed by a woman, Helvi Mäkinen, lyrics by Leo Anttila, in which the *receiver* of the love and longing is a male do exist. The *destinateur* is usually the force of love, fate, or destiny. The woman in the Finnish tangos has names like *Anneli*, *Anja*, *Anna-Liisa*, *Sinikka*, *Marja*, *Marketta*, *Marja-Leena* or is a girl, *Punatukkaiselle tytölleni* (1963) 'To My Girl with Red Hair',<sup>69</sup> whom the *subject* has in mind. Sinful girls are represented by girls with foreign names as *Tamara* or *Desirée* or a metaphor such as *the Rose of Kotka*, but are not frequent themes in original Finnish tangos. In *The Rose of Kotka* the female subject of the tango waits for 'the boy from abroad' in the harbour of Kotka. Another type of woman in the Finnish tango appears in *Monika*, *Monika*, *Monika* ([1956] 1965). The unhappy girl walks alone along the

<sup>67</sup> Except the tango by Noel Carter & Michael Mitchell, *O'Malley's tango*, translated into Finnish as *Jussin tango*, 'Jussi's tango' [1956] 1957, in Swedish *Don Johans tango*. *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).

<sup>68</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 1 (1976: 218).

<sup>69</sup> *Kultainen tangokirja* 1 (1994: 112-113), *Sinitaivas*, *Olavi Virta*, pp. 56-57. Fazer (notes), composed by Olavi Virta, lyrics by Lauri Jauhiainen.



streets in Paris, or the Japanese girl *Humiko* (1963) is beautiful like the cherry flowers. The foreign names denote either sin (e.g. *Tamara*, 1933) or exotic and escapist places, as in *Humiko san*, while the domestic names suggest brief love and happiness.<sup>70</sup> In the 1950s the name Tuija appeared in the tango *Tuija, tehtaän tyttönen* (1951) 'Tuija, the Little Girl Working at the Factory', while the Finnish tango parodies use names such as *Elsa*, *Esteri*, or *mummo* 'grandmother' (cf. *Tango Pelargonia*). In the 1930s the woman in the Finnish tango could be *Valkea sisar* ([1934] 1935) 'The White Sister',<sup>71</sup> a pleasant helpful young girl working at the hospital such as M. Maja describes.

The object is a temporary happy or unhappy love; love seldom results in marriage as in the Finnish tango *Anneli, Anneli, Anneli* (1965),<sup>72</sup> music by Antonio Brave [Toivo Kärki], lyrics by Reino Helismaa: *Anneli, Anneli Anneli, häitämme kellot nyt soi*, 'Anneli, Anneli, Anneli the wedding bells chime for us'. The inherent feature is *+temporary*, i.e. love and happiness are transitory entities. The *helper* is Life, but Life, Fate or the Other Love are the *opponents*. The setting, the place and time of the Finnish tango is nature, the countryside, or the dancing pavilion. The happy time is summer, while autumn and winter mean the time of the end of love; hence, love and sorrow follow the law and timing of nature.

Since the Finnish tango is not an urban phenomenon in the same way as the Argentinean tango, nature plays a central role in its texts, which can, for instance, describe Finnish Lapland and its magic as in *Lapin tango* (1964), 'The Tango of Lapland'<sup>73</sup> by Unto Mononen and Maj-Lis Könönen, without any mention of love of a person, or in Kaarlo Valkama and Usko Kempin tango *Valkovuokot* (1951), '*Wood Anemones*'<sup>74</sup> describing the beauty of these first white flowers in spring without any hint of human love, or the sea in *Mainingit* (1947) 'The Waves', a metaphor for freedom. The images of the Finnish tango are *heaven, moon, stars* and *the sea*. Sometimes the tango itself assists Eros as the *helper* which brings love and happiness. Hence, the woman in the Finnish tango represents mother earth for the man, the real love against which existence and inner states are seen. In one tango from the 1940s the perspective of the subject has been changed, in that while usually the male addresses his love or longing to a woman, now, in the female composer L. Sirkka's [Sirkka Valkola-Laine] tango *Mä olen nainen* (1948), 'I Am a Woman',<sup>75</sup> with her own lyrics, a woman is the subject talking about her love and passions. This is a self-conscious text, probably a reaction against the male tango culture, showing that a woman can express the modality of doing (*faire*), whereas she usually is a passive object in the texts.

<sup>70</sup> *Kultainen tangokirja 1* (1994: 82, 83166-167).

<sup>71</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 231).

<sup>72</sup> Kärki 1 (1970), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Haapanen 1902-1971 (1973: 16).

<sup>73</sup> Mononen (1970).

<sup>74</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>75</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 30).

Mä olen nainen	'I Am a Woman'
[...]	[...]
Mä olen nainen, joka lemмен ricmun tuntenut on.	I am a woman, who has felt the joy of love.
Mä olen nainen, joka lemmentuskan kokenut on.	I am a woman, who has felt the pain of love.
Oi suuri lempi, mi onnen huumavaan näyttää.	Oh, great love, which shows the ecstasy of happiness.
Oi suuri lempi, mi syömmcin tuskalla täyttää.	Oh, great love, which fills my heart with pain.
Mä olen nainen, jonka kaippu sammu ei konsanaan.	I am a woman, whose longing will never die.
Mä olen nainen, jonka veri polittaa suonissain.	I am a woman, whose blood burns in my veins.
Sun luokses armahin, saavun illan tullen unelmissain.	To you my dear, I return in my dreams when evening comes.
Mä olen nainen, joka rakastunut on.	I am the woman who has fallen in love.'
Music and lyrics L. Sirkka (1948)	

This tango is very ardent, and the new perspective is intentionally used but becomes a parody through overstatement. As mentioned above, Kerttu Mustonen has written many tango texts in which the male subject and his states are revealed. The subject here is a woman, which means a change, but a temporary change because the female subject has mainly found her place as a subject in so-called comic or parodic tangos (cf. *'Tango in the Summer Night'*, *Tango keittiössä*, (1964), *'Tango in the Kitchen; Tango metsässä* (1963), *'Tango in the Forest'*, *Tango amerikkalaisittain* (1963), *'The Tango in the American Way'*).<sup>76</sup> The genderless pronoun means that Finnish tango lyrics are formally neutral, but cultural awareness shows us that it is a male who has mainly composed, written and sung Finnish tangos, with the exceptions of the songwriters Kerttu Mustonen and Dagmar Parmas, and the composers Ester Seetri (*Ilta Kannaksella* (1942), *'The Night on the Karelian Isthmus'*, L. Sirkka [Sirkka Valkola-Laine] (*Mä olen nainen*, *'I Am a Woman'*, 1948), Helvi Mäkinen (*Kotkan ruusu*, [1941] 1969, *'The Rose of Kotka'*), and Rauni Autio (*Tango Humiko*, 1963).<sup>77</sup> The Finnish tango is actually a description of the history and psychology of the Finnish man, his love and anxiety, as well as his nostalgia.

### 7 Erotic narratives

In 1943 "Salamanteri" [Juhani Pohjanmies] composed *Kuubalainen serenaadi* ([1942] 1943), *'Cuban Serenade'*,<sup>78</sup> with lyrics by Unto Koskela. The Swedish lyrics were written some forty years later by the Finland-Swedish professor

<sup>76</sup> Kärki 1, 3 (1970–1971); Haapanen 1902–1971 (1975: 560–561).

<sup>77</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Haapanen 1902–1971 (1975: 559).

<sup>78</sup> Kärki (1956: 4–5), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 179, 354), also translated into Spanish as *Serenata Cubana* (1963) and *Kuutamotango* (1958) *Tango de la luna* (1963) by Joaquín Martínez, cf. Haapanen (1902–1971 (1975: 12–13).

Johan Wrede in 1986.<sup>79</sup> In the 1930s Usko Hurmerinta's tango *Yö Riossa* ([1936] 1937) 'A Night in Rio'<sup>80</sup> already had a narrative structure, especially involving the modality of doing (*faire*). This introduced a new element into the Finnish tango. Rimmon-Kenan states that a story is a narrative when it is an event answering the questions what happened? where? when? which persons were involved? why? and how?<sup>81</sup> Its time and place, and how it is told are typical. The 'Cuban Serenade' begins with 'coming from a pub, at night, being a bit drunk, drinking farewell to the wonderful country we are visiting and having to leave'. Then 'Watkinson noticed that a serenade should be sung to the pearl of Cuba', and 'I, Tom, and Watkinson, did it under her window, she then throws a red rose to each of us from her window.' 'I cried bitterly, when she smiled in a strange way to all of us, and I kept her garter as a precious treasure, only for me, so I thought.' The story goes on, 'And we boys were unhappy; why do we have to leave this wonderful country and this wonderful girl?' The Finnish men for the first time cry with tears in their eyes, *Ja me itkimme haikeasti*, 'and we cried so sadly'. A narrative whole can be tested by being able to answer the question: what happened?

The new setting for the Finnish tango is the urban pub. Another new element is also that the characters were a bit drunk. In the Argentinean tango the café or *cafetín* is a central place where the subject tells us about life and its *tristeza*. But this tango serenade cannot be compared with the setting of the Argentinean tango; in 'The Cuban Serenade', humour predominates, rather like in sea shanties. All these three men had been the object of a betrayal by the same girl. This setting can avoid all the taboos of the Finnish man, who can also cry bitterly in these lyrics, hence the enormous popularity of this song, which has been sung together on various occasions, especially during the war as a escapist narrative, a joyful and a sinful song in order to forget reality for a while. Today it is a Finnish evergreen.

In this narrative the erotic element is clear, a theme which is not normal but is a hidden structure in Finnish tango lyrics. The common feature is that erotic themes are so-called silent structures hidden between the lines. The strongly passionate tangos such as Mikko Sirén's tango *Polttavat huulet* ([1942] 1944) 'Burning Lips', Arvo Koskimaa and Dagmar Parma's *Tappavat suudelmät* ([1935] 1936), 'Killing Kisses'<sup>82</sup> are rare as we have seen. Passionate themes occur especially in contexts with foreign elements. In 'Cuban Serenade' the red roses from the pearl of Cuba signalise a sinful life; the three sailors from Finland had each felt her passion. The strange and foreign setting is the Cuban night and the harbour where sin flourishes. Through this story men can cry and sigh over their longing for passion. In 1956 Saukki [Sauvo Puhtila] writes Finnish lyrics to the European tango, *Tango Desirée*, by Carl Niessen & Cassen.<sup>83</sup> The Finnish

<sup>79</sup> Wrede (1985: 27-28).

<sup>80</sup> *Sonora 4* (1937: 4-5), *Helsinki University Library Collections: Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945* (1981: 379, 385).

<sup>81</sup> Rimmon-Kenan (1983: passim).

<sup>82</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 190, 312).

<sup>83</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 70).

lyrics have clear intertextual connections with the above tango; the gaucho and the girl in the text are on the Argentinean *puszta* (!), a geographical mixture, but the fantastic words and the music sung by the great tango singer Olavi Virta made *Tango Desirée* very popular in Finland and provided a fabulous setting together with passionate music into which the tango listeners and dancers could enter and forget the ordinary reality.<sup>84</sup> As the title of the tango suggests it is desire, the expression of the modality of want, *désir*.

During the latter part of the 1940s when the war was at its end, people wanted to hear and dance nostalgic and melancholic tangos. The production of nostalgia and melancholy in this genre was already high in the 1940s. A critic of this was, as mentioned above, L. Sirkka [Sirkka Valkola-Laine], the female composer of *Mä olen nainen* (1948), 'I Am a Woman'. Reino Helismaa also wrote a parody, *Parodiatango* (1949) 'The Parody Tango'.<sup>85</sup> Helismaa's parody tango lyrics describe its music as like 'a long sour-milk drink; the lyrics are filled with tears, everything is so wonderful, and the best of all is the awful pain which burns the heart'. Joy and music in a major key cannot match the tango, which must have 'a sad tone like a grandmother's sigh filled with sorrow', the text states. During the war Reino Helismaa and his competence in writing songs and various lyrics, comic songs and parodies, stories about the war, and love songs was well-known.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Lönnroth (1978: *passim*) talks about the terms *the double setting* and *derealization*.

<sup>85</sup> Helismaa (1967: 120-121). Tangos with humour were used also in Finnish films, cf. *Anoppi tanssii tangoa* ([1938] 1942) 'Mother-in-law Dances Tango'. In the 1950s, for instance, Veikko Lavi's *Hunajainen tango* (1952) 'The Honey Tango', in the 1960s, for instance, Kari Kuuva's *Tango Pelargonia* (1963), cf. Haapanen 1902-1971 (1973: 107; 1975: 506).

<sup>86</sup> Pennanen & Mutkala (1994: 47-86, 87-98).

## VIII Nostalgia – the soul of the Finnish tango born in the 1950s and 1960s

The Finnish tango lyrics of the 1950s and 1960s show a change in thematic repertoire from the 1930s and 1940s; the over-romantic, sentimental and pathetic appearing less often. Two reasons for this are that, on the one hand, the language of passion changes; the expression of feelings through exaggerations and archaisms become more modest, and words and word-forms typical of that time are used; on the other hand, the socio-cultural context is going through a structural change after the war.<sup>1</sup> This is reflected in the popular music lyrics, i.e. in the texts of the masses. The main themes in the Finnish tango are the same as before; namely, love, rejected love, and joys and sorrows described through Finnish nature, but the lyrics have a tendency to greater depth. The 1950s is the time of rebuilding for Finnish society, and structural change is a reality; people move from their rural environments, from villages in the countryside to urban and industrial regions, to Sweden and to the USA. For many Finns the war had meant farewell to their relatives, husbands, loved ones, to the ceded Karelia, homes, villages, hills. The longing remains, nostalgia for something people had, or have no longer other than in memories or as a longing for something which is only a dream or illusion. New themes of work and social reality are now represented, even though they are infrequent. As we have seen, the tango began as an urban phenomenon in Finland, being something new and modern from the urban world and Europe.

The 1950s is the period when Finnish *nostalgia, kaiho*, actualises its cultural-bound meanings in the Finnish tango lyrics and in other forms of popular music as well as in poetry and literature. The background to Finnish nostalgia is, naturally, the Finnish and Karelian folk poetry collected by Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884) in the middle of the 19th century. In this national romantic view which emphasises the national character of the people, nature is pervasive. For Lönnrot as well as for J. L. Runeberg (1804–1877), and Zacharias Topelius (1818–1898), nature is valuable and good, God-given, a completely contrary view to J. V. Snellman's (1806–1881) rational Hegelianism. For Snellman nature is barbarian, and rural people are uncivilised. The centre is the civilised urban environment.<sup>2</sup> Topelius emphasises the role of nature in man's life and man's need to take care of it. An interesting view is that Topelius means that God has given the native country its "natural boundaries"; he also thought of Finland as a woman or a maiden, a view that still influences our way of seeing Finland.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this explains the central position of nature in the male Finnish tango culture; as pointed out earlier, the Finnish tango can actually be interpreted as honouring the Finnish woman seen through nature and the cosmos. Hence, the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Allardt (1975: passim; 1986: passim).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Suutala (1986: 237–270); Kukkonen (1993a: 50–53).

<sup>3</sup> Topelius ([1875] 1983); Tiitta (1994: passim).

role of Finnish nature in socio-cultural contexts is based on this national romantic view, a somewhat pantheistic view already found in folk poetry.<sup>4</sup> This is also the background to Finnish society in the 1950s.

In 1965 Pekka Gronow asks in an article why Finnish songs do not discuss social reality.<sup>5</sup> During the 1960s however the atmosphere in popular music shows a change due to the structural social changes in the Finnish society. According to Allardt 32% of Finns made their living from agriculture in 1960, 12% in 1975, and 10% in 1980.<sup>6</sup> The song texts begin to exhibit social criticism, and the new protest song is born. The Finnish tango lyrics also reflect these changes during the active 1960s, even though not strongly. The prominent figures during this time in popular Finnish songwriting are Reino Helismaa (1913–1965) and Sauvo Puhtila (1928–) who have both written about 5000 lyrics to Finnish songs, and have created the central role of nature in describing man's inner landscape, a special feature of Finnish culture. During the 1960s new lyricists appear; the new music performed by the Beatles and other pop groups spawns new songs and new interpreters and lyricists, a fact made obvious in the various popular music texts. Changing times produce new thinking in song lyrics.

An example of the number of Finnish tangos during the 1960s shows in the tango *Rautalankatango* (1964) 'The Pop Song Tango',<sup>7</sup> music by Jukka Haavisto, lyrics by Kari Tuomisaari, which summarises the position of the tango amid the new music. The subject reflects on the fact that he will go to a dancing place where he can feel the wonderful tango which has the sounds of destiny. But he will only hear *Bird, bird, bird, is a word, / Twist and shout, hippy hippy shake / hey Boba Lou ... I am terrified*, as he says, because he will dream with half open eyes, hearing a nostalgic tango. But the orchestra plays *Shadows, Sounds, Spotnicks, Hounds, Violents, Cliffiers, Scaffolds, Drifters, Beatles ... Bootles, I am terrified*. At the end he visits the dancing pavilion of his home village where the pop group has had the idea of playing tangos, and played 'the tango in the hills, in the kitchen and in the forest, on the sea, and almost everywhere / The Happy Land, Irja, and The Lily Flower, wonderful.' Here intertextual references create a parody of the Finnish tango boom in the 1960s. However, the Finnish tango had become so strong that no parody or burlesque could dim its popularity.

The period of the 1950s and the 1960s is seen as a new time for the Finnish tango. In the 1960s the Finnish tango gets its nostalgic Finnish soul deeply. Many tangos are composed and written, original Finnish words springing from *Finnishness*. In the 1960s Unto Mononen creates his famous melancholic tangos, in which the states of despondency, gloom, and sadness, loneliness and oblivion are described in terms of Finnish nature. His tangos are pessimistic studies in man's soul. Mononen's own life – he committed suicide in 1968 – is

<sup>4</sup> Timonen (1993: 287–295, 345–346).

<sup>5</sup> Gronow (1965: 161).

<sup>6</sup> Allardt (1975; 1986: 25).

<sup>7</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes); Haapanen 1902–1971 (1975: 458).



reflected in his tangos through longing for love and acceptance, yearning for understanding in his works, longing for a place where life is perfectly happy. Mononen's tangos are mainly representations of the darkness of life, a deep sadness, and a sense of futility along with implicit religious themes. The frequent usage of water can be interpreted as the biblical metaphor of *the water of life*.<sup>8</sup> Toivo Kärki's tangos are more optimistic and positive, filled with a hope and optimism, a nostalgia, a life-preserving attitude, as Pekka Jalkanen has noticed.<sup>9</sup>

The production of Finnish tangos from 1950 to 1960 was large and also produced its own parodies. The tango boom was strong. Markku Pölönen's recent film *Onnen maa* (1993) 'The Land of Happiness'<sup>10</sup> tells the story of the Finnish countryside from the 1960s through Finnish tango lyrics using both the most popular tango lyrics from this period and *Onnen maa* 'The Land of Happiness'<sup>11</sup> (1971 sung by Reijo Taipale) composed by Mononen in the 1960s. In 1955 Mononen wrote his tango *Satumaa* (1955) 'The Happy Land'.<sup>12</sup> The theme of happiness or a land where one can be happy recurs in his tangos as *Sehnsucht* or *Heimweh* for some perfect place. The theme of Paradise, Heaven, Shangri La, Atlantis, is a nostalgic theme of longing, a return through memories to man's original position in Paradise. Besides these two basic Finnish tangos, the tango singer Reijo Taipale sings Mononen's tangos *Yön tummat siivet* (1966), 'The Dark Wings of the Night', *Jos jätät minut* (1964), 'If You Leave Me', lyrics by Solja Tuuli, *Tähdet meren yllä* (1964) 'The Stars over the Sea', lyrics by Solja Tuuli, *Tähdet silmissäsi* (1966) 'The Stars in Your Eyes', lyrics by Juha Vainio, *Kangastus* (1964) 'Mirage', lyrics by Solja Tuuli, and *Sateen tango* (1965), 'The Tango of Rain', lyrics by Solja Tuuli in this film.<sup>13</sup> These tangos deal with longing and loneliness. The other tangos in the film reiterate the theme of love: *Tango Humiko* (1963) music by Rauni Autio (female composer), lyrics by Saukki, on a Japanese theme talking about a girl as beautiful as cherry blossom, also expressing the escapist notion of going to some distant place, the tango *Monika* (1964), music by Olavi Karu, lyrics by Olaus [Olavi Linnus], which talks about a sad girl in Paris; *Eilinen tango* (1966), 'Yesterday's Tango', music by Alvi Vuorinen, lyrics by Solja Tuuli, concerns time; time flows, happiness is brief. *Satu ruskeista silmistä* (1966), 'The Fairy-Tale of the Brown Eyes', music and lyrics by Jauhiainen & Kurki, is among the most popular tangos of the 1960s. *Vaaralliset huulet* (1964), 'The Dangerous Lips', music by Arvo Koskimaa, lyrics by Solja Tuuli, is about dangerous love, whereas overt eroticism is usually lacking in the Finnish tangos. The only foreign tango in this film is by Oskar Strook, a Russian composer, *Kertokaa*

<sup>8</sup> Rev 7:17, 21.6, 22:1, 22:17.

<sup>9</sup> Jalkanen (1992: 77-78); Sjöblom (1994a: passim; 1994b: 53-61).

<sup>10</sup> Pölönen (1993).

<sup>11</sup> Taipale (1993), BBK 2545.

<sup>12</sup> *Satumaa* as a title exists also in M. Mikko's waltz *Satumaa* (1938, 1942), cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 190).

<sup>13</sup> Mononen (1963-1971; 1970); Taipale (1993), BBK 2545.

*hänelle miksi* (1976), 'Tell Her Why'<sup>14</sup> with Finnish lyrics by Saukki, an interesting tango using the normal Russian polite form of address *Te* 'You'. Its theme is forbidden love, giving a mythical aspect to the tango as a whole.

Finnish nature recurs throughout the Finnish tangos in this film; love and longing are described through the Finnish summer and Finnish attributes such as work, the dancing pavilion, sauna, the shortness of the beautiful summertime, through the oppositions of youth, manhood, age, and the end of all, death. The film also stresses *nostalgia*, the crucial point of the Finnish tango lyrics, not only as *melancholy* but also the sweetness and delight of humanity's history and memories. *Onnen maa* (1993) is actually a metaphor of return, going home, a representation of *nostalgia*, an actual return and a return through memory to a place and time which is a manifestation of *chronotopos*.

### *I Nostalgia – a longing to return*

Nostalgia for home and rural surroundings dominates in the 1950s. In *Kotiseutuni* (1952) 'My Home Region'<sup>15</sup> with music and lyrics by Lauri Jauhiainen the subject sighs: 'Oh, my home region, my silent song will sound for you, I cannot forget your hills and valleys; wherever I go, I will remember you. My roots are with you'. The main theme in this tango is the spirit given by the place longed for, personified in: 'you saw my birth, I some day perhaps will get back into your lap'. The text incorporates the dichotomies home–world, life–death. Home means here both 'the home region from childhood' and 'the lap of the home region', 'the heavenly home'. Later the subject sighs again, 'Oh, my home region, you will call back your child, you will not leave him/her in the world'. Only one line mentions that 'my very best friend is there', longing for another human being. This tango expresses the original meaning of nostalgia: 'a longing to return'.

The other aspect is the dichotomy rural–urban, i.e. the structural change in society and the urban life which causes alienation and loneliness when man has lost his bonds with home and nature. In *Ilta satamassa* (1953), 'A Night in the Harbour',<sup>16</sup> music by Toivo Kärki, lyrics by Kullervo talks about "the noise in the streets". Words like *melu* 'noise' are new to Finnish tango lyrics in the 1950s. The urban themes occur in *Heräävä kaupunki* (1959), 'The City Waking Up' by A. Lievonen, lyrics by M. Jäppilä, and *Muistojen satama* ([1958] 1959), 'The Harbour of Memories'<sup>17</sup> by M. Jäppilä. The setting of the tango thus gradually changes from the domestic to the urban. This fact has also been pointed out by Lönnroth in his studies of the settings of oral poetry in Nordic literature.<sup>18</sup> Even though the objects of longing are primarily the place, the home, lost childhood

<sup>14</sup> Strok (nd., Erik Lindström).

<sup>15</sup> *Toiveiskelmiä* 11 ([1952] 1957: 15–16), *Helsinki University Library Collections* (also notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 299).

<sup>16</sup> *Toiveiskelmiä* 3 (1953: 9), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>17</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 248).

<sup>18</sup> Lönnroth (1978: passim).

and youth in a rural milieu, a few others from the 1950s mention the urban environment, for instance, M. Ounamo and Ville's *Nuoruutteni kaupunki* (1953) 'The Town of My Youth',<sup>19</sup> but these are rare among the Finnish tango lyrics, and do not share the urban nostalgia of the Argentinean tangos.<sup>20</sup>

Toivo Kärki and Reino Helismaa's *Hiljainen kylätie* (1953) 'The Quiet Country Road'<sup>21</sup> has social concern as a new theme. The war had left many widows and women waiting for their husbands to return from the war. The country road remains quiet, the footsteps of the beloved husband or boyfriend were not heard. In the 1950s the countryside was abandoned as people went to the capital Helsinki as well as Sweden, a happy land offering new hope and a better future than Finland. This tango can also be interpreted as love of the past, or social change or the subject expressing the loss of the beloved. This tango offers a paradigm for the life-style of the past. The linguistic effects of repeated negation in the first line is powerful: *En enää*, 'I no longer', *kuule sun askeltes iloista kaikua tieltä nyt*, *en*. 'hear the joyful echo of your steps on the road; I do not', *En enää*, 'I no longer', *kuule sun kaihoisaa lauluas, laulua rakkauden*, 'hear your sad song, the song of love'. *Milloinkaan et enää vieressä portin sä odota minua, et*. 'You never wait for me by the gate, you do not wait.' This tango juxtaposes joy-sorrow. Fate has taken dreams away, the time is both the past and present, *Se oli silloin, mutta nyt sydämes lienee kylmennyt*, 'It was then, but now your heart might be cold'.

## Hiljainen kylätie

En enää kuule sun askeltes iloista kaikua  
tieltä nyt, en.  
En enää kuule sun kaihoisaa lauluas;  
laulua rakkauden.  
[...]  
Hiljainen on kylätie,  
joka kerran sun naurustas raikui.  
Hiljainen on kylätie,  
jolla ennen sun laulusi kaikui.  
Se oli silloin, mutta nyt  
sydämes lienee kylmennyt.  
Kylätie on hiljainen  
niin hiljainen.  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Reino Helismaa (1953)

Tyst ligger byvägen<sup>22</sup>

Ljudet av stegen när du gick på vägen,  
de glada, hör jag aldrig mer.  
Borta är sången du sjöng, där på vägen  
du gick, om vad kärleken ger.  
[...]  
Tyst ligger byvägen nu,  
där ditt skratl ljud, det klingande ljusa.  
Tyst ligger byvägen nu,  
där din sång kunde känsloerna tjusa.  
Här är så helt förändrat allt.  
För att ditt hjärta blivit kallt.  
Vägen är så stilla nu,  
så tyst och död.  
Swedish text Lars Huldén (1980)

The tango ends with *Kylätie on hiljainen, / niin hiljainen*, 'The country road is so quiet, so quiet'. This country road represents past life and nostalgia, the same theme as in the Argentinean tango *Caminito*, 'The Little Path', discussed earlier. The beloved and the country road are memories. The dichotomy of silence-laughter shows the nostalgia. This tango could have been a pure description of

<sup>19</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 50).

<sup>20</sup> *Dallapé* 65 (1959: 8-9), Helsinki University Library Collections; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 248).

<sup>21</sup> *Tunnetuinmat suomalaiset tangot*, p. 13; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 50).

<sup>22</sup> The Swedish translation is by Huldén (1980, manuscript).

the past, but the lines: *Se oli silloin, mutta nyt / sydämes lienee kylmennyt*, 'That was then, but now / your heart might be cold', suggests rejected love, which unfortunately banalises this otherwise beautiful, nostalgic description. In the Swedish version the line *Här är så förändrat allt* 'Here everything is so changed' emphasises the process of change. This Finnish tango has been an exemplar in describing the period after the war, as well as for pure nostalgia.

The dichotomy of home-strange place occurs in the lyrics of *Muistelen kotiseutua* ([1950] 1959), 'I Remember My Home Region',<sup>23</sup> music and lyrics by Pentti Vilppula. The subject first asks: 'Can I ever get to where my heart belongs?' The spirit of the road is repeated here; the subject is on a strange road far away from his home village. On one hand, the freedom of the vagabond is the theme of many tangos and songs, while on the other hand, the road in a strange place, implies alienation and loneliness, including the alienation of urban life in the 1950s and of social change. Karelia, ceded to Soviet Union at the end of the war, has been the theme of many texts, forming a part of the spirit of place in man's real and abstract environment. Folk poetry already contained the themes of orphanhood, homelessness, and loneliness. In memories nature is so beautiful and bright, a Happy Land to which one can never return. On this earth, man has to be ready to leave what he loves most as the lyrics in one of Kärki's tangos (*On elon retki näin, Sã leder livet vår fãrd*, 1940, 'Such Is the Journey of Life') say.

A dream or memory from childhood is expressed in *Lapsuuden muistoja* (1964), 'Memories from My Childhood'.<sup>24</sup> The tree *tuomi*, 'bird-cherry' belongs among "the good trees" in the Finnish folk tradition like the rowan and birch, while the alder is the Devil's tree.<sup>25</sup> *Tuomi*, 'bird-cherry' is a national symbol of happiness and spring. With its white bloom and strong scent, the tree is like a bride. In childhood it was always eternal spring or summer when life was happy, as in the songs of the *Kanteletar* which concern childhood.

## Lapsuuden muistoja

Muistan lapsuuden herttaiset hetket,  
kun sinut mã kohdata sain.  
Kotitanhuilla lapsena silloin  
me yhdessä leikittiin ain.  
Oi jos saisin nyt lapsuuden jälleen  
huolet heittäisin pois unholaan.  
Kotitanhuille sinut mã veisin  
näin muistot ain kauneimmat saan.  
Lauloi linnutkin riemuiten silloin,  
meille aamuin, päivin, illoin  
tuuli tuomea taivutti silloin  
kukat valkoiset sulta näin sain.  
Music and lyrics P. Neuvonen (1964)

## 'Memories from My Childhood'

'I remember the pleasant moments of childhood,  
when I met you.  
On our home ground as children then  
we always played together.  
Oh if I could return to my childhood again  
I could throw away my worries.  
I would take you back home;  
so I would get the most beautiful memories.  
The birds also sang with delight then,  
for us in the mornings; in the evenings  
the wind bent the bird-cherry when  
I got the white flowers from you.'

<sup>23</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 251).

<sup>24</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes).

<sup>25</sup> Guenat (1994: 120-133).

The same theme occurs in the tango *Harmaa kylä kertoo* (1965), 'The Grey Village Tells Its Story',<sup>26</sup> a rural tango which recalls childhood and the spirit of place in a village:

Harmaa kylä kertoo

Harmaa kylä kertoo lapsuustarinaa,  
tytölle mi kadun tietä taivaltaa.  
Kotimökin muisto mieleen kuvastaa,

kuiskee pihakoivu onnen sanomaa.

Kerran riemumiellä lähti kulkemaan,  
aikoi kylän muiston painaa unholaan.  
Mutta monta kertaa aatos palajaa,  
missä kotikoivu lehteen puhkeaa.

Vinttikaivon luona kukat aukeaa,  
tuuliviiri hiljaa jälleen narahtaa.  
Herää tyttö pieni tuska rinnassaan,  
kun harmaa kylä kertoo lapsuustarinaa.  
Music Kauko Leander  
Lyrics Pentti Kelavirta (1965)

'The Grey Village Tells Its Story'

'The grey village tells its childhood story,  
for the girl who walks along the street.  
The memory of the home cottage comes into her  
mind,  
the birch tree in the home yard whispers its  
message.

Once she walked away,  
intended to forget the memory of the village.  
But often her thought returns  
to where the home birch bursts into leaf.

Near the well the flowers bloom,  
the weather-vane creaks again.  
The girl wakes up with anguish in her breast,  
when the grey village tells its childhood story.'

The nostalgic view is offered by a grey village, a sign of poverty, so characteristic of the east Finnish countryside. The village tells its story for the girl who now is in an urban milieu. The rural-urban dichotomy implies the feeling of alienation so typical of this time. Exotic themes still exist, because they provide sentimental and escapist daydreams, but they seem to be in a minority here. This can be explained by the fact that the descriptions of psychological states as well as existential and social themes arising from structural change begin to appear. Humour and parodic themes also appear. While the Argentinean tango lyrics tell about love, rejected love, betrayal, sadness and bitterness, the European tangos have more hyperbolic passion and more escapism. The Finnish tango lyrics combine the mental landscape and the actual Finnish landscape. Messages of joy and sorrow, love and oblivion are described through the descriptions of nature. In the 1950s and 1960s especially the Finnish tango develops an overriding concern with describing psychological states using nature in which these are reflected.<sup>27</sup>

## 2 Values in life – love or money?

In the 1950s Finnish tango lyrics deal with new themes such as money. Toivo Kärki and Reino Helismaa's tango *Kultakuumetta* (1951), 'Gold Fever',<sup>28</sup> uses the subject of a Finnish play of the same title, a story of three gold-diggers and how

<sup>26</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes, Musiikki Fazer, Helsinki); Haapanen 1902–1971 (1973: 89).

<sup>27</sup> Kukkonen (1991 seq.).

<sup>28</sup> Helismaa (1967: 66–67); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 216).

gold makes people blind. Real values are in other things. The central message is that love, gold and happiness will vanish like ashes in the wind. An extralinguistic reality creates this new perspective on everyday life and work, and material things:

## Kultakuumetta

On raha maailman,  
on kulta voima sen  
ja niitä kaippaa ihminen.  
Kun kullan kiillon loistavan hän näkee, unohtuu  
sen vuoksi kaikki muu.  
Sen tähden tehdään kuumeisesti työtä,  
on onni myötä,  
tai sitten ei.  
Se kerallansa kateutta kantaa,  
ja minkä antaa,  
sen myöskin vei:  
Ei kulta anna onnea, ei onni kaupan lie.

Ei ostaa raha sydäntä, se lämmön siitä vie.  
Ken kulta rakastaa,  
hän onnen sijaansa saa vain tuhkaa,  
joka tuuleen hajoaa.  
On köyhyys onnen veljenä,  
sen sisko puutteen tie.

Kun kulta silmän sokaisee  
ja järjen polttaa pois,  
se onneako myötään tois?  
Ei kulta onneen tietä tee,  
sen tekee rakkaus,  
ja se on kaiken tarkoituks.  
Se tenhoo vielä nytkin niinkuin ennen  
ja vuotten mennen  
tuo varmuuden.  
Sen voimaa kullan mahti ei voi estää,  
se yksin kestää:  
On valta sen.  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Reino Helismaa (1951)

## 'Gold Fever'

'Money is the power of the world;  
gold is its power  
and man longs for it.  
When he sees the shining lustre of gold, he forgets;  
everything else for it.  
For this one works fervently,  
luck is with you,  
or not.  
It brings envy with it,  
and what it gives,  
it also takes:  
Gold does not bring happiness, luck might not  
be for sale.

Money cannot buy the heart, it takes its warmth.  
One who loves money,  
he gets just ashes instead of happiness,  
which scatter in the wind.  
Poverty is the brother of happiness,  
its sister is the way of shortage.

When gold makes your eyes blind  
and burns away your sense,  
could it then bring happiness?  
Gold does not make the way to happiness;  
that is made by love,  
and that is the aim of everything.  
It still enchants today as before  
and in by-gone years;  
it brings security.  
The strength of that the power of gold cannot hinder,  
it alone lasts:  
This is its power.

Gold-prospecting and the so-called *jätkä* culture, *jätkä* being 'a man with various jobs, travelling around in Finland working as goldminer, timber-floater and at other temporary jobs',<sup>29</sup> is a lifestyle the Finnish so-called *rillumarei* culture created by Toivo Kärki and Reino Helismaa describes. A *jätkä* was free to come and go. This life-style typifies longing for freedom. This has given birth to a romantic view expressed in Finnish songs, for instance, the popular song *Puhelinlangat laulaa* (1947), 'The Telephone Lines Sing' mentioned before articulates the notion of freedom: 'I am free like a bird, that is the life of a vagabond'. The tango *Tukkilaisromantiikka* (1952), 'Timber-Floater Romance',<sup>30</sup> by Kari Aava [Toivo Kärki] and Reino Helismaa has all the attributes of this free and romantic life-style of the timber-floating vagabond called *jätkä*. The

<sup>29</sup> Suomen kielen perussanakirja 1 (1990: 352) 'Basic Dictionary of the Finnish Language'.

<sup>30</sup> *Tukkilaislauluja* (1952: 18-19), Helsinki University Library Collections.



first two lines set the scene of the tango: *Tanssilava. Pihkan tuoksu. / Tango niinkuin virranjuoksu*: 'The dance pavilion. The scent of resin. / The tango like the stream of the river'; it is a dance on a Saturday night at which the *jätkä* meets a beautiful girl, but love is temporary in his life; time and place change, the girls are different. This notion also occurs in *Kulkuri ja pilvet* ([1952] 1953), 'The Vagabond and the Clouds',<sup>31</sup> music by Veikko Takala, lyrics by Rauni Kouta [Reino Helismaa]. This tango does not take human love as its theme, but tells about joy in nature's beauty, and about sorrow and sadness when clouds and rain follow the vagabond. 'It is as if joy does not belong to the world'. Nature mirrors the psychological states of the vagabond and his longing for freedom in the beautiful Finnish natural environment. But this tango deals also with unhappiness, since the life of a vagabond is not always a free romantic life. The theme of vagabond lifestyle is also described in Finnish films from the 1940s and the 1950s as well as in waltzes, comic songs (*kupletti*) and in the typical Finnish song tradition based on folk poetry represented by J. Alfred Tanner, Matti Jurva, Tatu Pekkarinen, and Reino Helismaa, just to mention a few. During the war this joyful song style was particularly popular in that it tried to lift the soldiers' spirits, give them joy, delight, laughter, courage, bravery, and hope as antidote to the grief and sadness under the war.

### 3 Time and reality

*Aika rientää* ([1951] 1953), 'Time Flies',<sup>32</sup> composed by Toivo Kärki with lyrics by Rauni Kouta, is concerned with time. Time is personified as the subject in the text. It is in a hurry and it cannot wait. Neither has love no time to wait as the beauty of the rose cannot wait. The message is that man's journey on the road of life is guarded by time. The lyrics of this tango point out the spirit of time, showing that life is short; the beauty of the moment vanishes. This spirit of place is what Bahtin calls *chronotopos*, 'time and place'. Place implies time;<sup>33</sup> they belong together:

#### Aika rientää

Aika rientää,  
kiire sillä ikuinen  
aika ei voi odottaa.  
Aika rientää,  
yksin on se ihminen,  
ken ei sitä kiinni saa.  
Rakkaus ei odota,  
ei ruusun kauneus,  
kerran hehkuu ruusu vain  
ja kerran rakkaus.

#### 'Time Flies'

'Time flies,  
it is in an eternal hurry  
time cannot wait.  
Time flies;  
the person who cannot catch it  
is alone.  
Love does not wait,  
neither does the beauty of a rose,  
just once only will the rose glow,  
and once love.

<sup>31</sup> *Toiveiskelmiä* 5 ([1952] 1953: 14-15), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 49).

<sup>32</sup> *Toiveiskelmiä* 4 (1953: 16), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 217).

<sup>33</sup> Bahtin (1991); Palin (1991: 125-146).

Aika rientää,  
 onni osana on sen,  
 ken sen oikcin tjuuaa.  
 Ruusu alla ikkunasi  
 kerran kuolee, kuuhtuu pois.  
 Elämäsi tiimalasi kerran tyhjä ois.  
 Ainuttakaan hetkeäsi  
 saada takaisin et voi,  
 sillä elon retkeäsi aika vartioi.  
 Music Toivo Kärki  
 Lyrics Rauni Kouta [Reino Helismaa] ([1951] 1953)

Time flies,  
 happiness is a part of it,  
 who understands it aright.  
 The rose beneath your window  
 dies, withers away.  
 The hour glass of your life is empty.  
 Not a single moment  
 you can get back,  
 because time guards the road of your life.'

The same idea occurs in the tango *Onnen tie* ([1953] 1954), 'The Road of Happiness'<sup>34</sup> by Onni Salomaa. The subject repeats: 'You cannot buy everything with money, at least not happiness.' *Olen köyhänäkin rikkaista rikkain. / Olen onnesta autuain. / Sinun kanssasi kulkea kun saan, / ilo suurin on osanain*, 'Even as a poor man I am the richest of the rich. / I am the happiest / When I can be with you, / then the greatest joy is mine.' The question of values had arisen in the Finnish tango lyrics of the 1950s. In Finnish society where the rebuilding process was under way, people became urbanised, industry changed people's lives, welfare and a better material future was a dream. One of these dreams was the romantic one of finding gold in Lapland which the so-called *rillumareit* films, e.g. *Rovaniemen markkinoilla* (1951) 'The Fair at Rovaniemi', described. The idea in these films is that Finland is seen as a market place where one buys and sells. If one has the gift of speech, even love can be seen as an exchange process, i.e. all values are upside down. This is the idea of carnivalism, the world upside down, discussed by Bahtin in his Rabelais studies.<sup>35</sup> The world upside down actually shows the weakness of the social reality.

New themes deal with work and society. Kari Aava [Toivo Kärki] and Rauni Kouta's [Reino Helismaa] tango *Tuija, tehtaan tytöinen* ([1951] 1952) 'Tuija, the Little Girl Working at the Factory'<sup>36</sup> shows the alienation of man in a changing society. Tuija is like a bird in a cage who cannot sing. The text describes how the noise of a machine can kill the soul of man. The text invokes the dichotomies light-darkness, freedom-prison. A new theme is also hinted at Valkama and Jauhiainen's *Salainen suhde* ([1953] 1957) 'A Secret Relation'<sup>37</sup> which concerns a secret love affair which only the moon knows about, a love that lasts only a summer. The themes of passion are usually hidden in the Finnish tango texts. *Kuubalainen pokeri* (1951) 'The Cuban Poker',<sup>38</sup> music by Justeeri [Kauko Käyhkö] with lyrics by Ville [Vilho Koljonen] also belongs to these "sinful" tangos. This has the same theme as some other narrative tango texts discussed earlier, such as stories told by men in Cuba or Rio playing games, drinking and being together with passionate girls *Sikari*, *sokeri*, *pikari*,

<sup>34</sup> *Kulkurit iskelmä* (1954: 18-19), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 161).

<sup>35</sup> Bahtin ([1965] 1991: passim; 1991: 179-200).

<sup>36</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Kärki 3 (nd.); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 218).

<sup>37</sup> *Toiveiskelmä* 11 (1957: 23-24), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 301).

<sup>38</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 348).

*pokeri* ..., 'Cigar, sugar, glass, poker' as in Finnish the word play. In the last lines the subject recalls his memories of Cuba, where he lost 'his golden tooth in the game'.

Even though the Finnish tango is not "social history" in that sense the Argentinean is, when it reflects global and social conditions, it does have a social aspect in the 1960s, because of the general political and social awareness and climate. For instance, Kaj Chydenius composed *Hiroshima Tango* in the 1960s.<sup>39</sup> A tango with a social history is *Tango Finlandia* (1967) also composed by Chydenius, with lyrics by Lars Huldén,<sup>40</sup> translated into Finnish by the poet Pentti Saaritsa. This tells a story about the Finns who came to Finland from far and near, to a country given them by destiny, and about their hard life. The time is the 1960s, when Urho Kekkonen was the President of Finland, and the wider political aspect was the world politics of the 1960s.

## Tango Finlandia

De kom hit från skilda trakter,  
de som började bo i vårt land.  
Men här knöt de sedan kontakter,  
vilka utvecklades efterhand.  
Gud vet, vad de har fått lida,  
för att hålla det rent och helt.  
Detta land det blå och vita  
så ojämnt bland folket fördelt.  
[...]  
Vänta inte för mycket av oss,  
när det gäller världens nöd.  
I det land som ödet gav oss  
får vi bara för arbete bröd.

Inte hittar vi på att fråga  
var frukten vi köper är köpt.  
Inte är det för oss någon plåga  
hur en röstning i FN förlöpt.  
De som ska för oss bestämma  
kan till mord kommendera oss.  
Men vi blir nog hellre hemma  
än vi ger oss ut för att slåss.

[...]

Music Kaj Chydenius  
Lyrics Lars Huldén (1967)

## Tango Finlandia

They came here from far and near,  
those who began to settle our land.  
but here they then made contacts  
which developed little by little.  
God knows what they had to suffer,  
to keep it pure and whole.  
This land, the blue and white,  
so unjustly divided among the people.  
[...]

Do not expect too much of us,  
when the distress of the world is in question.  
In that land which destiny gave us  
we get only bread for our work.

We don't come to ask  
from where the fruits have come.  
It is no pain for us  
how a vote in UN has gone.  
Those who will determine for us  
can order us to kill.  
But we will rather stay at home  
than start to fight.  
[...]

In the text the Finns are described as silent people, first uncivilised, then civilised. With real Finnish *sisu*, i.e. courage and endurance, perseverance and grit they have made Finland what it is. The text also deals with injustice and work in Finnish society as well as in the world, to which egoistic Finns give very little in world-wide aid, or question the politics in developing countries or the policies created by the United Nations. Finnish society is seen through the

<sup>39</sup> Gronow & Bruun (1968: 122).

<sup>40</sup> Korhonen (1967, 1968, 1970); Haapanen 1902–1971 (1975: 559). Huldén is professor of Scandinavian languages and literature, author and poet, has translated Finnish songs and tangos into Swedish, written cabarets, revues, and translated tangos such as *Satumaa* (1955), 'Sagolandet', *Tango Desirée* 'Tango Desirée', *Syyspihlajan alla*, 'Under höströnnen', etc. into Swedish.

concept of national egoism, but the Finns are a peace-loving and hard-working people as in J. L. Runeberg's Paavo, the farmer who struggled against the environment and distress, typical of those Finns who get their bread only with hard work and sweat. 'This land, the blue and white' denotes the colours of the Finnish flag, itself a symbol of freedom. This concept occurs in Jukka Kuoppamäki's song *Sininen ja valkoinen* (1972) 'Blue and White', a popular song which has almost become a national symbol, and appeared in a tango version in 1990. *Tango Finlandia* is actually the only tango with sociocultural concerns in my research material.

Everyday life characterises the Finnish tango lyrics in the 1960s. In 1953 the tango *Tuija, tehtaan tyttönen* ([1951] 1953) 'Tuija, the Little Girl Working at the Factory'<sup>41</sup> about social reality had already appeared. In the 1960s humdrum reality came into the tango lyrics, either describing a social situation, as in the period of social criticism, protest, and action in the 1960s or as parodies. The monotonous and nostalgic Finnish tango got some touch of reality. *Maanantaitango* (1963), 'The Monday Tango'<sup>42</sup> seems to be a carnivalistic tango, but its triviality could also be seen as a typical Finnish tango setting including dreams and the fire of love. The new theme is actually the life of the modern man and his/her time, the new life whose hectic rhythm leaves no time for real feelings. As in the *Maanantaitango* and in many others fire is a metaphor for strong passions. *Lemmen tuli*, 'the fire of love', is a frequent metaphor in the European tangos.

#### 4 The carnival tango: humour and parody

The romantic nostalgia in the Finnish tango lyrics of the 1930s, 1940s and the 1950s produces a new perspective in the tango lyrics, namely, parody. The first parodic Finnish tango, *Tanko laulu*, a text which was a reaction to the tango boom in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century actually goes back to 1915. In the 1950s the first really parodic Finnish tango texts appear, e.g. Veikko Lavi's *Hunajainen tango* (1952), 'The Honey Tango',<sup>43</sup> a parody of the saccharine lyrics in Finnish tangos; this text recounts all the familiar clichés such as honey, syrup, pain, and sorrow, as had already done in Reino Helismaa's *Parodiatango* (1949) 'Tango Parody' in the 1940s. This trend grew in the 1960s, a time before the temporary oblivion of the Finnish tango in the 1970s. Well-known parodies from the 1960s are Kari Kuuva's *Tango Pelargonium* (1964)<sup>44</sup> about grandmother longing for grandfather (oldies, not young and beautiful people!), with the old pelargonium (not a rose!) in the window, who hears the cuckoo of Tuoni 'Death'. Actually, this tango was the most popular record in

<sup>41</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes); Kärki 3 (nd.); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 218).

<sup>42</sup> *Toiveitten tangot* (1963), Katri-Helena (1963), Ildeco Oy, ILD 89; Haapanen 1902–1971 (1975: 288).

<sup>43</sup> Finnish Broadcasting Company, Gramophone Library, RW-1196-A copy; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 353).

<sup>44</sup> Jauhainen (1985: 246–247); Haapanen 1902–1971 (1975: 561).

1965 in Finland, the Finnish people not seeing it as a parody.<sup>45</sup> Erik Lindström and Martti Innanen's tangos *Elsa, kohtalon lapsi* (1967) 'Elsa, the Child of Destiny' and *Esteri, tyttö sadepisarain* (1967) 'Esther, the Girl of the Raindrops' are also parodies,<sup>46</sup> as are various tango potpourris, like Toivo Kärki and Reino Helismaa's *Uutta ja vanhaa, tangosikermä* (1955) 'New and Old, Tango Potpourri'<sup>47</sup> in which parts of famous Finnish tangos are cited. These are typically intertextual tangos.<sup>48</sup> The carnival can be interpreted as an upside down mirror reflecting culture and society. The carnival can also describe a phenomenon humorously. In *Ishias* (1951), 'Sciatica',<sup>49</sup> composed by Justeeri [Kauko Käyhkö], lyrics by Ville [Vilho Koljonen], a tango with a sub-title explaining the man dancing tango, tells a rather long story about how the subject caught cold when he swam in a hole in the ice, and how the doctor prescribed jitterbug and tango as a cure.

Even though the basic soul of the Finnish tango comprises expressions of nostalgia and melancholy, the texts also represent the other pole of temporary joy, humour and carnivalistic aspects. *Karnevaalitango* (1961) 'The Carnival Tango'<sup>50</sup> describes a joyful evening, but its lyrics emphasise once again its transitoriness. The great idea is of life as a carnival as in the much more serious Argentinean counterparts. The notion also occurs in the Swedish tango *Tango di concertino*, which talks about a clown and his joys and sorrows. Sadness lies beneath the joyful surface. The clown has to make people laugh so they can forget the reality and sadness for a moment. Tango texts also describe time as a short encounter between the participants. In folk poetry joy and happiness are also depicted as short joyful moments in the dance. The *Kanteletar* concentrates on sadness and sorrow, but fleeting joys are actually mentioned in dance songs.<sup>51</sup> The subject matter of *The Carnival Tango* is trivial but it still expresses the temporariness of life and happiness.

The comic tango texts of the 1960s are mostly narratives in which the subject is a female telling a story. The narrative genre appeared in the 1930s and 1940s, in such tangos as *Yö Riossa* ([1936] 1937) 'Night in Rio', and *Kuubalainen serenaadi* ([1942] 1943) 'Cuban Serenade' in which men tell their lascivious stories about what happened in Rio de Janeiro and in Cuba.<sup>52</sup> Here the male is the adventurer, his female counterpart is the representative of sin. But in *Tango amerikkalaisittain* (1963) 'Tango in the American Way',<sup>53</sup> the female lyric subject tells a story about Bill, a sailor whom she danced with. Reino Helismaa's text is a good combination of narrative and dialogue with phrases and patterns involving code-shifting, i.e. direct quotations from English.

<sup>45</sup> Nyman (1989: 13).

<sup>46</sup> Jauhainen (1985: 232-233); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1973: 59, 71).

<sup>47</sup> *Toiveiskelmiä* 8 (1955: 6-8), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

<sup>48</sup> Bahtin (1991); Palin (1991: 125-146).

<sup>49</sup> *Justeeri I Sävelpirahduksia* 2 (1951: 20-21), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 348).

<sup>50</sup> Kärki I (1970).

<sup>51</sup> The *Kanteletar* (1840-1841: 1:111, 116-119, 122), cf. Bosley (1992: 27-31, 40-41).

<sup>52</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1946 (1981: 179, 385).

<sup>53</sup> Kärki I (1970); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1975: 558).

## Tango amerikkalaisittain

Nousi laivasto maihin,  
ja tulotansseihin minä lähdin  
ja siellä sen Billin kohtasin.  
Tankin lailla  
huolta vailla  
vyöryi luoksein hän heti,  
kun soi tango.  
"Oukei, oukei!  
Ai äm Bill the Scilor  
meid in Juu Es Sei! oukei!"  
Näin huuteli Bill  
kun hän tanssiin mun vei.  
[...]  
Toiset tanssivat tangoa näin ja noin ja näin,

mutta foxia hyppeli uusi ystävään.  
Sanoin tälle hyppijälle:  
"Hyvä Bill tämä tanssihan on tango!"  
"Oukei, oukei!"  
huus Bill joka polvistain holtin se vei.  
"Huhu-huu, huh-hei!"  
Hän tyyliä vaihtoiko tangoksi?  
Ei! Hän totta tosiaan ryhtyi valssaamaan,  
pyöremyrskyn lailla tiensä raivas.  
Kuin hyrräpari niin siinä pyörättiin.  
Mä tyttöraukka huokailin:  
"Voi taivas!"  
[...]  
Kun riepunukke vain  
olla siinä sain.  
"Enhän ole laiva,  
olen nainen!"  
Oh päättyi viimeinkin  
piina hirmuisin,  
kun päättyi tango amerikkalainen!

Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Reino Helismaa (1963)

## 'Tango in the American Way'

The navy landed,  
and I went to the reception dance  
and there I met that boy, Bill.  
Like a tanker  
without worry  
he came over to me as soon as  
they played a tango.  
"Okay, okay!  
I'm Bill the sailor  
made in the USA! Okay!"  
So Bill shouted  
when he took me to dance.  
[...]  
Others dance tango this way, and that way  
and this way,  
but my new friend danced the foxtrot.  
I said to this dancer:  
"Dear Bill, this dance is a tango!"  
"Okay okay!"  
shouted Bill and made me lose my balance.  
"Oh, oh, oh, oh!"  
Did he change his style to a tango?  
No! In fact he began to waltz,  
like a tornado he made his way.  
Like a whirl we went round.  
I, poor girl, sighed:  
"Oh, good heavens!"  
[...]  
I was like  
a rag doll there.  
"I'm not a boat,  
I'm a woman!"  
Oh, at last  
the terrible torment was over.  
when the tango in the American way  
was finished!

Reino Helismaa wrote his *Parodiatango* (1949) 'Parody Tango' in the 1940s. He was an excellent lyricist in writing both serious nostalgic Finnish tango lyrics and comic, parodic or humorous lyrics for films, revues, and patter songs. Helismaa's tango lyrics are a part of Finnish popular music lyrics from 1940 to 1960; his lyrics are like folk poetry in our time. The idea of carnival, merrymaking in song lyrics was one of his strengths in Finnish popular culture; he could be serious, but he could also laugh and make people laugh. Actually, he was himself an incarnation of the Finnish paradox of joy and sorrow mixed. Major and minor went hand-in-hand giving meaning to each other in describing the Finnish mentality in song and tango lyrics.

The lyrics in *Tango metsässä* (1963) 'Tango in the Forest'<sup>54</sup> was also created by Helismaa. The 1960s was a time of the tango, the titles showing how the name *Tango* is used. There are tangos in different places and on different

<sup>54</sup> Kärki 3 (1971); Haapanen 1902–1971 (1975: 560).



occasions, on the sea, the forest, the evening, the morning, the moonlight, and so forth. This carnival text is humorous but becomes serious when love turns to trivial everyday life. The nightingales and chaffinches, the wonderful silence of nature and young love vanish:

## Tango metsässä

Satakieli siellä meille lauloi säveltään.  
Hiljaa, hiljaa, vaieten kuuntelimme ääntä sen.  
Miehekkäästi mulle lausuit: "Ilman sua tahdo olla en!

Tango metsässä silloin meidätkin yhteen sai.  
Sulle vastasin silloin:  
"Tottakai, tottakai!"  
Pienten peiposten lailla kodin laitoimme onnellisen.

Alkoi murhetta vailla tiemme yhteinen, ihmeellinen.

[...]  
Tango metsässä silloin jäänyt on unholaan.

Laulu peiposten silloin  
nyt on kuin unta vaan.  
Nyt vain haikaran äänen kuulla korvani varmasti vois.

Muiston valtaan jos jäänen,  
lasten äänet sen pyyhkivät pois ...  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Reino Helismaa (1963)

## 'Tango in the Forest'

The nightingale sang its tune for us.  
Silent, silent we listened to its sound.  
In a manly way you said to me:  
"I don't want be without you!"

The tango got us together then.  
I replied:  
"Of course, of course!"  
Like little chaffinches we built our happy  
home.

So together we began our road without  
worries; wonderful.

[...]  
The tango in the forest has then fallen into  
oblivion.

The song of the chaffinch then  
is now just a dream.  
Now I can hear only the sound of the stork in  
my ears.

If I am captured by the memory,  
children's voices will take it away ...'

The lyrics consciously banalises the over-romantic and sentimental atmosphere of the Finnish and the European tango. Kärki and Helismaa wrote new tangos because the Finnish people wanted them; after the war people wanted to dance the nostalgic, sentimental, romantic tango, close to each other after the many years of separation from loved ones. Helismaa's lyrics are self-parodying: we Finns like these kinds of nostalgic memories described through the Finnish natural environment. For Helismaa, Lapland especially and its nature and its extremes such as lightness-darkness was a Paradise, and a happy land, and his texts are like mirrors of the language and themes in Finnish folk poetry.<sup>55</sup>

In *Tango keittiössä* (1963) 'Tango in the Kitchen',<sup>56</sup> music by Arvo Koskimaa, lyrics by Saukki [Sauvo Puhtila], the setting is the kitchen and cleaning up, i.e. the tango could also be both realistic, and humorous. The subject is a female. A hyperbolic setting is depicted in *Mene pois* (1965) 'Go away',<sup>57</sup> music by Pedro de Punta [Toivo Kärki], lyrics by Tuula Valkama, repeating the phrase 'Go away'. The subject bursts out, 'My feelings are stormy, go away!' Even though the gender is not explicit in the text, the very hyperbolic atmosphere and the spontaneous feelings are probably a female's.

<sup>55</sup> Pennanen & Mutkala (1994) has discussed Reino Helismaa's life and songs.

<sup>56</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1975: 560).

<sup>57</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1975: 305).

## 5 Destiny

In the Finnish tango lyrics existence is seen as 'destiny's game', i.e. man can do nothing to change his/her situation. *Destiny* is the power believed to control events or that which happens to somebody, while something is thought to be decided or planned beforehand by *fate*, a power which controls all events inexorably. Fate is a person's destiny or future, or death and destruction. In Greek mythology the three goddess Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos were the Fates who decided the course of people's lives. In English the idiom *a fate worse than death*, means a very unpleasant experience.<sup>58</sup>

In the tango lyrics destiny and fate have central roles as *helper* or *opponent* when the subject of the text needs an explanation of his existential questions; his love, rejection, his despondency. In the Finnish tangos of the 1930s and 1940s only some religious hints were given in explaining why the subject had either good luck or bad luck in his life and love. God preordained him and his beloved to be together. Direct religious comment does not occur at all after this period. Life and love are ruled by "the law of life", or destiny, bad luck and unhappiness, the sadness and sorrows of destiny instead. This theme becomes most important. In the Finnish tangos of the 1950s the lyrics go deeper into stories about life or describe existential states. In *Kohtalo kutoo* (1951), 'Destiny Weaves'<sup>59</sup> by Toivo Kärki and Rauni Kouta from the Finnish film *Rovaniemen markkinoilla* (1951), 'The Fair at Rovaniemi'. The role of fate and destiny in man's life is described using the rural metaphors of weaving a rug. The lyrics use the oppositions of joy-sorrow and bright colours-dark colours.

## Kohtalo kutoo

Onni kangasta kutoo,  
kirkkaat on loimet sen.  
Poljin nousee ja putoo  
riemuiten, rakastaen.  
Murhe kangasta kutoo,  
tummat on loimet sen.  
Kyynel katkera putoo  
kangasta tummentaen.

Kohtalo ihmisen  
elämään kutoo  
kangasta monenkirjavaa.  
Yhdellä tumma se on, kuin yö,  
ja toisella helmenhoitoisaa.  
Jollekin sukkula nauraa ja soi  
jollekin pirta vain suruja toi.  
Kohtalo ihmisen elämään  
kutoo kangasta monenkirjavaa.  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Rauni Kouta [Reino Helismaa] (1951)

## 'Destiny Weaves'

'Happiness weaves the fabric,  
bright are its warps.  
The treadle rises and falls  
with joy, loving.  
Grief weaves the fabric,  
dark are its warps.  
The bitter tear falls  
making the fabric dark.

The destiny of man  
weaves in life  
fabric in many colours.  
For one it is dark, like night,  
and for another bright like pearls.  
For one the shuttle laughs and sounds  
for another it just brings griefs.  
Destiny in the life of man  
weaves fabric in many colours.'

<sup>58</sup> *Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of English Language* (1989); *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989: 536-537, 757-758).

<sup>59</sup> Kärki 4 (1971), *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1971 (1992: 41).

It is destiny which brings joys and sorrows. This rural metaphor allows Reino Helismaa to talk about a lifestyle which is going to be history in the 1950s. The view of the text is the author's, describing life through the dichotomy of joy and sorrow. The author uses the modality of knowing (*savoir*) that destiny determines our lives. Destiny is also the theme of Toivo Kärki's tango *Kohtalon kukka* ([1957] 1958), 'The Flower of Destiny',<sup>60</sup> with lyrics by V. Enckell, who also wrote lyrics for Kari Aava's [Toivo Kärki's] tango *Rakasta, kärsi ja unhoita!* ([1955] 1956), 'Love, Suffer, and Forget!'<sup>61</sup> 'The Flower of Destiny' reiterates 'The flower of destiny is the flower of sorrow', and 'Even the frost cannot take away the flower of destiny.' Unto Mononen's *Kohtalon tango* (1964) 'The Tango of Destiny',<sup>62</sup> is also well-known, a tango which is actually an icon for Mononen's own life. It deals with the sadness of life: *Soi hiljaa tango kohtalon, / sen sointi surullinen on*, 'The tango of destiny plays quietly, / its sound is sad.' The subject knows that the tango of destiny means that love and happiness are dead, and he sighs, *Miksi en saanut olla mä onnellinen / sitä yksin nyt mieltä saan*, 'Why could I not be happy; / I think about that in my loneliness'. In another of Mononen's tangos, *Yön hiljaisuudessa* (1964) 'In the Silence of the Night' he laments, *Olet kaukana rakkahimpain / niin kuin tähtönen tuo. / Olet lähtenyt maailmastain / uuden rakkauden luo*, 'You are so far away, my love / like that star. / You have left my world / for a new love'.<sup>63</sup> For Mononen destiny and the life's misery were central, his tangos of the 1960s manifesting the Finnish equivalent of *tristeza*.

### 6 *Life is a road*

We have seen how familiar man's road is as a metaphor for life. A well-known example of life as a road is Federico Fellini's film *La Strada* from the 1950s. The film shows how love and hate, good and bad exist side by side. The film music was composed by Nino Rota with Finnish lyrics by Kullervo under the title *Tie (Gelsomina, 1956)* 'The Road'.<sup>64</sup> The English lyrics by Geoffrey Parsons and J. Turner do not mention "la strada", only Gelsomina's eyes – "Stars shine in your eyes", i.e. instead of the idea of the road.<sup>65</sup> The Finnish lyrics however express the film's central notion that the vagabond's only consolation is that the road of life brings both joys and sorrows, or destiny. Hope is a new road and new possibilities. In the tango *Tie, joka luoksesi johtaa* ([1953] 1955), 'The Road Which Leads to You', music by Kari Aava [Toivo Kärki], lyrics by Rauni

<sup>60</sup> *Yleisön pyynnöstä* 3 ([1957] 1958: 14-15), *Dallapé* 65 ([1957] 1959: 14-15), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1971 (1992: 245).

<sup>61</sup> *Yleisön pyynnöstä* 1 ([1955] 1956: 8-9), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1971 (1992: 64).

<sup>62</sup> Mononen ([1963] 1970: 14); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1973: 168).

<sup>63</sup> Mononen (1970; 1973-1971). Cf. also Sjöblom (1994a; 1994b).

<sup>64</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1971 (1992: 69).

<sup>65</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).

Kouta [Reino Helismaa],<sup>66</sup> the road of life may be seen in religious terms. Wandering stands for life<sup>67</sup> and life is action, the modality of doing (*faire*), so that the way or the road represents the many choices among different alternatives. The lyrics have an existential seriousness, even though it is primarily a love song. In the tango beguine *Surun ja ilon kyynleet* ([1954] 1955), 'The Tears of Sorrow and Joy',<sup>68</sup> music by Kari Aava [Toivo Kärki], lyrics by Orvokki Itä [Reino Helismaa] and 'The Road Which Leads to You' the lyrics focus on the oppositions in life: joy and sorrow, joy being temporary and sorrow more enduring. The Beatles used the same idea in a song from the 1960s: *The long and windy road / leads to your door*. In this tango the last line is hopeful. Usually the lyrics begin with a beautiful nature description, then the gloomy psychological landscape of the subject, the text usually ending pessimistically. But this tango ends with: 'on this road happiness waits for me'. This expresses the modality of knowing (*savoir*) and believing (*croire*), since the subject knows and believes that on this road joy and happiness will also be found. Love and longing form the hope of life.

The cultural change reflected in Finnish tango lyrics of the 1950s is clear. Love and longing, or sorrow such as in *Lempilauluni* ([1950]), 'My Favourite Song', music and lyrics by Jauhiainen and Kurki<sup>69</sup> is naturally stressed – 'when sorrow comes my favourite song will sound in the most beautiful way'. Here again, the theme from the *Kanteletar* is repeated: *music was made from grief / moulded from sorrow – / its belly out of hard days*.<sup>70</sup> This is echoed in Eino Partanen's tango *Vanhan vaahteran laulu* ([1952] 1967) 'The Song of the Old Maple':<sup>71</sup> *Laulussani on sävel suruinen / ilo pois on mennyt kuin virvaliekit nuo*, 'There is a sad tone in my song; / joy is gone like those will-o'-the-wisps', and there is a very clear connection with a tango of the 1990s, in Veikko Juntunen's lyrics for *Suruista on soitto tehty* (1991) 'Music Is Made from Grief'.<sup>72</sup> This title has the same words, but with altered word order, as the ninth line in the *Kanteletar*, functioning as an intertextual allusion.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>66</sup> *Metro-tyttöjen lauluja* (1955: 22-23), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1971 (1992: 53).

<sup>67</sup> Chatwin (1988: passim).

<sup>68</sup> Kärki 2 (1970), *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1971 (1992: 57).

<sup>69</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1971 (1992: 293).

<sup>70</sup> The *Kanteletar* (1840–1841: 1:1), transl. Bosley (1992: 9). The original Finnish lines are, *Soitto on suruista tehty, / Murehista muovaeltu*. This Kalevala theme of sorrow occurs in Georg Malmstén's tango *Suuret on surujen pellot* (1939) 'Great are the Fields of Sorrows', cf. Haapanen 1902–1971 (1975: 534).

<sup>71</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 32-33; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1971 (1992: 63, 67).

<sup>72</sup> Eija-Sinikka (1991), ES LP-01; Hirvi et al. (1995: 234).

<sup>73</sup> Bahtin ([1965] 1991). Kristeva ([1969] 1980) was the first to introduce Bahtin's *intertextuality*, i.e. the weaving together of texts into a new text in which many former texts are present. The text is in a continuous dialogue with different voices and texts; the text represents what Bahtin describes as *polyphony*. Cf. also Palin (1991: 125-146).

7 *Life is a dream*

In the 1930s Georg Malmstén and R. R. Ryyänen had written a tango dealing with the motif of the dream, *Hiljaisia haaveita* (1935) 'Silent Dreams'.<sup>74</sup> The basic setting of the Finnish tango becomes very clear in *Haaveita tanssilavan luona* ([1964] 1965), 'Dreams near the Dancing Pavilion'.<sup>75</sup> This presents the primal setting of the Finnish tango, dealing with the joys and sorrows, and talking about the dream, as Calderón had already done in his *La vida es sueño*, 'Life Is a Dream':

## Haaveita tanssilavan luona

Haaveita tanssilavan luona,  
haaveita haaveen vuoksi vaan.  
Toiveita tanssilavan luona  
käämättä todeks' milloinkaan.  
Haaveita tanssilavan luona,  
hetkiä hetken vuoksi vaan.  
Toiveita tanssilavan luona,  
liekkejä, luotu sammumaan.

Ilon pienen vuoksi surun suuren  
voi moni viedä täältä mukanaan.  
Toinen taas voi löytää onnen juuren,  
ja kohtalonsa melkein kuka vaan.

[...]

Toiveita tanssilavan luona,  
surut ja ilot rinnakkain.

Music Kari Aava [Toivo Kärki]

Lyrics Lauri Jauhiainen ([1964] 1965)

## 'Dreams near the Dancing Pavilion'

'Dreams near the dancing pavilion,  
dreams for dreams only.  
Wishes near the dancing pavilion  
without ever coming true.  
Dreams near the dancing pavilion,  
moments for the sake just of the moment.  
Wishes near the dancing pavilion,  
flames which are made to die.

For the sake of a little joy the great sorrow  
can be taken from this place by many.  
Somebody can find the root of happiness,  
and everybody his/her destiny almost.

[...]

Dreams near the dancing pavilion,  
sorrows and joys walk hand in hand.'

The last line puts the central idea of the tango lyrics, the contraries which sustain life once more. These lyrics provide *chronotopos* in the Finnish tango, the dancing pavilion which is the place for dreams of a bygone life-style, which still occurs in Finland, especially in summertime. The dancing pavilions have seen people's joys and sorrows meeting and drifting apart, sharing the tango for a few moments. Destiny as *helper* or an *opponent* joins or divides people, and fulfils or destroys their fragile dreams. Nostalgia implies both *chronos* 'time' and *topos* 'place'. In the above text there are no actors, but the author describes the state of man near the dancing pavilion. This idea of the dancing pavilion and the sadness of parting appears in P. Mustapää's poem, set as a tango by Kaj Chydenius in the 1970s, when the so-called literary direction of the Finnish tango began.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1946 (1981: 233).

<sup>75</sup> Helsinki University Library Collections (notes, X-Sävel, Helsinki); Haapanen 1902–1971 (1973: 85).

<sup>76</sup> P. Mustapää (1925; 1927), *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 66–67).

## 8 Freedom

Trees and birds as we have seen are mythological elements in Finnish culture. Mythical birds include the swan and the crane. The swan appears in a tango from the 1960s, *Tango merellä* (1963) 'Tango on the Sea',<sup>77</sup> where 'my white boat floats to you like a swan'. Elsewhere birds like the lark, the chaffinch, the thrush, or the swallow, birds in general or migratory birds which take the messages of love to the beloved, express longing for freedom. In the mythology birds are believed to take one's soul to the heavens. The birds which pass the winter in Finland are metaphors for the fact that the subject is without wings, 'a prisoner of the ground'. The stork announces the coming of a child, as in the humorous text *Tango metsässä* (1963) 'Tango in the Forest'.<sup>78</sup>

The crane also appears. *Etelän kutsu* (1959), 'The Invitation of the South',<sup>79</sup> begins with the alliterative expression *Kurkiaurat korkealla rientää etelään*, 'The flights of cranes hurry high to the South', and the last line laments, *Kunpa kurjen lailla voisni löytää kevään maan*, 'Oh if only I could find the land of spring like the crane':

## Etelän kutsu

Kurkiaurat korkealla rientää etelään.  
Pohjatuulten tumma lintu jäi nyt yksinään.  
Meni kevät leikin lailla kesä lämpöineen.  
Leikitellen kukka vaihtui toiseen kukkaseen.

Kaunein kevään kukkasista olit amahain.  
Sydämeni kaipausta vaistonnut et vain.  
Syys jo vihmoo, talvi hyinen jäättä vuorollaan.  
Kunpa kurjen lailla voisni löytää kevään maan.  
Music Olavi Karu  
Lyrics Lauri Vuorre (1959)

## 'The Invitation of the South'

The cranes hurries high to the South.  
The dark bird of Northern winds now stayed alone.  
Spring gave way to the warm summer.  
A flower easily changed into another flower.

The most beautiful of the spring flowers was you, my dear.  
But you just did not sense the longing of my heart.  
Autumn already drizzles, the cold winter ice waits its turn.  
Oh, if only I could find the land of spring like the crane.'

In spring nature offers hope, new life and the new opportunities. The time of happiness is the brief spring and summer, whose message is that beauty lasts only for a while: 'A flower easily changed into another flower.' The subject's love is rejected and his inner state is described through the coldness of autumn and winter. This text opens and closes with the crane flying away from the cold land. Only 'The dark bird of Northern winds now stayed alone.' The mythical side of Finnish tango texts occurs in the expression *tumma lintu* 'the dark bird', which denotes death in folk poetry *Tuonen tumma lintu* 'the dark bird of Tuoni (Death)'. The dark bird can also mean more literally overwintering birds. Autumn, especially November, is *marraskuu* in Finnish 'dead time', a Baltic-Finnish word for November (Fi. *marraskuu*, Est. *marras aeg*, Ing. *marrasaika*) is 'death month', 'dreadful time'. According to folk tradition this was the time

<sup>77</sup> Kärki 2 (1970); *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, p. 12; Haapanen 1902–1971 (1975: 560)

<sup>78</sup> Kärki 3 (1971).

<sup>79</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 249).



when disasters and accidents occurred, a time when the ancestral spirits were especially active. It was the time of the year when nature died. "The grass stopped growing, birds migrated, animals went into hibernation, the frost froze everything in its grip."<sup>80</sup> In autumn and winter man was 'a prisoner of the ground, without wings'.

The theme of freedom appears in the tango *Orpopojan tango* ([1952] 1953) 'The Orphan Boy's Tango'<sup>81</sup> from the Finnish film *Lentävä kalakukko* (1952) 'The Flying Kalakukko',<sup>82</sup> music by Toivo Kärki and lyrics by Reino Helismaa. It has intertextual connections with the waltz *Orpopojan valssi* (1926, 1929) 'The Orphan Boy's Waltz', originally a Swedish folk melody from the 18th century which was altered by J. Alfred Tanner,<sup>83</sup> a well-known Finnish writer of comic songs (*kupletti*). This tango incorporates the themes of orphanhood, homelessness and loneliness, which appeared especially in the 1930s and 1940s, and recalled Finnish folk poetry:

## Orpopojan tango

Olen orpopoika, mutta mitä siitä –  
joka raitilla tuttuja on.  
Kodin lämpöä jos minulle ei riitä,  
silti en ole onneton.

Tule, tyttö! Mun riemuni suuri  
sinun silmistäs' välkkyvi juuri.  
Tule, tyttö, niin tanssiin sun vien  
ylä raittien rattoisan tien!

Olen orpo ilman kotia ja maata,  
mutta raittien riemut mun on –  
eikä orpokaan voi laulamasta laata,  
kun on nuori ja vallaton.

[...]  
Tule, tyttö – sen raitilla kuu  
nähdä voi, mutta ei kukaan muu.

Olen orpopoika, vailla taaton hoivaa –  
mulle aurinko taaton vaan.  
Metsä lauluansa laulaa huminoivaa,  
niinkuin äitini aikoinaan.

[...]  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Reino Helismaa ([1952] 1953)

## 'The Orphan Boy's Tango'

'I am an orphan boy, but so what –  
I have friends everywhere.  
If I can't have the warmth of a home,  
still I won't be unhappy.

Come, girl! My greatest joy  
shone just in your eyes.  
Come, girl, I will take you dancing  
over the joyful roads of the landscape!

I am an orphan without home and land,  
but the joys of the landscape are mine –  
and the orphan cannot stop singing,  
when he is young and wild.

[...]  
Come, girl – in its landscape the moon  
can see, but nobody else.

I am an orphan boy, without a father's shelter –  
the sun only is my father.  
The forest sings its humming song,  
like my mother did once.'

[...]

*Kulkurin tango* ([1946] 1963) 'The Vagabond's Tango'<sup>84</sup> used the same idea alluding to J. Alfred Tanner's *Kulkurin valssi* (1943) 'The Vagabond's Waltz', or the waltz *Kulkurin kaiho* (1947), *Vagabondens längtan* 'The Vagabond's Nostalgia'.<sup>85</sup> This theme is a reflection of the *life is a journey* metaphor, since

<sup>80</sup> Honko (1993: 409).

<sup>81</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 48).

<sup>82</sup> A train which ran from Helsinki to Northern Savo.

<sup>83</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1946 (1981: 130, 319), music by Rauno Lehtinen, lyrics by Eino Partanen.

<sup>84</sup> *Toiveitten tangot* (1965), Valtanen (1965), Ildeco Oy, ILD 89.

<sup>85</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1946 (1981: 26, 387).

man wants to be free on this road. In the 1960s the idea of vagabond romantics was no longer so frequent. Society had changed and the itinerant seeking work ceased to exist. The romance of the roads appears especially in the texts of the 1940s and 1950s.

### 9 Practical psychology: love, longing and anxiety

Among the tango lyrics written in the 1960s an almost pantheistic approach is found in *Sä kuulut päivään jokaiseen* (1966), 'You Belong to Everyday',<sup>86</sup> one of the optimistic and delightful Finnish tangos, invoking the same atmosphere as the poem *Armaan kulku* 'The Road of My Beloved' in the *Kanteletar*.<sup>87</sup> It is a love song praising Finnish nature and combining these two elements in describing how great love changes the world. Its very simple structure repeats the line in the title, comparing the beloved to the essential parts of nature. Time goes from dawn to evening and the song of the night bird. The object of love changes the whole world; he/she is *nousu auringon, kuutamon silta, aamukaste, iltarusko*, 'the rising sun, the moon river, the morning dawn, the evening glow' and *laulu yölintusen* 'the song of the night bird'. The idea of beauty is expressed in *Sä yksin olet mulle kaikki / kauneus päällä maan*, 'You alone are for me / all the beauty on the earth'. The lyrics are first optimistic, positive and bright, but then comes the unreachable aspect of love, the longing. The subject states that *Pois toisien luota, jos lähden, / sun luotasi lähtisi en*, and *sun kuiskaavan kuvittelen*, 'Though I leave others, / I would not leave you', and 'I think that I hear you whispering'. These are the only lines which remind the listener or reader of the love's inherent transitoriness and dreamlike character. The subject is just dreaming.

Sä kuulut päivään jokaiseen

'You Belong to Everyday'

Sä kuulut päivään jokaiseen,  
sä kuulut aamuun ja iltaan.  
Oot ensimmäinen aatoksissain  
miete myös viimeinen.  
Sä kuulut nousuun auringon  
ja liittyt kuutamon siltaan.  
Oot aamukaste, iltarusko,  
laulu yölintusen.  
[...]

'You belong to every day,  
you belong to morning and evening.  
You are the first thought in my mind  
as well as the last.  
You belong to the rising sun  
and come with the moon river.  
You are the morning dawn, evening glow,  
the song of the night bird.  
[...]

Sä kuulut päivään jokaiseen,  
sä kuulut aamuun ja iltaan.  
Oot ensimmäinen aatoksissain  
miete myös viimeinen.

You belong to every day,  
you belong to morning and evening.  
You are the first thought in my mind  
as well as the last.

Sä kuulut päivään jokaiseen,  
sä kuulut aamuun ja iltaan.

You belong to every day,  
you belong to morning and evening.

<sup>86</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 7 (1985: 196); *Kultainen tangokirja* 1 (1994: 154-155); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1975: 547).

<sup>87</sup> *The Kanteletar* (1840-1841, I:174). Bosley (1992: 36-37).

Luot päivään riemun,  
joka vie mun päivään taas seuraavaan.  
Sä kuulut nousuun auringon  
ja liityt kuutamon siltaan.  
Sä yksin olet mulle kaikki  
kauneus päällä maan.  
[...]  
Sä kuulut päivään jokaiseen,  
sä kuulut aamuun ja iltaan.  
Oot ensimmäinen aatoksissain  
miete myös viimeinen.  
Music Reino Markkula  
Lyrics Juha Vainio (1966)

You give the day joy and delight,  
which takes me to the next day.  
You belong to the rising sun  
and come with the moon river.  
You alone are for me  
all the beauty on the earth.  
[...]  
You belong to every day,  
you belong to morning and evening.  
You are the first thought in my mind  
as well as the last.'

This joy informs some Finnish tangos as in *Kesäinen muisto* 'A Summer Memory', and *Vanhan vaahteran laulu* 'The Song of the Old Maple'. Love gives light in the day and makes everything more beautiful as Francesco Alberoni (1979) writes in his book *Innamoramento e amore*, claiming that there is a connection between the mass movements of history and falling in love in the sense that the forces involved are the same, and the experiences of solidarity, loyalty, joy, and rebirth are analogical. Riitta Jallinoja believes that in fact the role of romantic love will be strengthened. It actually seems to be the only way to "experience something real" in a world where people have lost many of their great experiences and adventures. In fact, the structural changes in society show that love will soon belong only to the real social movements.<sup>88</sup> The themes of popular music may be trivial and banal, as banal as life or death as Yevgeni Yevtushenko writes in a poem. In the *Kanteletar* love belongs among the great adventures, especially in the poem *Armahan kulku*, translated into Swedish by Joel Rundt (1879–1971), a Finland-Swedish author, and in English by Keith Bosley.<sup>89</sup>

## Armahan kulku

Täst' on kulta kulkenunna.  
Täst' on mennyt mieltetty,  
tästä armas astununna,  
Valkia vaeltanunna;  
Täss' on astunut aholla,  
Tuoss' on istunut kivellä.  
Kivi on paljo kirkkahampi,  
Paasi toistansa parempi,  
Kangas kahta kauniimpi,  
Lehto viittä leppiämpi,  
Korpi kuutta kukkahampi,  
Koko metsä mieluisampi,  
Tuon on kultani kulusta,  
Armahani astunnasta.  
*Kanteletar* (1840-1841, I:174)

## Min käras väg

Här min kära vän har vandrat,  
vandrat den min själ har utvalt,  
här min trogna vän har trampat,  
här mitt hjärtas ljus har framgått.  
Han har stigit här på sveden,  
Han har suttit här på stenen.  
Ljusare mig synes stenen,  
hällen är förmer än andra,  
heden dubbelt skön jag finner,  
lunden femfalt mera ljuvlig,  
kärret sexfalt blomstersmyckat,  
skönare är hela skogen,  
där i dag min vän har vandrat,  
där min käras väg har framgått.  
Swedish lyrics Joel Rundt (1937)

## Herding songs I:174

This way my treasure has walked,  
here my beloved has been  
this way my dear one has stepped  
and my white one has wandered  
here she has stepped in the glade,  
there she has sat on the rock.  
The rock is much brighter,  
the boulder better than the next  
the heath twice more fair  
and the grove five times sweeter  
and wild six times more flowery  
all the forest more pleasant  
because that treasure of mine  
walked, that dear one of mine stepped.  
English transl. Keith Bosley (1992)

In the Finnish tango lyrics love is short but bright like the Nordic light in summer, nostalgic and melancholic, or as cold as winter and frost. Minor and

<sup>88</sup> Jallinoja (1984: 114-115).

<sup>89</sup> The *Kanteletar* (1840–1841, I:174); Rundt (1937:51-52), Bosley (1992: 36-37). Cf. also *Visor och ballader ur Kanteletar* (1989: 59).

major harmonies occur side by side in the tango discourses. Elias Lönnrot writes in his foreword to the *Kanteletar* in 1840: 'For a very long time people in the whole world have loved music, song and poetry. Song and music are in a way another, holier language in which man talks to himself or to other people about his desires and effects in mind; in this language one can talk about joy and delight, grief and sorrow, and one's worries, one's happiness and contentments, one's hope and longing, one's rest and peace and everything else better than in this usual, everyday language.'<sup>90</sup> In the *Kalevala* (1835) Väinämöinen, the mythical hero, is a singer; a fact that gives song and music a central role in Finnish folk poetry and mythology.

Even though the main idea of the Finnish tango is built around the theme of love as Eros (*désir*, passion) and Filia (*désir*, friendship), extreme passion is not usual; Eros is implicit in the lyrics. The 1960s Finnish tango texts do however have their erotic aspects. The tango *Vaaralliset huulet* (1964), 'Dangerous Lips'<sup>91</sup> was composed by Arvo Koskimaa as early as 1935 with lyrics by Dagmar Parmas under the title *Tappavat suudelmat*, 'Killing Kisses',<sup>92</sup> but the words were so sensational that they were rewritten in 1964 by Solja Tuuli. The new text is still erotic but it is presented more blandly. The subject knows (*savoir*) that the lips of his beloved are dangerous. The reason and the heart are in conflict however; he also knows that his passion (*désir*) will lead to destruction. The conclusion of the subject's action (*faire*) is, however, inability to act any other way (*non-pouvoir*).

## Vaaralliset huulet

Nään huultes hehkuvan ja kutsuvan,  
mä niiltä polttavan saan suudelman.  
Mä tiedän kuitenkin: Myös hehku tuo  
on suurta valhetta vain, se mun tuhoaa.  
Sun huultes ansa on, ken siihen jää,  
hän rauhan mielestään jo menettää.  
Nyt vaaraan antaudun sua suudellen,  
sun huultes vaaralliset valloittaa.  
Nään huultes hehkun vain nyt vieläkin,  
kun yksin ollessain mä uneksin.  
Nyt lailla toisien mä tiedän sen:  
On hehku valhetta vain, se mun tuhoon vei.  
[...]  
Music Arvo Koskimaa  
Lyrics Solja Tuuli [Sauvo Puhtila] (1964)

## 'Dangerous Lips'

'I see your lips burn and calling,  
I get a burning kiss from them.  
I also know, however, that glow  
is a big lie, it destroys me.  
Your lips are a trap, for whoever is held there  
loses his peace.  
Now I surrender to danger when I kiss you,  
your dangerous lips capture me.  
I see the glow of your lips still,  
when alone I dream about you.  
Now like others I know it:  
The glow is just a lie, it destroyed me.  
[...]

The symbols of love, burning or cold lips, are repeated. Lips are cold as ice especially in the sentimental and very passionate European tango lyrics, for instance, *Tango Roulette* (1959).<sup>93</sup> The metaphors for passion are fire and

<sup>90</sup> Lönnrot in the *Kanteletar* (1840–1841, foreword).

<sup>91</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes, Scandia-Musiikki Oy, Helsinki); Haapanen 1902–1971 (1975: 624).

<sup>92</sup> *Viimeisiä Levysäveleitä* (1936: 4–5), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1946 (1981: 312).

<sup>93</sup> Haapanen 1902–1971 (1975: 561).

flames, indicating its passing nature. Finnish radio had a board which classified music and songs, so that songs with texts militating against good morals could be censored.<sup>94</sup> Words like *turmio* and *tuho*, 'destruction' were "bad" words and songs including them could not be played on radio. Hence *Tappavat suudelmat* ([1935] 1937) 'Killing Kisses' was too explicit. This situation pertained during the 1930s and the 1940s particularly.

A Finnish tango called *Liekkien tango* (1964), 'The Tango of Flames'<sup>95</sup> is a sentimental love story. The words describe the eyes of the beloved, in which the subject finds both the moon and the sun (cosmic imagery). This is the *Firstness* stage of love, a temporary passion which is a strange, powerful feeling which burns, but the subject does not avoid the fire. Happy love is short, and although he knows (*savoir*) that his road will take him elsewhere, he plays with fire. Love changes everything, and material aspects are unimportant compared with real love. In the tangos of the 1960s the dichotomy of love-material values emerges. The lyrics talk practically about values as in *Rakkauten rikkaus* (1964) 'The Richness of Love':<sup>96</sup> The pure, true love which the Argentinean tango also is concerned with is mother-love. This theme is not common in Finnish tango texts, but the tango called *Uskon oikeaan rakkauteen* (1965), 'I Believe in the Real Love'<sup>97</sup> emphatically repeats:

## Uskon oikeaan rakkauteen

Uskon oikeaan rakkauteen,  
vaikka pilven se peitossa ois.  
uskon oikeaan rakkauteen,  
vaikka onni käy luotani pois.  
Uskon oikeaan rakkauteen,  
joka äitini silmissä on.  
Uskon oikeaan rakkauteen  
tunne ainut se kuolematon.  
Käy elämä ohitsemme  
nopeammin kuin uskotkaan ...  
Ja sen kulkua määrää emme -  
joka päivä on uusi vaan.  
[...]  
Music Ossi Runne  
Lyrics Lauri Jauhiainen (1965)

## 'I Believe in Real Love'

'I believe in real love,  
even though it will be covered by clouds.  
I believe in real love,  
even though happiness will leave me.  
I believe in real love,  
which is in my mother's eyes.  
I believe in real love  
it is the only eternal feeling.  
Life goes by  
faster than we believe ...  
And its road and aim we do not determine  
every day is only a new day.  
[...]

The subject believes (*croire*) in real and pure love, even though it is rare. The other existential question in this text is man's existence; the road of life and the meaning of life are not in the hands of man; every day is a new day. The subject had failed to understand the real meaning of love, but now he has achieved an insight into it; he knows (*savoir*, a *Thirdness* awareness) that real and pure love exists and is worth waiting and struggling for.

Kari Aava [Toivo Kärki] and V. Enckell's *Rakasta, kärsi ja unhoita!* (1955), 'Love, Suffer and Forget!',<sup>98</sup> contains the essential characteristics of the theme of

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Pekka Gronow, Oy Yleisradio Ab, Finnish Broadcasting Company, Gramophone Library, Helsinki.

<sup>95</sup> *Tanssilavan luona* (1964), Klimentko (1964), BMC 119; Haapanen 1902-1971 (1973: 271).

<sup>96</sup> Kärki 5 (1971); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1975: 453).

<sup>97</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes, Musiikki Fazer, Helsinki).

<sup>98</sup> *Yleisön pyynnöstä* 1 ([1955] 1956: 8-9), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 64).

love in the Finnish tango. It gives advices on how to live, to love, and then to suffer and forget.

Rakasta, kärsi ja unhoita!

Rakasta, kärsi ja unhoita –  
se on määräys kohtalon.  
Rakasta, kärsi ja unhoita –  
lyhyt tuokio onni on.  
Hyljätyn sydän sen ymmärtää,  
hyljätty aina kun yksin jää.  
[...]  
Rakasta, kärsi ja unhoita –  
surun kyynleet pyyhi pois.  
Rakasta, kärsi ja unhoita –  
niitä liiaksi vuotaa vois.  
Kerran sä kuitenkin onnen sait,  
vaikka se aikaa jo särkyi kait.

Rakasta, kärsi ja unhoita –  
surun kyynleet pyyhi pois.  
Music Kari Aava [Toivo Kärki]  
Lyrics V. Enckell (1955)

'Love, Suffer and Forget!'

'Love, suffer and forget –  
it is the order of destiny.  
Love, suffer and forget –  
happiness is a brief moment.  
The rejected heart understands it,  
rejected always when it is alone.  
[...]  
Love suffer and forget –  
dry the tears of sorrow.  
Love suffer and forget –  
those tears might be too much.  
Once however you had some luck,  
even though it perhaps was broken  
a long time ago.

Love suffer and forget –  
dry the tears of sorrow.'

The message of this text is that even a short moment of happiness and its transitory effect is an essential part of life 'Once however you had some luck, / even though it perhaps was broken a long time ago'. Man's essence consists in this vanishing moment of joy and happiness. It is as the Argentinean tango puts it, 'the most natural state of man is to suffer'. The contrast of joy and sorrow is, as we have seen, the essential part of life, as is the case in *Surun ja ilon kyynleet* ([1954] 1955), 'The Tears of Sorrow and Joy'.<sup>99</sup>

The modality of being (*être*) is, along with doing (*faire*), one of the basic modalities. Doing (*faire*) however occurs seldom. Descriptions of man's state and position in life, his attitude to love and suffering, joy and sorrow is more usual. The existential theme in the Finnish tango lyrics from the 1950s can be found, for instance, in *Minkä vuoksi* (1952), 'Why?',<sup>100</sup> a tango which won a prize in 1952, composed by Veikko Takala, lyrics by Eino Sinisalo, which repeatedly asks "Why?", but the subject cannot find an answer. In a state of *Firstness*, a spontaneous feeling, and *Secondness* (here: framing questions) he cannot reach the *Thirdness* stage where he would find the answer, the meaning of life:

Minkä vuoksi

Minkä vuoksi sun kohdata sainkaan,  
minkä vuoksi vain sua rakastin?  
Minkä vuoksi mä nuoruuden hehkun  
sulle, rakkahin, vain omistin?  
Minkä vuoksi pois onnemme häipyi,  
sitä vieläkin muistelen ain?

'Why?'

'Why did I ever meet you,  
why do I love only you?  
Why did I dedicate the passion of youth  
only to you, my love?  
Why did our happiness,  
which I still always remember, vanish?

<sup>99</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 57).

<sup>100</sup> *Toiveiskelmä* 5 ([1952] 1953: 11–12), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 47).



Minkä vuoksi vei toinen sen multa,  
mikä ollut on kalleimpain?

Minkä vuoksi on taivaalla tähti,  
minkä vuoksi se luo valoaan?  
Minkä vuoksi voi ystävä pettää,  
mi on vannonut rakkauttaan?  
Kesä kauneinkin loppuvi kerran,  
sitten syksy ja synkkyys on vain.  
Minkä vuoksi vei toinen sen multa,  
mikä ollut on kalleimpain?

Minkä vuoksi on rakkaus luotu,  
minkä vuoksi se kestää ei saa?  
Ruusu tuoksuva kukkii vain hetken,  
kunnes halla sen päin taivuttaa.  
Minkä vuoksi saa perhonen lentää  
yhden lämpöisen päivänsä vain?  
[...]  
Music Veikko Takala  
Lyrics Eino Sinisalo (1952)

Why did somebody else take from me  
the one who has been the most precious to me?

Why is the star in the sky,  
Why does it shed its light?  
Why can a friend betray,  
who has sworn his/her love?  
The most beautiful summer will end sometime,  
then there is only autumn and distress.  
Why did somebody else take from me  
the one who has been the most precious to me?

Why is love created,  
why it is not allowed to last?  
The fragrant rose will bloom just for a while,  
until the frost bends its head.  
Why is the butterfly allowed to fly  
just for one warm day?  
[...]

The subject, however, tries to find out 'Why is the star on the sky?' i.e. if the star exists, why does love not last? 'Why is beauty so evanescent, summer so short, and the beauty of a rose so brief?' Then comes the law of life: 'The butterfly is allowed to fly just for one beautiful day', the most beautiful summer has to die, since autumn and its sadness, winter and its frost take care of this. The only answer is when the subject sits silent in the twilight when nature has gone to sleep. He states in the tango *Odotin pitkän illan* (1953) 'I Waited a Long Evening',<sup>101</sup> *Sydämeni riutuu ikävään / rauhaa vain en saa*, 'My heart suffers in longing / I cannot find peace'; he is sitting and looking outside at the path, but in vain. Life is futility *Odotin pitkän illan – turhaksi tiesin sen*, 'I waited a long evening through – knowing it was useless', but, *Kuitenkin pitkän illan odotin toivoen*, 'However, I waited a long evening, hoping.' He knows (*savoir*) that a new morning will come, and birds are singing joyfully, but his heart will not hear the sound of delight; longing has taken it away. This tango opens with silences:

Odotin pitkän illan

Hiljaa iltaruskon ohde häipy  
yöhön tummuvaan.  
Hiljaa niityn pienet kukkaset jo  
käyvät nukkumaan.  
Sydämeni riutuu ikävään  
rauhaa vain en saa.  
Katse polun mutkan hämärään  
turhaan tuijottaa ...

Odotin pitkän illan – turhaksi tiesin sen.  
Kuitenkin pitkän illan odotin toivoen,  
että saisin taas nähdä mä sun,  
että muistaisit unhoitetun.  
Odotin pitkän illan – turhaksi tiesin sen.  
Kerran aamu saapuu, päivän kulta  
maan taas purppuroi.

'I Waited a Long Evening'

'Silently the glow of twilight  
disappears in the darkening night.  
Silently the little flowers of the meadows already  
go to sleep.  
My heart suffers in longing  
I cannot find peace.  
My eyes stare in vain  
at the grey bend of the path ...

I waited a long evening through – knowing it was useless.  
However, I waited a long evening, hoping  
that I could meet you again,  
that you would remember the rejected one.  
I waited a long evening through – knowing it was useless.  
Sometime morning will come, the gold of the day  
will again cover the ground with a purple shade.

<sup>101</sup> Kärki 2 ([1953] 1970), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 225).

Kerran aukee kukka, linnunlaulu  
riemukkaasti soi.  
Sydämeni laula enää ei kanssa lintujen.  
Kaippu siitä kerran myötään vei  
riemun sävelen ...  
[...]  
Music Kari Aava [Toivo Kärki]  
Lyrics Rauni Kouta [Reino Helismaa] (1953)

Then the flower will bloom, the bird's song  
ring joyfully.  
My heart will no longer sing with the bird.  
The longing took the sound of joy  
with it ...'  
[...]

Many of the tango lyrics give instructions on how to live and how to bear the loss of love and the longing as in *Rakasta, kärsi ja unhoita!* (1955), 'Love, Suffer and Forget!' or in *Älä unohda hymyä* (1953), 'Don't Forget the Smile', music by Toivo Kärki, Finnish lyrics Reino Helismaa, Swedish lyrics by Bror Johansson.<sup>102</sup> Finnish tango lyrics are thus also practical psychology or therapy in dealing with nostalgia and loss of love, happiness, home, past times and places, or in expressing a longing for something in the future. In the lyrics the tango singer communicates a state for his audience, where one can work out the loss; time gives oblivion. In the tango beguine *Ikävässä* (1954), 'In Longing'<sup>103</sup> by Toivo Kärki and Päiviö Kiuru, 'my poor heart cries in my longing', the subject can actually discuss his sorrows in his loneliness and self-pity, but after all, some hope still remains, as in Unto Mononen's tango with lyrics by Kalevi Artell *Ei yhtään ystävää* ([1953] 1954), 'Not a Single Friend',<sup>104</sup> where the alienation and loneliness are repeated. The lonely Finnish man has no real friend, a theme especially strong in Mononen's tangos from the 1960s.<sup>105</sup> *Pyydän anteeksi* (1958), 'I Apologise',<sup>106</sup> music by Toivo Kärki, lyrics by H. Neva, is typical of the Finnish man's self-pity. It is like a suicide note.<sup>107</sup>

## Pyydän anteeksi

Pyydän anteeksi, etten arvoisesi lie.  
Sulla kirkas elon tie, yksinäinen mun.  
Pyydän anteeksi, että myöhään käsitin:  
kaipuullain vain häiritin työntä rauhaas' sun.  
Kas, itsein lahjaksi antaa sulle koin,  
ja liian myöhään nyt ymmärtää kai voin:  
Niin tyystin, tyystin on tuo lahja arvoton,  
käsiisi sen turhaan, turhaan toin.  
Pyydän anteeksi, että koskaan rakastan,  
viel jos tielles yksityin, pyydän anteeksi.  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics H. Neva [Helena Eeva] (1958)

## 'I Apologise'

'I apologise that I am not worthy of you.  
You have a bright road in life, mine is lonely.  
I apologise that I understood too late;  
that with my longing I just disturbed your life.  
Look, I tried to give myself to you as a gift,  
and now too late I can understand:  
so completely, completely worthless that gift is;  
I brought it to you in vain, in vain.  
I apologise that I ever loved;  
if I come across you again, I apologise.'

In these lyrics a female writer has described the state of man's life. The subject is alone, aimless and joyless and apologises repeatedly for his existence: 'Excuse

<sup>102</sup> Kärki 5 ([1953] 1971), *Helsinki University Library Collections*: Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 52, 64).

<sup>103</sup> *Toiveiskelmä* 7 ([1953] 1954: 19–20), *Helsinki University Library Collections*: Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 229).

<sup>104</sup> *Kulurit iskelmiä* (1954: 14–15), *Helsinki University Library Collections*: Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 228).

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Sjöblom (1994a: passim; 1994b: 55–56).

<sup>106</sup> *Yleisön pyynnöstä* 3 (1958: 6–7), *Helsinki University Library Collections*: Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 79).

<sup>107</sup> Cf. the life and stories of the Finnish man, Roos (1994: passim); Siltala (1994: passim); Kukkola (1994: passim), and the life of the Finnish woman, Piela (1993: passim).

my getting in your way, I am alone, Your life is joyful. My longing only disturbs your life.' He also doubts that 'I might ever love again.' The rejection has left him bitter. The lyrics do not explicitly say that the subject is male but the general atmosphere takes a male attitude as in so many other tango texts. 'Only in my dreams can I be a happy man' says another Toivo Kärki tango *Olen unessa onnellinen* (1958), 'In My Dreams I Am Happy',<sup>108</sup> lyrics by Reino Helismaa, based on a theme by Tyyne Haltia: 'In my dreams I am happy, because there I can meet my beloved, I will stay in the Land of Dreams, and with the wings of longing return to her. There on the road of my dream, I close the dark door of longing.' The happy land is here called 'The Land of Dreams'.

The Finnish tango could well be punningly called an "itkelmä",<sup>109</sup> since the verb *itkeä* means 'to cry' and *iskelmä* means 'hit'. *Itkelmä* 'a song filled with tears and sorrow' becomes a new culturally bound word in Finnish, a sort of parallel in our time to the lament songs in Finnish folk poetry. The recent studies by the psychohistorian Juha Siltala (1994) show that the Finnish man is and has been in a state of anguish, *Angst*.<sup>110</sup> Many discussions claim this is because of communicative problems. He cannot verbally penetrate or solve his problems. The incidence of suicide is particularly high among Finnish men. In the war, popular music attempted to avert gloom and sorrow. Entertainment actually had a life-preserving function. This anguish has been a monumental problem for the Finnish man. He was never taught to cry, as the Finnish saying directed to both little boys and grown men "Iso mies ei itke!" 'An adult man does not cry!' shows. Generations of Finnish men have been brought up with this dogma. With this background it is easy to say that popular music, and the nostalgic Finnish tango especially means a milieu in which you can cry, at least in your mind. Clear permission to express one's anguish and despondency occurs in the Argentinean tango where the verbal expressions for various negative passions are actualised as tears. The subject can sit in the *café* alone or with his friends and say explicitly that he cries over the bitterness of life. In Finnish culture this kind of expression of feelings and passions through tears is not normal; tears are seen as characterising a weak but a good man, as the Finnish author Eino Leino (1878—1926), writes in his poem *Aurinkolaulu* 'The Sun Song' from the collection *Hymyilevä Apollo* (1979), that *itkeä ei voi ilkeä*, 'the evil person cannot cry'.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>108</sup> *Yleisön pyynnöstä* 3 (1958: 8-9), Helsinki University Library Collections; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 77).

<sup>109</sup> Pennanen & Mutkala (1994: 79-110).

<sup>110</sup> Siltala (1994: passim), cf. also Tarasti (1993: 51-57) based on Heidegger ([1927] 1953).

<sup>111</sup> Leino ([1898] 1994: 11).

## 10 Nature and silence – the joy of life

Unto Mononen's tango *Syyskaipaus* (1954), 'Autumn Nostalgia'<sup>112</sup> gave birth to longing and yearning as mirrored in Finnish nature, the essence of the Finnish tango of the 1950s and 1960s. Nostalgia is clearly the natural state of man in the Finnish tango lyrics:

## Syyskaipaus

Minä kaipasin kaukomaihin,  
kera lintujen lähteväin,  
kun ne lensivät suurin parvin,  
minä jälkeen vain yksin jäin.  
Minä kaipasin kaus sinne,  
missä ikuinen kesä on,  
huolta huomisen miss' ei tunne,  
eikä mielein ois rauhaton.  
Noin lailla lintujen lähtisin pois.  
Ei silloin sielussain myös syksy ois.  
Ehkä kerran jos siivet saisin,  
silloin tekisin retken sen.  
Palatakseni tänne jälleen,  
sekä jällehen kaivatun.  
Music and lyrics Unto Mononen (1954)

## 'The Autumn Nostalgia'

'I longed for distant lands,  
with the migratory birds,  
when they flew in great flocks,  
I was left alone.  
I longed for a distant place,  
where the summer never ends,  
where one does not feel any worry about tomorrow,  
and where my mind would not be restless.  
I would like to go away like those birds.  
Then I would not have autumn in my soul.  
If I could only get wings,  
then I would make that journey.  
Return here again,  
and then stay here in longing again.'

This tango has the usual attributes of the Finnish tango: the distant land, the migratory birds, longing for peace and silence, the everlasting summer without grief and sorrow. The subject sighs his wish: 'If I could only get wings', seeing himself as 'a prisoner of the ground' who has no wings, not free like the bird to leave this dreadful place on the earth. Mononen typically writes 'I have autumn in my soul' which describes the depression and sadness of life. The idea of longing for the place with never-ending summer is repeated in many of his tangos, including *Satumaa* (1955) 'The Happy Land', and in *Onnen maa* (1960s) 'The Land of Happiness', to mention two.

Olavi Virta, the legendary Finnish tango singer, also composed and wrote lyrics to Finnish tangos and translated international tangos. One of his tangos, *Tuulikannel* ([1953] 1963) 'The Aeolian Harp (The Wind Harp)'<sup>113</sup> is quoted here as an exemplar of Finnish tango lyrics of the 1960s.

## Tuulikannel

Saapunut syys jo on,  
synkkä ja lohduton  
kantelo tuulen sen lauluja soi.  
Lehdet pois lentäneet,  
tuulihin häipyneet  
näin kesä kauneinkin haihtua voi.  
Nyt pois muuttolinnut jo lentäneet on  
nyt pois kesän muistot ne jää unhohon.

## 'The Aeolian Harp (The Wind Harp)'

'Autumn is already here,  
dull and inconsolable  
the harp [*kantele*] of the wind plays its songs.  
The leaves have blown away,  
gone in the winds;  
so the most beautiful summer can vanish.  
The migratory birds have already left  
now the memories of summer will be forgotten.

<sup>112</sup> *Valioiskelmä 5* (1954), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 112).

<sup>113</sup> *Valioiskelmä 5* ([1953] 1954), *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 161).

Lehtien lentävään  
teille nyt yksin jäin  
tuulosen kantelo puistoissa soi.

Syksyinen myrsky-yö,  
vain sade ruutuun lyö  
vallittain tuuessa kantelo soi.  
Tuulien soittohon  
kaikki jää unohon,  
kuuntelen hetken kun puut huminoi:  
[...]

Noin kaikki tuulihin haihtua voi.  
Music and lyrics Olavi Virta ([1953] 1963)

On the roads of the flying leaves  
I am now left alone.  
the harp of the little wind plays in the parks.

The stormy autumn night,  
only the rain hits against the window,  
the *kantelo* plays moaning in the wind.  
In the play of the wind  
everything falls into oblivion,  
I listen a while when the trees hum:  
[...]

So everything will vanish in the wind.<sup>1</sup>

This text turns on the *kantelo*, a national mythical symbol, almost magical and mystical instrument symbolic in Finnish culture, used here as a *tuulikannel*, *tuuli*- 'wind', *kannel*, i.e. *kantelo*, *kannel*, *kantelo*, an aeolian harp, a thing caused or carried by the wind, a musical instrument that makes sounds when the wind blows across its strings. *Tuulikannel*, or *kantelo tuulen*, is a metaphor for time. Life is a dream or a lie, but the subject asks: 'Would I be unhappy?' Joy is short, the beloved walks only a passing moment on the same road; the sadness, sorrow, and gloom of autumn dominate the atmosphere. Joys and sorrows go in the wind. In some other tango texts *kantelo*, *kantelo*, appears as a symbol for music and song. The *kantelo* is used in such contexts as the beloved's eyes play 'the most beautiful *kannel* of my heart'.<sup>114</sup> One tango from 1950 is entirely joyful, describing the beautiful Finnish nature in summer where joy is described in girls' and women's songs.<sup>115</sup> *Keskikesä*, 'High Summer'<sup>116</sup> portrays the delight and joy of life. "Here" denotes the cold, Nordic Finland where autumn and winter are so long, spring and summer so short:

## Keskikesä

Voi täälläkin, ah, naisten nauru soida,  
kun tuomet kuohuu kukkain valkeaa.  
Voi neito Pohjolankin ilakoida,  
kun kukkiin peittyä äsken jäinen maa.

Soi kirkas nauru,  
huulilta neitoni armaan.  
Helähdä laulu  
illassa suvisen maan.  
Taivas on korkea,  
siniset silmäsi varmaan  
tänään on lempeä, lupausta tulvillaan.  
Music K. Kirsi [Kauko Käyhkö]  
Lyrics "Ville" [Viljo Koljonen] (1950)

## 'High Summer'

'Here also, oh, woman's laughter can sound,  
when bird-cherry trees foam with white flowers.  
The maiden from the North can also be joyful,  
when flowers cover the ground so icy just a while ago.

The bright laughter sounds  
from the lips of my girl.  
The song resounds  
in the evening of the summer land.  
The sky is high,  
your blue eyes are surely  
today full with love, and promise.<sup>1</sup>

The bird-cherry is a significant symbol of spring and love. The text uses both *kesä* and its more poetic variant *suvi* in the text, as well as *suvisen maan* 'the

<sup>114</sup> In the tango *On silmäsi tummat kuin etelän yö* (1940s) 'Your Eyes Are Dark Like the Southern Night', music by George de Godzinsky, lyrics by Kerstu Mustonen. *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes).

<sup>115</sup> *The Kanteletar* (1840–1841), transl. Bosley (1992: 39–73).

<sup>116</sup> *Justeeri I Sävelpirahduksia* (1950: 8–9), *Helsinki University Library Collections*.

summer land'. Such words announce the joy and happiness of a bright Nordic summer day. *Pohjola* is the mythological place of folk poetry, also occurring as a name in Usko Kemppe's tango *Pohjolan tango* (1956) 'The Tango of Pohjola'.<sup>117</sup> There are actually few Finnish tangos in which Finnish nature is unrelated to human love or the inner states of man. As early as 1946 K. Kirsi [Kauko Käyhkö] and T. Manninen's tango *Valkovuokkoja* 'Wood Anemones'<sup>118</sup> appeared, describing these white flowers of spring associated with human love and how the subject 'picked burning kisses from his beloved's lips, and made his heart catch fire.' But in Kaarlo Valkama and Usko Kemppe's tango *Valkovuokot* (1950) 'Wood Anemones',<sup>119</sup> these white and tender flowers of the early spring are the object of love, natural signs of new life and hope. The text tells about winter, spring, summer, and then the time for death:

## Valkovuokot

Kun taas kevät saa,  
murtunut on valta lumen, jään,  
niin pienet valkovuokot  
silloin nostaa pään.  
Ne sammalmättäillään  
ihmetellen hiljaa kuuntelee,  
kun metsätuuli puissa humisee.  
Se kertoo kuinka lähteellä  
keijut karkeloivat  
ja kuinka kesäyössä  
noin sirkkain viulut soi,  
ja kuinka jälkeen sen  
syksyn alle hiljaa nukkuu maa  
ja kuinka valkovuokot katoaa.  
Music Kaarlo Valkama  
Lyrics Usko Kemppe (1950)

## 'Wood Anemones'

'When spring comes again  
the power of snow, and ice is broken,  
then little wood anemones  
raise their heads.  
On their moss-covered places  
they wonder and listen silently  
to how the forest wind sings in the trees.  
It tells how near the well  
the elves are dancing  
and how in the summer night  
the violins of the yellowhammers play,  
and how after that,  
in the autumn the ground sleeps silently,  
and how the wood anemones disappear.'

As in so many other Finnish tango lyrics, here time is the central theme. The cyclic process of life is repeated almost in every Finnish tango. The dichotomy life-death is apparent here, but death is also a promise of new life, as nature teaches us by its example. At the front during the war Yrjö Kokko wrote his book *Pessi ja Illusia* ([1944] 1983) 'Pessi and Illusia', a fairy-tale for his daughter. When he returns from the war he goes into the forest and kneels in front of these small, innocent flowers; 'He thought nothing so beautiful and smooth could remain after the war'. In the opening of his book Kokko also mentions the rowan tree so laden with red berries as a powerful sign of war,<sup>120</sup> a metaphor appearing in a tango text from the 1940s.

In the 1960s the tango *Lapin tango* (1964) 'The Tango of Lapland',<sup>121</sup> music by Unto Mononen, lyrics by Maj-Lis Könönen, also describes nature unrelated

<sup>117</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 241).

<sup>118</sup> *Dallapé* 60 (1946: 8-9), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; also a waltz by B. Martin, cf. Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 173).

<sup>119</sup> *Valioiskelmiä* 2 ([1950] 1951), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 196).

<sup>120</sup> Kokko ([1944] 1983: 10-11).

<sup>121</sup> Mononen ([1964] 1970: 2-3); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1973: 252).



to human love. In Arvo Koskimaa and Lauri Jauhiainen's tango *Lumpeenkukka* (1963) 'Water Lily'<sup>122</sup> the subject goes to a forest pond with his grief and sorrow. The white flowers are symbols of purity; their innocence stands for the real love which exists somewhere, maybe in 'the land of never-ending summer'.

*11 The existential state: longing and yearning for  
love, beauty and silence*

In Plato's dialogues Socrates says that the human being longs for what he/she does not have; beauty, love and truth.<sup>123</sup> The same idea is repeated in poetry, for instance, in the Ostrobothnian author Gösta Ågren's (1936–) poem *Ett sällsamt ord* 'An Unusual Word': *Den, som har allt, / saknar någonting / att sakna. Han saknar / det, 'The one who has everything, / longs for something / to long for. He longs for / that.'*<sup>124</sup> In the modernist Edith Södergran's (1892–1923) poem *Landet som icke är* 'The Land That Is Not', longing takes the form *Jag längtar till landet som icke är, / ty allting som är, är jag trött att begära., 'I long for the land that is not, / for I am weary of desiring all things that are.'*<sup>125</sup> Concepts like longing, love and death are perennial themes of literature, reflections of real life.<sup>126</sup> These are also key themes of the tango.

Finnish *nostalgia* was established in Finnish tango texts in the 1950s and 1960s especially. Their main concern is longing as a concrete phenomenon, a *kaukokaipuu* ('Sehnsucht') for distant lands, or for some distant country far away and unreachable. It can also be an abstract object, the heavenly home where all sorrows and griefs are left behind. The Finnish word for *nostalgia* is *kaiho* 'longing for the past', incorporating sadness and poignancy affecting one's feelings deeply, making one sad or full of pity.' Sorrows, regrets, and memories can be poignant. The term also suggests wistfulness. 'A wistful person is full of sad or vague longing, especially for something that is past or unobtainable'; *nostalgia* also means 'a sentimental longing for things that are past'.<sup>127</sup> The past, childhood, youth, music, or an atmosphere can be nostalgic. The Finnish nouns *kaiho*, *kaipaus*, *kaipuu*, *haikea ikävä*, *haikeus*, *kaihomieli*, can be equated with *melancholy* which means 'depression', 'sorrow', 'grief', 'sadness', and 'distress', while *nostalgia* does not necessarily imply darkness of mind.<sup>128</sup> *Melancholy* is a tendency towards deep sadness which lasts for some time as well as depression, or a mental disease marked by melancholy. The adjective *melancholy* means 'very sad', 'depressed', in expressions such as *a melancholy mood or a person*. While the inherent features of *nostalgia* are 'longing' and 'longing for the past', it is active, emphasising the modality of doing (*faire*), while *melancholy* suggests

<sup>122</sup> *Kultainen tangokirja* 1 (1994: 74–75); Haapanen 1902–1971 (1973: 281).

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Plato, *The Symposium, The Phaedrus*.

<sup>124</sup> Ågren (1992), *Hid 'Here'*.

<sup>125</sup> Södergran (1984), *Samlade dikter, Complete Poems*, transl. by David McDuff (1984: 187).

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Kukkonen (1986: 77–100).

<sup>127</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989: 309–311, 535, 572–574).

<sup>128</sup> *Suomen kielen perussanakirja* (1990; 1993) 'A Basic Dictionary of Finnish'.

depression, and hence a state, the modality of being in some state (*être*).<sup>129</sup> This implies that it is painful to long for the past. Nostalgia is thus not only a sentimental and romantic longing for the past but also a more profound expression of the role of memory. In the Finnish tango, deeper nostalgia grows from nature, folk tradition and folk songs. The Finnish mentality is often described as silent, introverted, slow, shy and so on, negative aspects which have become a myth. These features are actually realisations of a serious attitude to life, a philosophical point of view. Finns maintain a creative dialogue with themselves, in which existential questions can be raised, a kind of auto communication, or perhaps prayer. Finnish silence derives its seriousness from nature, and partly from the Slavic mentality and the so-called Tchekhovian slowness which is actually poor in external action, but rich in inner states.<sup>130</sup> Communing with nature, trees, flowers, and birds has created a mythical dimension in the life of the Finns. This Finnish national silence is actually a creative force allowing man time to contemplate his/her existence.

Art, literature, and the tango are all concerned with love. Is love banal and sentimental in popular music but not so in high culture? Yevgeni Yevtushenko writes in one of his poems: 'I do not love you anymore ... A banal decision / banal like life, banal like death'. The lines express the truth that life is banal, death is banal, and love is banal. All these three great entities are banal. Love or rejection, love in its many forms occurs. The tango is a little story, a dramatic episode, one of man's great stories in a small form. Its themes are the Great Love, the Great Sorrow, the Great Grief, and the Great Longing. These eternal themes are combined with the idea of beauty and the succession of the seasons. Longing, love and death are concepts which form the man's great story, its myths and the legends. They belong to both high culture and low culture. In Plato's dialogues man longs for what he does not have: love, beauty, and truth. Plato defines love as searching for beauty; "[...] love is desire for the perpetual possession of the good".<sup>131</sup> Man's search for the good and the beautiful form various myths or fairy-tales.

Tango lyrics with their music form one of these dramatic episodes, a way to process love and longing, rejection and sorrow, joy and sorrow, etc., which are difficult to verbalise in prosaic everyday language; for instance, when the full moon takes the message of love to the beloved, as in *Täysikuu* ([1953] 1954) 'The Full Moon',<sup>132</sup> or the subject asks in *Tuntematon tähti* (1963) 'The Unknown Star',<sup>133</sup> 'Why are you like a unknown star to me?', so distant that only the cosmic helpers can be invoked.

What is the essential feature of a Finnish tango? The critics claim that the tango is repetitious. The Finnish tango is usually associated with the rural life-style, the romantic countryside dance pavilion in the Finnish summer evenings,

<sup>129</sup> Cf. the English meanings of the words, *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1989: 309-311, 535, 572-574).

<sup>130</sup> Broms (1984: 156-175), cf. also Tarasti (1978).

<sup>131</sup> Plato, *The Symposium*, 206a.

<sup>132</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 3 (1979: 206); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 228).

<sup>133</sup> Tuomi (1965); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1975: 595).

a life-style now past, first and other loves. It is a dramatic episode of longing, and our 'sorrow-pains' or 'the painful joys of memory' through which the tango lyrics communicate. The Finnish tango is a nostalgic thought which is danced, to restate Enrique Santos Discépolo's well-known claim that Argentinean tango is 'a sad thought that is danced'.

Whether love is banal or not is an ambiguous question. In the 1950s the tango *Muista minua* ([1953] 1954) 'Remember Me' music by Pedro de Punta [Toivo Kärki] with lyrics by Orvokki Itä [Reino Helismaa],<sup>134</sup> is a direct request to love me, and not forget me when nature is beautiful in summer, when life is joyful, and not forget me when autumn comes. Tangos do not usually mention laughter as this one does within its joy-sorrow, summer-autumn structure:

## Muista minua

Sinä muista minua silloin,  
kun on valkea, suvinen yö!  
Muista minua silloin,  
sade syksyinen ruutuun kun lyö!  
Sinä muista minua silloin,  
sinun huulillas nauru kun soi!  
Muista minua silloin,  
kun et murheille hymyillä voi!  
[...]

Music Pedro de Punta [Toivo Kärki]

Lyrics Orvokki Itä [Reino Helismaa] ([1953] 1954)

## 'Remember Me'

'Remember me,  
when it is a bright, summer night!  
Remember me,  
when the autumn rain hits the window!  
Remember me,  
when laughter sounds on your lips!  
Remember me,  
when you cannot smile at your griefs!'

The repetitions and alliteration give an almost folk song-like atmosphere to this tango. Summer represents joy, autumn grief and sorrow. The tango texts set out to communicate using words or expressions which are difficult to use in real life.

Åke Daun, a Swedish researcher, has discussed the use of emotions and the emotional language of the Swedish people and claims that Swedes are reluctant to show their feelings. *Jag älskar dig* 'I love you' has more frequent alternatives such as *Jag tycker om dig*, *Jag gillar dig* 'I like you'.<sup>135</sup> It is true that the verbal discourses of love are pragmatically difficult to handle in everyday life. The Swedish linguist, Ulf Teleman has discussed the discourse of "I love you" in his article *Varför säger du aldrig att du älskar mig?* 'Why don't you ever say you love me?' and the meanings of the verb *älska* in the sentence "Jag älskar dig" ('I love you'). He claims that this profession is too theatrical and binding to be used in everyday life situations.<sup>136</sup> Using the modalities, this means that 'I love you' expresses knowing (*savoir*), is binding in the sense of believing (*croire*) and will (*vouloir*), must (*devoir*); i.e. I know and believe that I will and must love you for ever. This is a paradox when 'I love you' actualises the modality of can (*pouvoir*); i.e. I can – but I do not know if I can – love you until the end of time.

<sup>134</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 6 (1985: 184); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 166).

<sup>135</sup> Daun (1989: 152, 176–192.)

<sup>136</sup> Teleman (1991: 285–293).

These modalities show that the claim 'I love you' is too binding, because love is inherently transitory – *+temporary*.<sup>137</sup> Extralinguistic signs as kisses, glances, and caresses can show our love without assigning it to something as definitive as 'I love you' can be. This is because our body language has open, alternative meanings, while 'I love you' implies finality.<sup>138</sup>

It is also easier then to dance a Finnish tango very close to each other with closed eyes. It is easier to hear the sentence 'I love you' (Finnish *rakastan sinua*, Swedish *jag älskar dig*) or the concept of love (Finnish *rakkaus*, Swedish *kärlek*) sung than to use it. The language of poetry and song texts are the communicators of passions and feelings. Carl-Gunnar Åhlén also claims that tango texts are crucial to so-called silent cultures, where the tango is danced mainly to words (Finland, Japan). The tango is a transfer of words and feelings, a silent proposal.<sup>139</sup> An example of the difficulties in communicating directly is the tango beguine *Minä soitan sulle illalla* ([1952] 1953) 'I'll Call You in the Evening', music by Kari Aava [Toivo Kärki] with lyrics by Tatu Pekkarinen (1892–1951) one of his last works. Reino Helismaa actually finished the text.<sup>140</sup> Its setting includes the central attributes of the Finnish tango lyrics: love, difficulty in explaining one's feelings, cosmic entities as communicators and *helpers*, while symbol of the feelings is the nightingale:

## Minä soitan sulle illalla

Sinä miksi oot rakkahin mulle,  
tällä hetkellä sanomatta jää.  
Mutta soitan ja kerron sen sulle,  
mitä nyt minä en voi selittää.

Minä soitan sulle illalla  
kaiken sen, mikä syönessä kaikaa.  
Kunhan nousee kuu, taivas tummentuu,  
kerron senkin, mistä nyt on vaihi suu.  
Minä soitan sulle illalla,  
sillä ilta on rakkauden aikaa.  
Nyt en kerro en, nyt mä vaikenen,  
mutta soitan sulle illalla.

Satakielikin laulunsa vienoon  
vasta puhkeaa, kun nukkunut on maa.  
Hämy illan kun tummentaa tienoon,  
sydän kaipuunsa ilmi vasta saa.

[...]

Music Kari Aava

Lyrics Tatu Pekkarinen & Reino Helismaa ([1952] 1953)

## 'I'll Call You in the Evening'

'The reason why you are dear to me,  
just now I cannot tell.  
But I'll call and tell you  
what I cannot explain now.

I'll call you in the evening  
everything that is echoing in the heart.  
Until the moon rises, the sky darkens,  
I will tell you even what I now am quiet about.  
I'll call you in the evening,  
because the evening is the time for love.  
Now I will not tell, now I am quiet about it,  
but I'll call you in the evening.

The nightingale will begin its soft song  
when land has gone to sleep.  
When the glow of the night darkens the land,  
the heart can express its longing.'

[...]

Finnish tango lyrics also show that the language of love is difficult to address to one's beloved. Usually nature communicates the feelings, or, as above, it is

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Östman's (1989) analysis of the English verb *love*.

<sup>138</sup> Teleman (1991: 285-293).

<sup>139</sup> Åhlén (1987: 64-82).

<sup>140</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 10 (1991: 198-199); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946-1961 (1992: 46).

easier to communicate one's deepest feelings through some medium such as the telephone.

Toivo Kärki and Reino Helismaa's tango *Täysikuu* ([1953] 1954) 'The Full Moon'<sup>141</sup> is one of the most popular tangos in Finland along with Kärki and Mustonen's *Liljankukka* (1945), 'The Lily Flower' and *Siks' oon mä suruinen*, (1944) 'Therefore I Am Sad', and naturally Mononen's *Satumaa* (1955) 'The Happy Land'.<sup>142</sup>

## Täysikuu

Täysikuu, sä ihme suurin olet öisen taivahan.  
Täysikuu, kun avaruuden puot loistoon hopeaan,  
saat nähdä vain sä rakkauden, sen hetket riemukkaat,  
mut' kiertää kylmää tietäsi niin yksin sinä saat.  
Täysikuu, kun hänet löydät jota kaipaam minä niin,  
täysikuu, sä hänet loisteellasi peität suudelmiin!  
Ja kerro hälle, kuinka paljon häntä rakastan.  
Täysikuu se kerro hälle, täysikuu!  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Reino Helismaa ([1953] 1954)

## 'The Full Moon'

'Full moon, you are the greatest wonder in the night sky.  
Full moon, when you fill the sky with silvery light,  
you can only see love, its joyful moments,  
but you have to go around on your own cold road so alone.  
Full moon, when you find her whom I long for so,  
full moon, cover her with kisses of your light!  
And tell her, how much I love her.  
Full moon, tell it to her, full moon!'

I talked at the outset about the mediator aspect in the Finnish silent culture. In this tango the subject asks the full moon to tell his beloved how much he loves her. The *helper* is thus the full moon, as nature is in many other Finnish tangos. The subject knows (*savoir*) that he wants to talk about his love but cannot; the modality is *non-pouvoir*. The texts often contain eroticism *saat nähdä vain sä rakkauden, sen hetket riemukkaat* 'you can only see love, and its joyful moments', or *täysikuu, sä hänet loisteellasi peität suudelmiin* 'full moon, cover her with the kisses of your light.' The full moon is implicitly personified as a communicator. The time of the tango is the night *öisen taivahan*, 'the night sky'. The negative features of love are implicit in the image *mut' kiertää kylmää tietäsi niin yksin sinä saat*, 'but you have to go around on your own cold road so alone', i.e. +*dolor*; +*loneliness*, and +*longing*. The repetition functions stylistically as a folk song: *Ja kerro hälle*, 'And tell her', and *Täysikuu, se kerro hälle, täysikuu*, 'Full moon, tell it to her, full moon'. The semantic attributes are +*désir*, +*intensity*, and +*dolor*.

That the tango is a serious communication form is shown by Julie M. Taylor in her analysis of the Argentinean tango, quoting one of her informants.<sup>143</sup> Silence as communication is central to Finnish culture. In a culture where it is difficult to express feelings, for instance, in the Finnish culture, the tango becomes central to communication. Eva Österberg has published interesting studies of silence in the Icelandic sagas. The strategies of silence are very

<sup>141</sup> Kärki 2 (1970); *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 3 (1979: 206); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 228).

<sup>142</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 6-7, 38-39, 2-3; Strömmer & Haapanen 1920–1945 (1981: 182, 334, 339); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 234).

<sup>143</sup> Taylor (1976: 290).

important in Icelandic culture when people have lived in the countryside at great distances from each other and verbal communication has been rare.<sup>144</sup>

### 12 *Satumaa 'The Happy Land' – a paradigmatic Finnish tango*

Unto Mononen's (1930–1968) tangos comprehend the whole range of the Finnish mentality; longing, melancholy, nostalgia, dreams, sorrow and sadness described through nature. The features common to Mononen's tangos are water, the rain or the sea, and the night and silence in nature. He has also composed tango music to famous Finnish authors' poems. The quintessence of being a Finn, is often said to be found in the tango *Satumaa* (1955), 'The Happy Land',<sup>145</sup> where longing receives its characteristic expression. *Satumaa* has been one of the most popular Finnish tangos; indeed, the most played tango in Finland in 1991.<sup>146</sup> The original Finnish, the Swedish translation and an English translation are as follows:

Satumaa	Sagolandet <sup>147</sup>
Aavan meren tuolla puolen, jossakin on maa, missä onnen kaukorantaan laine liplattaa. Missä kukat kaucimmat luo aina loistettaan, siellä huolet huomisen voi jättää unholaan.	Bortom vida havet finns det någonstans ett land, där små vågor plaskar mot en lummig lyckostrand. Ständigt står där blommor i den härligaste prakt. Över morgondagens oro glömskans väv sig lagt.
Oi, jospa kerran sinne satumaahan käydä vois, niin sieltä koskaan lähtisi en linnun lailla pois. Vaan siivetonää en voi lentää vanki olen maan, vain aatoksin mi kausa entää sinne käydä saan.	Ack, om jag blott en enda gång fick flyga över dit, då skulle jag bli stannfågel och aldrig komma hit. Men utan vingar som jag är, så får jag hållas här. Blott tanken som är snabb och fri kan stundom vara där.
Lennä laulu sinne missä siintää satumaa, sinne missä oma armain mua odottaa. Lennä laulu sinne lailla linnun liitävän. kerro, että aatoksissain on vain yksin hän. [...] Music and lyrics Unto Mononen (1955)	Flyg min sång till sagolandets azurblåa kust. Där bor den mitt hjärta älskar hett i nöd och lust. Flyg min sång som fågeln flyger över land och hav. Säg henne att hon är den jag evigt håller av. [...] Swedish lyrics Lars Huldén (1980)

#### The Happy Land

Over there beyond the oceans, there's a happy land,  
Where the waves so softly kiss its warm and golden sand.  
Charming flowers spread their fragrance and soothe a troubled mind.  
There's no place for sorrow – only happiness you'll find.

Oh, if only I could find and reach that happy land.  
Unlike a bird that flies away I'd never leave that sand.  
But without wings I cannot fly, I am prisoner of the ground.  
And only through my heart and dreams to the Happy Land I'm bound.

<sup>144</sup> Österberg (1991: 9-30).

<sup>145</sup> *Toiveiskelmiä* 8 (1955: 4-5), *Helsinki University Library Collections*; Mononen ([1955] 1963–1971); *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 2-3; Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 234).

<sup>146</sup> Sirén (1992).

<sup>147</sup> Huldén (1980: 163).



Fly, my song, and take me where I'll find that happy land.  
 Fly, and take me to my darling, let me take her hand.  
 Fly, my song, and spread your wings, go soaring like a dove.  
 Tell my love so sweet and tender, she's my only love!

Oh, if only I could find and reach that happy land.  
 Music and lyrics Unto Mononen  
 English lyrics Helinä Kotkanen (1995)

*Satumaa* is the Finnish national and romantic idea of some happy place somewhere, as it had already appeared in the Finnish author Aleksis Kivi's (1834–1872) poem *Kaukametsä*, 'The Far Forest',<sup>148</sup> where a child comes running to his mother telling her: *I have seen heaven's country [...] Not so, but there upon the skyline / Where the far forest glimmers, / There is the world of happiness, and / There is the blessed country.* Another poem by Kivi, the well-known *Lintukoto*, 'Elfland',<sup>149</sup> contains a theme used both in music and poetry.<sup>150</sup> In mythology *Lintukoto* can be interpreted as 'the home of the birds' (*lintu* 'bird', *koto* 'home'), Tuonela or Manala, The Land of Death, to which birds take man's soul. *Elfland* is a long poem which begins:

#### Elfland

Far out to sea a comely island lies,  
 An isle of leafy forest and green grass.  
 Precipitous, the shores of rocky cliffs  
 Perpetually resist when in a storm  
 The waves, the open sea's unruly children,  
 Caper in ringlets all of foam  
 To overwhelm the lovely isle of Elfland.  
 [...]  
 Immortal people dwell upon this isle,  
 Their youth eternal in a land of joy  
 [...]  
 The cuckoo, bird of joy, and the song-thrush  
 Calling in golden thickets all around.  
 [...]  
 English transl. Bosley (1994: 54-57)

People here are described: "Silent they sit, deep in a leafy dale [...] There is a quiet everywhere, the silent / Blue of the heavens high above them rests [...] / But without pain is all their weariness" and they make a "voyage of delight" around "the shore of the isle of peace." The poem expresses longing for peace and harmony: "Calm, clear and calm, is echoing far off / With all the blended, humming harmony." The poem ends with a description of the "eternal summer on the isle of peace: The lads plough fields, they mow meadows, / The maids wearing their garlands, their fair curls, / Arc weaving golden cloth in the tall turret."<sup>151</sup>

<sup>148</sup> In Kivi, *Odes*, transl. Bosley (1994: 19).

<sup>149</sup> In Kivi *Odes*, transl. Bosley (1994: 54-57).

<sup>150</sup> Erkki Salmenhaara (1941–2002), a Finnish musicologist and composer, has composed music for this poem; *Symphony No. 5 "Isle of Bliss" (Aleksis Kivi)* ([1990] 1991) Edition Pan/Fazer.

<sup>151</sup> In Kivi *Odes*, transl. Bosley (1994: 54-57).

In another poem Kivi describes *Ikävyyts*, *Weariness*,<sup>152</sup> the life on the earth, in which the persona longs for beauty and harmony:

## Weariness

What weariness,  
What gloom encircling my soul  
Like an autumn evening on desolate land?  
Vain is trouble here,  
Vain the struggle is  
And the world's allness is vain.

I have no wish  
For heaven, not for hell's night,  
Nor shall any girl nestle more in my arms:  
Let my fate be far  
From the pain of knowing,  
Silence and emptiness all.

Now listen friends,  
To this, my final request,  
O give ear to what I am begging of you:  
Build a house of death  
For this boy's abode:  
Deep in the soil he will hide.  
[...]

Kivi has however happy poems entitled *Onnelliset*, *The Happy Ones* and *Sunnuntai*, *Sunday*,<sup>153</sup> in which he depicts a beautiful summer morning and a Sunday. In *Song of my Heart* (from the novel *Seven Brothers*)<sup>154</sup> cited earlier the longing for The Land of Death, the place of peace, expresses the weariness of this earthly life. The intertextual connections of these poems can be seen in Mononen's tango. Man dreams of going to a paradise where he is happy far away from "the cold country". But it can also express the eternal idea of longing for love and beauty expressed as a platonic idea; man longs for the beauty and peace he does not have.

In *Satunmaa* the subject sighs: 'Oh, if only I could find and reach that happy land'. In Kivi's poem *Swing-Boat*<sup>155</sup> we hear [...] *Like Happyland in the distance / There glimmers a lovely hillock, / Which is where I would fly beside my girl. / On wings heading westward [...]*. Kivi's poem *Sunday*<sup>156</sup> describes happiness and harmony, longing for the happy land somewhere.

Longing can also be for the heavenly home, as in Kivi's *The Far Forest*. The symbols of death are strong in Finnish folk poetry. In the tango *Satunmaa*, *kaiho* ('nostalgic yearning') and *haikeus*, ('poignancy') get their full expression. The object of longing is an abstraction, longing for something man does not have, but can also be a physical place which gives material security and welfare; after the war years Sweden was an actual paradise for many Finns who emigrated in

<sup>152</sup> In Kivi, *Odes*, transl. Bosley (1994: 41).

<sup>153</sup> In Kivi *Odes*, transl. Bosley (1994: 20-21, 22-23).

<sup>154</sup> In Kivi, *Odes*, transl. Bosley (1994: 45).

<sup>155</sup> In Kivi, *Odes*, transl. Bosley (1994: 27-28).

<sup>156</sup> In Kivi, *Odes*, transl. Bosley (1994: 20-21).

the 1960s in the hope of a better future. Previously it had been the USA. My interpretation of 'The Happy Land' follows the more abstract idea that man longs for what he lacks.

The same idea of longing appears in Kurt Weill's *Youkali: tango habanera*, composed in the 1930s (probably 1935) with lyrics by Roger Fernay.<sup>157</sup>

Youkali: Tango habanera

C'est presque au bout du monde  
 Ma barque vagabonde  
 Errant au gré de l'onde  
 M'y conduisit un jour  
 L'île est toute petite,  
 Mais la fée qui l'habite  
 Gentiment nous invite  
 A en faire le tour.  
 Youkali, c'est le pays de nos désirs  
 Youkali, c'est le bonheur,  
 c'est le plaisir  
 Youkali, c'est la terre  
 ou l'on quitte tous le soucis  
 C'est dans notre nuit,  
 Comme une éclaircie,  
 L'étoile qu'on suit,  
 C'est Youkali.  
 Youkali, c'est le respect  
 de tous les vœux échangés,  
 Youkali, c'est le pays  
 des beaux amours partagés.  
 C'est l'espérance  
 Qui est au cœur de tous les humains,  
 La délivrance  
 Que nous attendons tous pour demain,  
 [...]  
 Mais c'est un rêve, une / folie  
 il n'y a pas de Youkali!  
 Et la vie nous entraîne  
 Lassante, quotidienne  
 Mais la pauvre âme, humaine,  
 Cherchant partout l'oubli,  
 A, pour quitter la terre,  
 Su trouver le mystère  
 Ou nos rêves se terrent  
 En quelque Youkali.  
 Music Kurt Weill  
 Lyrics Roger Fernay (1935)

The longing for a Paradise, Shangri La, a Wonderland, a happy land, or a Youkali, recalls the eternal longing of man for the prelapsarian Earthly Paradise, or for a *chora*, where everything is a unity. The tango habanera *Youkali* also realises the platonic longing and yearning; man longs for Freedom, Love, Beauty, and Truth,<sup>158</sup> or for something that he does not have.

Unto Mononen's tango *Satumaa* (1955) expresses the central theme of the Finnish tango, longing and yearning. As music and text it can be interpreted in

<sup>157</sup> Farantouri (nd.) CD MCD 906/7; also Stratas (1981), CD Nonesuch 7559-7 9019-2.

<sup>158</sup> Plato, *The Symposium*, 191c-d, 204e-206a.

many ways; on the one hand, as a sentimental and romantic longing and yearning for something, a distant country or a happy land, and on the other hand, as a seriously existential and religious text. Mononen had studied church music, a reason for the allusions in his tangos to the psalms which has been discussed by Jalkanen.<sup>159</sup> Despite the particular interpretation of this tango, Mononen's tango embodies the essence of Finnish longing and yearning; 'but without wings I cannot fly I am a prisoner of the ground', and 'only in my thoughts which can fly far away can I go there'. In Arvo Koskimaa's tango *Syyspihlajan alla* (1942) 'Under the Autumn Rowan Tree', discussed earlier, 'the cranes have flown away / over my head. / They did not take me to the distant lands, / those without wings must stay with / the cold bonds of the ground'. The subject says that 'I waited for something; / he/she will never come'. Man 'waits for something', the idea in Plato's dialogues. Man longs for what he does not have and needs his/her longing dreams to fulfil this idea.

The Swedish lyrics of this tango by Lars Huldén use the normal alliteration in Finnish poetry and songs, as in *lummig lyckostrand* 'the flourishing happy shore', and *Flyg min sång som fågeln flyger över land och hav*, 'Fly my song like the bird flies over land and sea', which reproduce alliteration as in the original: *Lennä laulu sinne lailla limmun liitävän*. The image *siellä huolet huomisen voi jäädä unholaan* 'there the worries of tomorrow can fall into oblivion' is in Swedish: *Över morgondagens oro glömskans väv sig lagt*, 'Over the worries of tomorrow the web of oblivion has lain'. Huldén's expressions are even more explicit: *sagolandets azurblåa kust* 'the azur blue shore of the happy land', and *där bor den mitt hjärta älskar hett i nöd och lust*, 'there she lives whom I love in good as well as bad times'. The interjection *Ack*, 'Oh' and the literal adverb *blott* 'only', used in Swedish psalms, recalls the Swedish poet Carl Michael Bellman (1740–1795), an 18th century author whom Huldén has done research on. Bellman's poetry represents a completely different philosophy of life from the idea of 19th century romanticism; his characters lived where longing was unimportant, *längtan* 'longing' not being very frequent in the collection *Fredmans epistlar* (1790) 'Fredman's Epistles'. Love, women and wine were their reality, *carpe diem* being the message; a completely different view of life than that of J. L. Runeberg, a national romantic; in whose poetry *längtan* 'longing' occurs frequently.<sup>160</sup>

*Satunmaa* or *Sagolandet* is an abstract or actual land at a distance, a land of perfect happiness. It is an expression of man's eternal longing for 'a land which does not exist'. The object of the longing is actually an abstraction, something indefinite. It is the heaven of the Finns, a place of peace, a *Thirdness* state where silence gives understanding and consolation, where man understands the meaning of existence. The more literal sense can be provided by the great emigration from Finland in the 1950s and the 1960s from a country materially poor but existing in memories as a golden land, as J. L. Runeberg (1804–1877)

<sup>159</sup> Jalkanen (1992: 77-78; 1993: 48-54).

<sup>160</sup> Kukkonen (1986: 77-100).

describes in his poem *Vårt land*. It is the land of memories consisting of childhood, youth, longing for the past, a longing to return to the place where one's roots are, the first home described by Runeberg as Finnish nature:

Vårt land

[...]  
Vi älska våra strömmars brus  
och våra bäckars språng,  
den mörka skogens dystra sus,  
vår stjärnenatt, vårt sommarljus,  
allt, allt, vad här som syn, som sång  
vårt hjärta rört en gång.  
J. L. Runeberg (1846)

'Our Land'

[...]  
'We love the foam of our waters  
and the wells of our brooks,  
the sighing of the dark forest,  
our night of stars, our summer light,  
everything, everything which as sight, as song  
has touched us once.'

Nature is particularly important, since although the persona longs for distant lands, 'the sighing of the dark forest' and 'the night of stars' and 'our summer light' are the most important place. Zacharias Topelius (1818–1898) also describes the Nordic light in the chapter *Sommarnattens klarhet* 'The Brightness of the Summer night' in his book *Boken om vårt land* (1875) 'The Book of Our Land', something which is inside the Finnish people, and which is the object of longing, promising light and brightness, metaphors of hope and harmony. The nationalist romantic view of man and nature is explained in this passage:

*Sedan solen gått ned till sin korta vila, antager hela naturen en egen drömmande stämning. Dagens givarinna är borta, de flesta fåglar ha tystnat, människor och djur söka vila, växterna vänta natten, och natten kommer icke. I stället sprider sig ett matt, glänsande sken över stränder, fjärdar och skogar. Det är ej solsken, ej månsken, ej stjärnljus, ej skymning, det är nattens egen tysta, förklarade glans, mild och högtidlig, såsom en evig glädje i jordens förgångliga vår. [...] Därtill kommer stillheten överallt, som endast avbrytes av talltrastens melodiska sång, och den känsla av enslighet, som åtföljer natten. Allt detta liksom flyter in i åskådarens själ. Han känner inom sig det hemlighetsfulla sambandet mellan naturen och alla levande väsen. Det är som om nattens klarhet skulle överflyttas till människans öga.<sup>161</sup>*

'When the sun has gone down for its short rest, the whole of nature acquires a dreaming atmosphere. The giver of the day has vanished, most birds have stopped singing, people and animals seek for rest, the plants wait for the night, and the night will not come. Instead a dim, shining glow is spread over the shores, the open sea, and forests. It is not sunshine, not moonlight, not starlight, not twilight, it is the special, clear sheen of the night, mild and solemn, like an eternal joy in the perishable spring of the earth. [...] In addition, there is the silence, which is only broken by the melodic song of the thrush, and the feeling of loneliness which is followed by the night. All this is somehow floating in the eye of the onlooker. Inside him he feels the connection between nature and all living beings. It is as if the brightness of the night moved into the eye of man.'<sup>162</sup>

This can be said to be the Finnish soul reflected by nature, the changes between lightness and darkness, an almost pantheistic view of existence. It is this Topelian soul that the Finnish nostalgic tango lyrics describe over and over again, this nature which has shaped the Finnish mentality, its silence and slowness, the Finnish soul always longing and yearning for the light and the happy

<sup>161</sup> Topelius ([1875] 1983: 72).

<sup>162</sup> My word-by-word translation into English.

land as an abstraction, which is 'like the eternal joy of the perishable spring of the earth'. Tango nostalgia is the language of love and longing here under the pole star, where the brightness is so bright, the darkness so dark, the joy so joyful, the sorrow so dark; minor and major in dialogue with each other as in nature.

In his poem *The Finnish Land*<sup>163</sup> Aleksis Kivi gives his view of the Finnish wilderness, also an essential part of Finnish existence and being (*être*) reflected in the tango lyrics.

The Finnish Land

What is that land of hill and dale  
That is so beautiful,  
The land aglow with summer days,  
Land with the northern lights ablaze,  
Whose beauty all the seasons share,  
What is that land so fair?

There many thousand lakes are bright  
With twinkling stars at night,  
There many kancles resound  
And all around make hillsides sing  
And on the golden heath firs ring:  
That is the Finnish land.

O never shall your tender sky  
Be gone from memory,  
Never the fire of your bright sun  
Nor in your spruces the clear moon  
Nor yet your woodsmoke as it rides  
From clearings to the clouds.

And yet these valleys have endured  
Seasons when life was hard,  
When in a night of sudden frost  
The corn sown in our fields was lost;  
But hope came with the dawning day  
And work swept frost away.

And in these valleys yet again  
Some horrors there have been,  
When slaughter, death were brought by war  
And the ground swallowed human gore;  
But many heroes' splendid name  
Added to Finland's fame.

[...]

To fall asleep in your embrace,  
Land of our dreams, what bliss,  
O you our cradle, you our grave,  
You the new hope we ever crave,  
Peninsula so beautiful,  
Finland for aye our all!  
(Kivi, *Odes*, transl. Bosley 1994: 67-68)

<sup>163</sup> In Kivi, *Odes*, transl. Bosley (1994: 67-68).



This poem is a description of the Finnish land and man's struggle with her harsh conditions. Human longing and yearning is more abstractly described in high culture, a description which clearly expresses the central ideas in the Finnish tango lyrics. Edith Södergran's poem *The Land That Is Not*<sup>164</sup> depicts the existential state of man and his/her modalities, a state of melancholy typical of Heidegger's notion of *Gelassenheit*.<sup>165</sup> *I am weary of desiring all things that are; the persona leaves the thing as such.*

The Land That Is Not

I long for the land that is not,  
for I am weary of desiring all things that are.  
The moon tells me in silver runes  
about the land that is not.  
The land where all our wishes are wondrously fulfilled,  
the land where all our chains fall away,  
the land where we cool our gashed foreheads  
in the moon's dew.  
My life was a hot delusion.  
But I have found one thing and one thing I have truly gained -  
the path to the land that is not.

In the land that is not  
my beloved walks with sparkling crown.  
Who is my beloved? What is his name?  
The heavens arch higher and higher,  
and a human child drowns in endless mists  
and knows no answer.  
But a human child is nothing other than certainty.  
And it stretches out its arms higher than all heavens.  
And there comes an answer: I am the one you love and always shall love.  
(Södergran [1920] 1984: 187)

Nevertheless, the abstract 'Land that is not' is an 'Elfland' or a 'Youkali', as *helpers*, gives the answer: *I am the one you love and always shall love*. In the longing and yearning for this place come hope and consolation. This poem expresses yearning for something a human being does not have. It talks also about life as a delusion, and the metaphor of the path; the path to the land that is not, where longing and desiring end.

In the 1960s Toivo Kärki, under the pseudonym Karl Stein, composes his tango *Atlantis* (1961), 'Atlantis',<sup>166</sup> which repeats the idea of paradise or the happy land somewhere, either real or unreal, with words by Rauni Kouta. In the ancient legend Atlantis was a large island continent said to have sunk below the Atlantic Ocean, west of the Straits of Gibraltar.<sup>167</sup> It was described by Plato and it is discussed very thoroughly in 17th-century Swedish literature by the linguist and antiquary, Olav Rudbeck, in his great work *Atlantica* (1679–1702) in four volumes. This myth is repeated in Toivo Kärki's tango:

<sup>164</sup> Södergran ([1920] 1984: 187). English transl. David Mcduff.

<sup>165</sup> Heidegger (1991: passim).

<sup>166</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes). Cf. P. Mustapää's poem titled *Atlantis* in the collection *Laulu vaakalinnusta* (1927) *The Song about the Eagle*.

<sup>167</sup> *Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1989: 94).

## Atlantis

Oli kerran ...  
 kertoo vanhat laulut niin:  
 Oli merten keskeen luotu Atlantis.  
 Sitä silloin rinnastettiin Eedeniin,  
 oli onnen kehto Atlantis.  
 Rikas oli köyhäkin,  
 onnellinen onneton.  
 Mutta onni hurmaavin  
 kovin lyhyt aina on!  
 Atlantiksen turma vei  
 alle meren aaltojen.  
 Saari sieltä noussut ei,  
 löydetty ei paikkaa sen.  
 Onni nytkin lienee  
 niin kuin saari tuo  
 tarun kaunein parhain paikka Atlantis.  
 Onni joskus saapuu,  
 hetken kauniin suo  
 ja taas häipyy kuten Atlantis.  
 Music Karl Stein [Toivo Kärki]  
 Lyrics Rauni Kouta [Reino Helismaa] (1961)

## 'Atlantis'

'Once upon a time ...  
 old songs say so:  
 In the middle of the oceans Atlantis was created.  
 It was then compared with Eden,  
 Atlantis was a cradle of happiness.  
 Even the poor were rich,  
 the unhappy were happy.  
 But even the most wonderful happiness  
 is always so short!  
 The destruction of Atlantis left it  
 under the waves of the sea.  
 An isle was not born,  
 its site was not found.  
 Happiness can sometimes be  
 like that isle  
 Atlantis, the most beautiful and best place of the myth.  
 Happiness will come some day,  
 bringing along a beautiful moment  
 and then again disappear like Atlantis.'

The narrative opens with "Once upon a time ...", familiar from fairy-tales; then the myth. The central message of these tango lyrics is in the last lines: beauty and happiness are like this myth appearing but quickly vanishing. Joy and happy moments are temporary. This is the same concept of the happy land as in *Youkali* (1930s), the tango habanera composed by Kurt Weill. The intertextual connections with the Biblical Paradise and in Finnish literature with Aleksis Kivi's (1834–1872) *Elfland* or in Swedish the romantic P. A. Atterbom's (1790–1855) *Lycksalighetens ö* (1824–1827), 'The Isle of Happiness', in which life on Felicia's [Astralis] isle is a metaphor for the aesthetic life are apparent. Felicia represents poetry in its highest form, a world beyond reality, i.e. God. In his dramatised fairy-tale Atterbom makes the religious world view which was indispensable for him superior to the romantic view.<sup>168</sup>

In the 1960s Finland began to rebuild its society, but many Finns emigrated to Sweden or the USA to get jobs and better material welfare than Finland could offer them. The countryside began to lose people, making the time one of social mobility. The "happy lands" were the big towns in Finland or industrial places in Sweden. In summer Finns came on holidays to their former native country; in the dancing pavilions they danced to nostalgic Finnish tangos with lyrics about the surroundings they had had to leave, longing for love and happiness, youth and memories. The tango could briefly offer them another world, "a happy land", in terms otherwise difficult to articulate. Through these lyrics they could work through their nostalgia.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Frykenstedt (1951: passim).

## 13 Here under the Pole Star

In the 1960s Finnish tango lyrics were mainly written by Reino Helismaa (1913–1968) for whom Finnish nature, especially Finnish Lapland, is paramount.<sup>169</sup> He uses Lapland and its nature in the tango *Lapin tähti* (1963), 'The Star of Lapland',<sup>170</sup> composed by Toivo Kärki:

## Lapin tähti

Kun on suvi silloin on  
päivän valo loputon.  
Kun on talvi yölle yö  
kättä aina lyö.  
Lappi vastakohtain maa  
kaiken tämän tarjoaa  
etsijänsä Lappi lumoa.

Lapintähti, kallis aarre köyhän erämaan,  
sinut milloin löytää saan.  
Moni etsii, harva kai  
nähdä sinut kerran sai,  
maa ei tahdo antaa kauneuttaan.

Lapintähti kivi kaunis salaperäinen  
Lapin yö on luonut sen,  
että yöhön pimeään,  
pitkään sekä ikävään  
jokin loisi väkettäin.

Jänkien ja metsien  
halki tulien etsien  
hauras haave oppaanain  
onneani hain.  
Jalokiven unohdin kauniimpaa kun kohtasin,  
rakkain, josta kauan haaveilin.  
[...]  
Music Toivo Kärki  
Lyrics Reino Helismaa (1963)

## 'The Star of Lapland'

'When it is summer  
the light of the day never ends.  
When it is winter the night  
always shakes hands with the night.  
Lapland the land of opposites  
offers all these;  
Lapland enchants the one who is searching for it.

The star of Lapland, a precious treasure of the wilderness,  
when will I find you?  
Many search for you, few perhaps  
have got to see you,  
a land so unwilling to reveal its beauty.

The star of Lapland, a beautiful and mysterious stone  
born out of the night of Lapland,  
to bring its shine  
for the dark night  
so long and sad.

Through the marshes and forests  
I came to search,  
only a weak dream as my guide  
I sought my fortune.  
I forgot the jewel when I met more beautiful things,  
my love, whom I dreamt about for a long time.  
[...]

In describing Lapland's endless light in summer, endless night in winter, and the pole star as a precious stone, Helismaa uses nature, so filled with dichotomies such as summer–winter, light–darkness and therefore always fascinating to man who seeks happiness with just a fragile dream as a guide. Man's dream is to achieve beauty and happiness, but when he has it, he forgets it, when "something more beautiful" comes his way. The pole star signifies hope in the dark winter night. Another tango, *Pohjantähti* (1980), 'The Pole Star',<sup>171</sup> also composed by Toivo Kärki but with lyrics by Vexi Salmi, uses this star as a crux. The tango concerns a sailor who has been away for years, and is at last coming home to his dear friend. This star shows the way on the great ocean of life. Life is either a road or a sea, two unknown entities. In 1980 *Pohjantähti*, 'The Pole

<sup>169</sup> Pennanen & Mutkala (1994: passim); cf. Helismaa (1968).

<sup>170</sup> Tammi (1963), BMC 119; Haapanen 1902–1971 (1973: 252).

<sup>171</sup> Taipale (nd.), MK 1388; Haapanen 1901–1982 (1990: 512).

Star' juxtaposes sea-home, the star-the beloved. The star is the fixed point which leads home. This tango is set at night with the pole star and the open sea. The subject is alone in this huge universe. A pairing is that of macrocosm-microcosm in the night when man feels his loneliness more keenly (cf. Rixner's tango *Blauer Himmel*). The drama in these lyrics is trivial but at the same time it deals with man's existential problem of loneliness. The pole star directs man's journey home; life is a dream or a road, from which man returns to *chora*, his/her point of origin, something at once real and abstract. Cosmological themes also mean a dialogue with basic myths and symbols.<sup>172</sup>

A woman can also be compared with the star, as in *Tuntematon tähti* (1965), 'The Unknown Star',<sup>173</sup> music and lyrics by P. Peltonen and Veikko Tuomi. The text stresses distance in that the unknown star is far away and the open and unknown sea lies before man. The subject stands before the universe: the mighty sea and the infinite night sky. He associates the evening star with his beloved who is like a star, bright but shining only briefly.

The cosmos has always interested man; space, cosmos, the moon, the sun and the stars have also created man's longing for a mythical sense.<sup>174</sup> *Here under The Pole Star* is Väinö Linna's (1920-1991) trilogy about life in Finland during the war. *Täällä Pohjantähden alla* (1959-1962) is also a Finnish folk song with lyrics by Jaakko Juteini (1781-1855). Finnish tango lyrics in general actually repeat this folk song thematically.<sup>175</sup> In 1992, Petri Laaksonen set the poem of the same name by Turukka Mali which Mali wrote as a schoolboy.<sup>176</sup> When the same themes and icons in a national culture are semiotically repeated in art, literature or music, they have indexical force, producing icons with resemblance to earlier texts. Finns would recognise this as their own poetry, and derive security from such iteration.<sup>177</sup>

Täällä Pohjantähden alla

Täällä Pohjantähden alla  
on nyt kotomaamme,  
mutta tähtien tuolla puolen  
toisen kodon saamme.

Täällä on kuin kukkasella  
aika lyhyt meillä,  
siellä ilo loppumaton  
niin kuin enkelillä.

Täällä sydän huokaillee  
ja itku silmään täyttää,  
siellä sydän iloitsee  
ja silmä riemun täyttää.

'Here under the Pole Star'

'Here under the Pole Star  
our home land is now,  
but beyond the stars  
another home we find.

Here the life is like a flower  
time is short for us,  
over there an eternal joy  
like the life of angels.

Here my heart is always sighing  
and tears fill my eyes;  
over there the heart delights  
and joy fills the eye.

<sup>172</sup> Honko (1993a: 63-77; 1993b: 81-91).

<sup>173</sup> Tuomi (1965), Ildeco Oy, ILD 89; Haapanen 1901-1982 (1975: 595).

<sup>174</sup> Honko (1993: 81-91); Timonen (1993b: 287-298).

<sup>175</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 3 (1979: 61).

<sup>176</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 10 (1992: 162).

<sup>177</sup> Tarasti on myths (1978: 11-38); Tarasti (1990: 200-203) on national icons; cf. also Ahlén (1987: 68-69).

Sinne toivon siivillä  
jo sydän pieni lennä!  
Siellä kun on kotomaani,  
sinne tahdon mennä.  
Music Finnish Trad.  
Lyrics Jaakko Juteini

Fly there, my heart,  
with wings of hope!  
There is my home land,  
there I want to go.'

This short spiritual song concerns our actual homeland, while beyond the stars is our second homeland. The theme of longing for Paradise where life is perfect and happy recurs. In Finnish texts the term is "longing for eternity" (*iäisyys-kaipuu*), or Elfland. This is a key line in Finnish tango lyrics, as well as in spiritual songs and psalms. The second motif is time; our time on earth is short, and 'beyond the stars there is an eternal joy like the time of angels.' 'Here is sorrow, there is joy and delight, both of which my heart is filled with.' 'I will go there on wings, because my homeland is there.' These concepts are repeated in many Finnish tangos expressing this eternal longing for heaven, especially in tangos by Unto Mononen. This theme is repeated over and over again in Finnish songs. Turcka Mali's song *Täällä Pohjantähden alla*<sup>178</sup> repeats the despondency of man; its second and third lines take a cosmic view in which the subject stays on the highest hill looking far into the distance. Here man also communes with the star; 'only the pole star sees me when I cry for your sake; under your star I live and die.' Human life on earth is filled with griefs and sorrows, the frost kills one's feelings and binds up one's soul. Nature with its purple evening glow are his only consolation and shelter.

Täällä Pohjantähden alla

Täällä Pohjantähden alla  
korkeimmalla kukkulalla  
katson kauas kaukaisuuteen,  
tulet uniin uudestaan.  
Täällä Pohjantähden alla  
taivas täyttyy purppuralla,  
siitä suojakseni peiton  
minä itselleni saan.  
Ja alla Pohjantähden  
minä tulen, minä lähden  
ja vain Pohjantähden nähdän  
itken vuokses kyneleän.

Täällä Pohjantähden alla  
murheita on laulajalla,  
täällä kuu kumottava  
on myös alakuloinen.  
Täällä Pohjantähden alla  
hiipii sieluun asti halla  
ja tunteet tappamalla  
rikki repii sydämen.  
[...]  
Music Petri Laaksonen  
Lyrics Turcka Mali

'Here under the Pole Star'

'Here under the Pole Star  
on the highest hill  
I look into the distance,  
you are coming into my dreams again.  
Here under the Pole Star  
the sky is filled with purple,  
from which I make a cover  
to shelter me.  
And under the Pole Star  
I will come, I will go  
and only under the Pole Star  
I cry for your sake.

Here under the Pole Star  
the singer has his griefs and sorrows,  
here the moon shines;  
it is also sad.  
Here under the Pole Star  
the frost will creep into my soul;  
killing the feelings,  
tearing the heart to pieces.  
[...]

<sup>178</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja 2* (1979: 61); Laaksonen (1994), *Täällä Pohjantähden alla*, CD4509-971096-2. Fazer Music.

Rauli "Badding" Somerjoki's (1947–1987) song *Tähdet, tähdet* (1983), 'Stars, Stars',<sup>179</sup> also stresses stars: *Tähdet, tähdet, luoksenne tahtoisin pois. / Tähdet, tähdet, silloin mun helpompi ois. / Tähdet, tähdet, enkö jo tulla mä saa. / Tähdet, tähdet, ikuisuuksiin ajan taa* 'Stars, stars, I want to go away to you. / Stars, stars, then it would be easier for me. / Stars, stars, can't I come now. / Stars, stars, to the eternities beyond stars.' In this song the pointlessness of life is forcefully put; 'it is useless to have hopes, the road of dreams is useless; if you give something, or love somebody, it leads to nothing.' Only the bitter longing remains. This song is a powerful example of the longing for Death, the life beyond stars.

These two songs express *Finnishness*, the typical atmosphere of nostalgia and melancholy found on cold winter days; the frost, *halla*, creeps into your bones, and soul and kills all feeling, freezing the heart. The pole star is the entity the Finn talks to, communes with, to whom he tells his sorrows, worries and problems, and directs his existential questions. Why is life so dark on this earth? Can I soon get to the other side, beyond the stars?

The national signs are also seen in popular culture texts. *Sininen ja valkoinen* (1972), 'Blue and White'<sup>180</sup> set by Jukka Kuoppamäki to his own lyrics has become a national icon. This song deals with the dichotomy richness–poverty, and the national colours blue and white, interpreted as a universal view of man's life on this earth, especially in the place called Finland. It was not intended as a tango at the outset, but has been rewritten in a tango version recently.

In the Finnish tango lyrics nature and cosmic elements are fundamental to the experience of nostalgia and melancholy. The subject has a continuous dialogue with nature, a phenomenon not present in the Argentinean tango which is an urban phenomenon, the exception being the nostalgia for the pampas. Nostalgia for the suburbs, for the urban objects of longing such as streets, quarters, and cafés is more normal. The subject in the Finnish tango calls on higher forces, even though religious themes actually do not occur. The stars are invoked as predictors of the fortune in *Tähdet kertovat* ([1959] 1960) 'Stars Tell':<sup>181</sup>

## Tähdet kertovat

Tähdet kertovat loisteellaan  
riemuista ihmisien.  
Tähdet kertovat meille myös  
suruista, uskotko sen?  
Kirjoitettu on tähtiin  
täytymys elämän lain.  
Köyhyys, rikkaus, rakkaus -  
tähdet sen kertovat vain.  
Et voi onnea saada  
jos määrää tähtesi niin.  
Kaiken kohtalo kytkee  
yön tähtiin kimmeltäviin.

## 'Stars Tell'

Stars tell with their light  
about the joys of man.  
Stars also tell us  
about sorrows; do you believe it?  
In the little stars there is written  
the fulfilment of the law of life.  
Poverty, wealth, love -  
the stars will tell us all that.  
You cannot find happiness so  
if your star determines so.  
Everything destiny joins  
with the shining stars.

<sup>179</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 7 (1985: 172).

<sup>180</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 3 (1979: 28).

<sup>181</sup> Helismaa (1967: 150–151); Strömmer & Haapanen 1946–1961 (1992: 252).



Kirjoitettu on tähtösiin  
täytymys elämän lain.

[...]

Music Orvokki Itä [Toivo Kärki]

Lyrics Orvokki Itä [Reino Helismaa] ([1959] 1960)<sup>182</sup>

In the little stars there is written  
the fulfilment of the law of life.

[...]

The things people want to know about are happiness, wealth, and love. Reino Välimäki and Saukki's [Sauvo Puhtila's] tango *Povas mulle mustalainen* (1967) 'A Gypsy Told My Future'<sup>183</sup> also deals with the crucial issues of poverty-wealth, real values-false values. This tango is a rare example of the modality of doing (*faire*), telling a story about the subject and the gypsy using various actions and verbs, whereas the Finnish tango lyrics usually express particular internal or external states (*être*). A dramatic episode, myth or legend is related in the tango *Musta ruusu* (1962) 'The Black Rose',<sup>184</sup> music by Pentti Viherluoto, lyrics by Harry Etelä. This tango is a narrative which begins with the story of an old castle and in its garden where a black rose is hidden. The myth says that if somebody finds it, he will die for his love. The subject walks in the garden and finds this rose which brings destruction and death. It tells about the dream and the delusion; he had a strange, enchanting dream of a woman who took his heart: *Mä lemmin neidon unikuvaa tuota, / mi oli mustan ruusun harha vain*, 'I loved the illusion of the maiden, / who was only a delusion of the black rose'. The text ends with the withered black rose which the subject keeps on his table as a reminder of his love. This is a legend for adults.

Human time, the mysterious stars, and the element of water, are central themes in Unto Mononen's tangos, as Sjöblom points out.<sup>185</sup> I discuss only some of his works. Typical of Mononen is a situation of anguish and depression, a state of melancholy. The silence of the night and the water are his recurring motifs. Time is described in the texts in terms of the different seasons. *Suvesta syksyyn* (1963), 'From Summer to Autumn',<sup>186</sup> shows both this and the brevity of love. The cuckoo, a sign of happiness, is a bird which often appears in Finnish folk poetry. The modality of believing (*croire*) appears in *Simut sai toinen, luulen*, 'You went with somebody else, I believe'. The same state is expressed in *Syksyinen kaipaus* (1963), 'A Longing in Autumn',<sup>187</sup> where birds are the core image:

Syksyinen kaipaus

Suvi päättyi, ja linnut silloin  
lensi maihin niin kaukaisiin.  
Tuli kaipaus syksyn illoin  
olin jälleen mä yksin niin.

'A Longing in Autumn'

'Summer came to its end, and birds then  
flew to distant countries.  
The longing came in the autumn nights  
I was so alone again.

<sup>182</sup> The pseudonym Orvokki Itä denotes both Toivo Kärki as composer and Reino Helismaa as lyricist.

<sup>183</sup> *Kultainen tangokirja 1* (1994: 110-111); Haapanen 1901-1971 (1975: 436).

<sup>184</sup> *Tunnetuimmat suomalaiset tangot*, pp. 46-47; Haapanen 1902-1971 (1973: 345).

<sup>185</sup> Sjöblom (1994a; 1994b).

<sup>186</sup> Mononen ([1963] 1970: 18); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1975: 536).

<sup>187</sup> Mononen ([1963] 1970: 12); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1975: 540).

Olen vankina syksyn harmaan,  
 ja on kaipuu vain seurassain.  
 Toinen saanut on lämmön armaan  
 minä syksyiltä kaipuun vain.  
 Nyt lailla lintujen en lentää voisi  
 mä kaipuun syksyisen kahleista pois.  
 Olen viimassa syksyn tuulen  
 ja on syömessäin talven jää.  
 Minä syömmeni sykkeen kuulen,  
 mutta armastain nyt en nää.  
 Music Unto Mononen  
 Lyrics Rauni Kouta [Reino Helismaa] (1963)

I am a prisoner of autumn's greyness,  
 and longing is my only companion.  
 Others have found the dear warmth,  
 autumn gave me only the longing.  
 Now unlike the birds I cannot fly away  
 from the autumn bounds of longing.  
 I am in the draught of the autumn wind  
 and in my heart is the ice of winter.  
 I hear the sighs of my heart,  
 but my beloved I cannot see.'

It is typically autumn and the subject downcast. Love is over, the coldness of winter remains; he is in a state of *Gelassenheit*. The theme of rejection and the language of longing are repeated in *Kaipuuni tango* (1964), 'The Tango of My Longing',<sup>188</sup> characteristic of Unto Mononen's melancholic tangos. They express profound depression, but sometimes combined with a more optimistic nostalgia. This is an example of how the subject has a dialogue with himself, and how a pessimistic, passive *melancholy* attitude ('it was useless'), and an optimistic, active *nostalgic* attitude ('I remember again ...', 'My longing mind finds some hope') interact.

## Kaipuuni tango

Illan rauhaan himmeään  
 myötä kaipuun jälleen jään  
 paljon mennyt päivä toi,  
 vaan kuitenkin  
 kuin hukkaan mennyt ois.  
 Muiston ääni hiljainen  
 sielussani soi kaivat  
 menneen mieleen jälleen tuo,  
 myös muistan sen,  
 kun rakkain lähdit pois.  
 [...]  
 Tuon menneen uudestaan  
 jos vielä saisin sen,  
 sua luotain milloinkaan  
 pois silloin päästä en.  
 Katson iltaan, tyhjään siltaan,  
 tuota mietin jälleen:  
 onni mainen  
 toisenlainen  
 myös kai olla vois.  
 Music and lyrics Unto Mononen (1964)

## 'The Tango of My Longing'

'In the calmness of the dim night  
 I remain with my longing  
 the day which brought me so much is gone,  
 however,  
 it was useless.  
 The silent sound of memory  
 rings longing in my soul,  
 bringing the past into my mind,  
 I remember again,  
 when you, my love, went away.  
 [...]  
 If only I could relive  
 those days,  
 I would never let you  
 leave me.  
 I look into the night, at the empty bridge,  
 wondering again  
 whether happiness on the earth  
 could be something else,  
 and maybe it could be.'

The structure of the text is that the first description is the place, the night. Many things have happened, but are useless. The memory is described, then again nature. He looks into the empty night, and sees that man's existence on this earth could be otherwise. The modality of uncertainty, the modality of being able (*pouvoir*) forms an existential theme here. It is like a modest wish to the Lord of Life, or to Destiny, functioning as *helpers*, or to some cosmic power to give life something other than this misery and longing for love which never comes. Arvo

<sup>188</sup> Mononen ([1963] 1970: 14); Haapanen 1902–1971 (1973: 168).

Koskimaa and Jouko Kukkonen's tango *Muistelen Sinua Marketta* (1965) 'I Remember You, Marketta'<sup>189</sup> echoes this when the subject is unable to meet his beloved Marketta: *vain suuri kaipuu Sun luokses / unelmissa rientää ainiaan. / Pois miksi katoaa / sen minkä saavuttaa / ja miksi onni viiptyy / hetken vaan*, 'only the great longing for You / catches You always in my dreams. / Why does what one gets / disappear / and why does happiness stay / only for a while?' This existential question is repeated in many texts.

Unto Mononen also uses Lapland and its nature in tangos such as *Lapin tango* (1964) 'The Tango of Lapland',<sup>190</sup> *Laina-tango* and *Marja* from the 1960s.<sup>191</sup> *Lapin tango* is actually a paradigm of man's existence in nature, one of the few Finnish tangos where love of nature is not combined with human love. It invokes the magic of Lapland and the *ruska*, 'colours in autumn', as if it were a fairy-tale:

## Lapin tango

Lapin luonto luo outoa taikaa,  
se on kaunis ja vertaamaton.  
Rinne tunturin kauaksi hohtaa,  
ruska loistossaan kuin satu on.

Lapin muistan ja tunturit jylhät  
sekä auringon tuon keskiyön.  
Metsälampien välkkyyvät silmät,  
talvi-iltojen tähtien vyön.  
Kun kerran matkallain  
Lapin maahan eksyin,  
ei haihdu rinnastain outo taika tuo.  
Mua kutsuu Lappi vain  
sen tenho yksin.  
Sen muisto mulle  
aina kaiputaan luo.  
[...]  
Music Unto Mononen  
Lyrics Maj-Lis Könönen (1964)

## 'The Tango of Lapland'

The nature of Lapland creates a mysterious magic,  
it is beautiful and incomparable.  
The slope of the hill shines far away,  
the Northern colours are like a fairy-tale.

I remember Lapland and its wild hills  
and that midnight sun.  
The twinkling eyes of the forest ponds,  
the row of the stars in the winter nights.  
Since once on my journey  
I happened to come to Lapland,  
that mysterious magic will not leave my heart.  
Only Lapland is calling me,  
its magic only.  
The memory of it  
always creates longing.  
[...]

An inherent qualitative feature pre-eminent in the Finnish tango is an existential silence as an auditive, visual and physical, verbally expressed entity, as well as through the cultural *Gefühl* the reader or listener feels in the texts. Silence is also expressed in the descriptions of states and processes in nature as in Mononen's tango *Yön hiljaisuudessa* (1965), 'In the Silence of the Night'.<sup>192</sup> The role of silence is central in the Finnish internal and external environment. Silence is a force and a power which is felt, as here, in the night and in nature:

<sup>189</sup> Cf. *Margetta* ([1939] 1942) music by Arvo Koskimaa, lyrics by Jouko Kukkonen in *Columbia iskelmiä 4* (1942: 40-41); Strömmer & Haapanen 1920-1945 (1981: 72). The more recent version, with lyrics by Saukki [Sauvo Puhtila], was recorded in 1965, cf. Haapanen 1902-1971 (1973: 334).

<sup>190</sup> Mononen (1970: 2-3); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1973: 252).

<sup>191</sup> Haapanen 1901-1971 (1973: 249, 252, 1975: 297).

<sup>192</sup> Mononen (1970: 15); Haapanen 1902-1971 (1975: 677).

## Yön hiljaisuudessa

Olet kaukana, rakkahimpain,  
 niin kuin tähtönen tuo.  
 Olet lähtenyt maailmastain  
 uuden rakkauden luo.  
 Sitä voinut en estää mä lain  
 ja vain huomata saan:  
 valat vannottu kestävät vain  
 kunnes ne rikotaan ...  
 Yö laulujaan  
 luo tummin varjosoinnuin.  
 Ne jälleen nään  
 kun yksin huoneen  
 hiljaisuuteen jään.  
 On lohtunain  
 vain välke iltatähden.  
 Kun muistoissain vain sielun silmin  
 rakkain, nyt sun nään.  
 [...]  
 Music and lyrics Unto Mononen (1965)

## 'In the Silence of the Night'

'You are so far away, my love,  
 like that little star.  
 You have left my world  
 for a new love.  
 I couldn't help it at all  
 and I just found out:  
 the oaths given once last  
 until they are broken.  
 Night creates  
 its songs with dark shadow-sounds.  
 I see them once again  
 when I stay alone  
 in the silence of my room.  
 My only consolation is  
 the glow of the evening star.  
 When I see, you, my love,  
 in my memories only with the eyes of my soul.  
 [...]

This silence of the night recalls the *tristeza* of the subject in the Argentinean tango; life is vain, lonely and unhappy. In another tango by Mononen, *Kukkani lumen alla* (composed in the 1960s) 'My Flower under the Snow',<sup>193</sup> the theme of death and hopelessness is obvious. In longing for love, beauty, warmth, and truth man meets only coldness. Winter and snow are the symbols of oblivion and dead feelings. The theme of death is not explicit in the Finnish tango lyrics but is often subsumed in natural processes as nature prepares itself for winter; life and love die in autumn, winter covers them in oblivion. The longing and the oblivion are mostly associated with descriptions of autumn and winter. A variation occurs where the coldness of feelings are compared with stones, as in *Kun kivetkin itkevät* (1965), 'When Even the Stones Cry',<sup>194</sup> composed by W. Stone [Toivo Kärki] with lyrics by Juha Vainio. When love is over it is cold like winter. The stone image is used for oblivion and rejection. In the Finnish tango lyrics all the elements of nature are used as metaphors: water–fire, the cosmic elements, the sky—the ground and hard stone, granite.

The essential aspects of the Finnish tango are, however, expressed in the longing for Paradise, The Happy Land, Atlantis, or The Land of Happiness. Unto Mononen's and Juha Vainio's tango *Onnen maa* (composed in the 1960s) 'The Land of Happiness'<sup>195</sup> repeats once more the archetypical Elfland somewhere:

<sup>193</sup> Mononen (1963–1971).

<sup>194</sup> *Helsinki University Library Collections* (notes); Haapanen 1902–1971 (1973: 230).

<sup>195</sup> Mononen (nd.), pp. 8–9; Taipale (1993), BBK 2545.

## Onnen maa

Kaukana siintää onnen maa  
 odottaa meitä saa.  
 Yhdessä kerran kahden vaan  
 sinne kuljetaan.  
 Kerran kun meille onnen maa aukkaa,  
 silloin jaa kanssani kaikki kaunis tuo  
 minkä luonto suo.  
 Istut mun kanssain ääreen veen,  
 katselet pintaa sen.  
 On kuin me noustais kirkkauteen  
 luo muuttolintujen.  
 Kaukana jossain onnen maa  
 odottaa meitä saa.  
 Yhdessä kerran kahden vaan sinne kuljetaan.  
 Täältä on auringon aika auttamatta pois,  
 uskoisin, jossakin paikka onnellinen ois.  
 Onnistun kanssas sun kenties sinne löytämään.  
 Etsitään, etsitään, sinne kanssasi jään.  
 Music Unto Mononen  
 Lyrics Juha Vainio ([1960s] 1971)

## The Land of Happiness'

'Far away the land of happiness is dimly seen  
 waiting for us.  
 Together we sometime, you and I,  
 will go there.  
 When the land of happiness opens to us,  
 then you will share with me all the beauty  
 which nature offers us.  
 You sit by my side at the sea,  
 looking at its surface.  
 It is as if we rose to the brightness,  
 to the migratory birds.  
 Far away somewhere the land of happiness  
 waits for us.  
 Together you and I, will go there sometime.  
 Here is no time for sun, it is gone,  
 I believe there is a happy place somewhere.  
 Perhaps with you I will manage to find it.  
 We will search, we will search, there I will stay with you.'

The lyrics describe a state (*être*). The last two lines are optimistic; 'I believe (*croire*) there is a happy place somewhere', and 'We will search for it ...' means doing something to find it (*faire*). The natural imagery is once again about brightness and birds, denoting eternal peace. This tango repeats the theme in *Satumaa* (1955) 'The Happy Land', the exemplar of the Finnish tango and in Kurt Weill and Roger Fernay's tango *Youkali* (1930s). It is the place for man's dreams and longing, which may be either real or abstract. It can be heaven or Paradise, or a longing for The Land of Death ('the home of the birds', Elfland) which ends all the useless struggles of man on the earth. It is the myth of *Atlantis*, *Youkali*, *The Happy Land*, and *The Land of Happiness*.

## IX Finnish tango lyrics in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s

After the period of structural change of the Finnish society in the 1960s, music and song takes on new themes and characteristics.<sup>1</sup> The Finnish tango appears in its many versions and the Finnish tango boom was parodied. In the 1960s popular music offers various musical genres, the tango having mostly been the music of middle-aged country people. However, Toivo Kärki and Reino Helismaa among others continued to compose and write lyrics for Finnish tangos. High culture lyrics, written by such well-known Finnish poets as P. Mustapää [Martti Haavio] (1899–1973), Anu Kaipainen (1933–), and Kaarlo Sarkia (1902–1945) in 1994 make their first appearance.<sup>2</sup>

During the 1970s the Finnish tango began to lose its popularity, dancing pavilions were shut in the countryside, and it seemed that their era and that of the Finnish tango had come to an end, but the 1980s saw a renaissance in the pavilions. In the 1970s the tangos of Unto Mononen, who died in 1968, were recorded and performed. The old Finnish tangos mainly from the 1950s and the 1960s, the tangos which actually gave the Finnish tango its soul as a unique world genre, were also played and performed, as were some tangos of the 1930s and the 1940s, still very much alive today.

### 1 The tango as a dramatic episode

The new thematic group in the 1970s is the so-called literary tango, i.e. serious poetry composed as tangos; otherwise the themes are the same as in the 1960s. Kaj Chydenius composed tango music for P. Mustapää's<sup>3</sup> poems *Kyläkahvilan edessä* 'In front of the Village Café', from the collection *Laulu ihanista silmistä* (1925) 'The Song about the Wonderful Eyes' and *Viimeisestä illasta* 'The Last Evening' from *Laulu vaakalinnusta* (1927) 'The Song about the Eagle'. The themes of these poems are nostalgic love described through a village café, the gramophone, and the dancing pavilion. These are both narratives, dramatic episodes with two actors in a given place and time. The subject recalls his unhappy love, the moon is behind the hills; the setting derives a special atmosphere from expressions such as *kuu lymyää*, 'the moon hides itself' and the repetitions. The gramophone brings its nostalgic feeling to the café. The subject talks about the flower of love which the girl does not obtain and is trampled

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gronow (1965: 156–161), cf. also Gronow & Bruun (1968: passim); Apo (1974: 167–183).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Laaksonen (1994), Kaarlo Sarkia's poem *Älä elämää pelkää* 'Don't Be Afraid of Life' as a tango composition.

<sup>3</sup> P. Mustapää [Martti Haavio] (1899–1973) published collections such as *Laulu ihanista silmistä* (1925) 'The Song of the Wonderful Eyes', *Laulu vaakalinnusta* (1927) 'The Song about the Eagle', *Jäähyyäiset Arkadialle* (1945) 'A Farewell to Arcadia', *Koiruoho, ruusunkukka* (1947) 'The Wormwood, the Rose Flower', *Ei rantaa ole, oi Thetis* (1948) 'There Is No Shore, Oh, Thetis', *Linnustaja* (1952) 'The Flower Hunter', *Tuuli Airstolta* (1969) 'The Wind on the Open Sea' ja *Kootut runot* (1948) 'Collected Poems'.



violently under foot. The theme is disappointment described through the night and the moon. The subject declares his sorrow:<sup>4</sup>

Kyläkahvilan edessä

Kuu vuorten taakse lymyää. En ole onnellinen.  
Kuu vuorten taakse lymyää.  
Minä sinua ajattelen.

Minä kahvilan oven aukaisin ja ulos kuitenkin jäin.  
Minä kahvilan oven aukaisin:  
sinut tiskin tykönä näin.

Ja grammofonin soidessa minä sinua katselin,  
ja grammofonin soidessa  
sinä nauroit jollekin.

Et rakkauden kukkasta sinä, tyttö, minulta saa.  
Et rakkauden kukkasta.  
Se maahan putoaa.

Sen rakkauden kukkasen nyt tielle tallaavat,  
sen rakkauden kukkasen,  
nämä tylät anturat.

Ja pimeys kattaa maiseman ja saapunut on syys.  
Ja pimeys kattaa maiseman  
ja mielen ikävyyss.  
Lyrics P. Mustapää (1925)  
Music Kaj Chydenius (1987)

'In front of the Village Café'

'The moon hides itself behind the clouds. I am not happy.  
The moon hides itself beyond the clouds.  
I think of you.

I opened the door to the café but I stayed outside.  
I opened the door to the café:  
I saw you near the counter.

And while the gramophone played I looked at you,  
and while the gramophone played  
you laughed at somebody.

You cannot get the flower of love, girl, from me.  
Not the flower of love.  
It falls to the ground.

The flower of love now is trampled on the road,  
that flower of love,  
by these harsh soles.

And the darkness covers the landscape and autumn has come.  
And the darkness covers the landscape  
and my mind is filled with sadness.'

This text recalls the atmosphere of some Argentinean tango lyrics in which the subject has been rejected by his love and is sitting, lonely and rejected, in the *café* trying to forget. In P. Mustapää's text the existential feeling of man's loneliness receives its full expression. The juxtaposition of the beautiful flower and harsh soles describes the rejection. The girl is laughing at somebody else, the same situation as in so many Argentinean tango texts about rejection and oblivion. The interior is the nostalgic place, the village café with a gramophone, and the moon is in the dark sky telling of sadness for the subject. The repetition in the lyrics and Chydenius' music, like a musical counterpart to the moon and the darkness, together form a nostalgic dialogue which make this tango a classic high quality Finnish tango.

In Mustapää's *Viimeisestä illasta* 'About the Last Evening' the same nostalgic state is described. The idea of using Mustapää's poems for Finnish tangos reinforces my claim that the Finnish tango lyrics are the folk poetry of today. Mustapää's own poetry, has absorbed influences from the folk poetry tradition, as is apparent in *Kyläkahvilan edessä*, following a narrative story in which the characters being given an identifiable place and time:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 66-67); Grön (1987), *Bandoncon* SMK 719, Fazer Finnlevy; Hirvi & Ollila (1991: 146).

<sup>5</sup> *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 12-13); Grön (1987), *Bandoncon* SMK 719, Fazer Finnlevy; Hirvi & Ollila (1991: 146).

Viimeisestä illasta

Istuimme kahden tanssilavan luona.  
 Ja sinä olit kalpea ja kaunis.  
 Ja hehkui pihlajassa lyhty tanssilavan luona.  
 Ja viulu yksin soitti, viulu soitti:  
*Olet kaunis, Marguerita.*

Istuimme kahden tanssilavan luona.  
 Elämä katsoi meitä silmin hämmentävin  
 ja puhui meille rakkaudesta tanssilavan luona.  
 Ja viulu yksin soitti, viulu soitti:  
*Olet kaunis, Marguerita.*

Istuimme kahden tanssilavan luona.  
 Yö takanamme oli niinkuin Suuri Murhe  
 ja itki meitä molempia tanssilavan luona.  
 Ja viulu yksin soitti, viulu soitti:  
*Olet kaunis, Marguerita.*

Istuimme kahden tanssilavan luona.  
 Me emme voineet auttaa toisiamme.  
 Me nousimme ja vaelimme tanssilavan luota.  
 Ja viulu yksin soitti, viulu soitti:  
*Olet kaunis, Marguerita.*

P. Mustapää (1927)

Music Kaj Chydenius (1987)

'About the Last Evening'

'We were sitting, you and I, together near the dancing pavilion.  
 And you were pale and beautiful.  
 And the lantern glowed in the rowan tree near the dancing pavilion.  
 And the violin just played, the violin played:  
*You are beautiful, Marguerita.*

We were sitting, you and I, together near the dancing pavilion.  
 Life looked at us with embarrassment  
 and talked to us about love nearby the dancing pavilion.  
 And the violin just played, the violin played:  
*You are beautiful, Marguerita.*

We were sitting, you and I, together near the dancing pavilion.  
 The night behind us was like the Great Grief  
 and cried for the both of us near the dancing pavilion.  
 And the violin just played, the violin played:  
*You are beautiful, Marguerita.*

We were sitting, you and I, together near the dancing pavilion.  
 We could not help each other.  
 We rose and walked from the dancing pavilion.  
 And the violin just played, the violin played:  
*You are beautiful, Marguerita.'*

In this poem the repetition of the opening line of every stanza, a basic stylistic figure in Finnish folk poetry, has a special effect: the violin is the interpreter of both the happiness at the beginning of the poem and the Great Grief towards the end. Life is personified, looking at the characters in the poem with embarrassment, as if it could not understand the situation. The night is dark, an image of sadness and grief, while the place is the nostalgic and romantic dancing pavilion, and the state of love or not-love is here represented by the violin. This existential state is similar to that in *Kyläkahvilan edessä* 'In front of the Village Café' since the brief moments of joy and happiness do not last, and Life or Destiny in its role as *helper* or *opponent*, looks with eyes which mean you were not meant for each other.

## 2 The 1980s and 1990s – the renaissance of the Finnish tango

In 1985 the Seinäjoki Tango Festival (*Seinäjoen tangomarkkinat*, 'The Seinäjoki Tango Fair') began, an annual event nominating a tango king and a queen every summer. The first Tango Queen was crowned in 1988. This festival also arranges an annual tango music composition conquest. This occasion has surely influenced the survival of the Finnish tango. The new tango lyrics of the 1980s are unfortunately rather simple however, dealing increasingly with sentimental and trivial love. The same tendency is apparent in the 1990s.

In 1992 the great Finnish tango composer Toivo Kärki (1915–1992) died, and in 1968 Unto Mononen (1930–1968), ending an era in the history of the Finnish

tango, but their music still lives. Kerttu Mustonen (1891–1959) and Reino Helismaa (1913–1965) were Kärki's most important tango lyricists, while Juha Vainio (1938–1990), who wrote lyrics both for Kärki's and Unto Mononen's music, died in 1990. This meant that the basic Finnish tango poetry of the previous generation had lost its writers and potential developers. Since the 1980s new forms and themes have been introduced into the Finnish tango; the long narrative elements familiar from the Argentinean tangos, or urban themes of loneliness or hectic everyday life. Social criticism is included, for instance, in the tango *Varjojen tango* (1987), 'The Tango of Shadows',<sup>6</sup> music by Reino Markkula, lyrics by Juha Vainio, in which the subject arrives in Argentina and compares the Argentinean tango with its Finnish counterpart; in Argentina the tango is an art form like ballet, expressing man's loneliness and alienation in this world. The dark streets represent poverty and distress. Global themes are suggested by the title of *Maailman tango* (1987), 'The Tango of the World'<sup>7</sup> but remain unfulfilled since the lyrics naively discuss romantic and sentimental love.

The state of the Finnish tango, especially as music, was the object of discussions during the 1980s. For instance, in 1984 the Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* reported the visit of an Argentinean tango orchestra from the Kuhmo Chamber Music festival arranged every summer in the North of Finland. Hannu-Ilari Lampila, a renowned art critic, points out in the title of his article that "The Finnish tango has to change". He claims that the Finnish tango is not able to develop itself, maintaining same musical sound and theme decade after decade, whereas the Argentinean tango has developed, for instance, in Astor Piazzolla's *tango nuevo*, which Lampila claims invokes the same existential psychology, psychological depth and existential problematics as Ingmar Bergman's films.<sup>8</sup>

While it is true that the Finnish tango is not dynamic it seems that the Finnish people need a repetitive musical form such as this. The repetition recalls folk song and poetry tradition. Repetition in popular music offers security, a feeling of something being the same though time changes, a stable centre. Jalkanen has made this point in discussing the character of the hit as a genre. It is the unchanging and ritual effect of repetition that gives a feeling of continuation and security.<sup>9</sup> Popular music takes us over and over again to some other place than we now are; childhood, youth, Paradise, Happyland, Blauer Himmel, Monrepos – all take us away from everyday life, to a voluntary escape to Somewhere Else, to the land of Nostalgia. The dichotomies here and there, now and then are fundamental to lyrics representing the Bakhtinian concept of *chronotopos*. These oppositions do not necessarily mean a romantic escape, journey or a melancholic state of unhappiness; on the contrary it is rather that *nostalgia* is a creative force for man, since through nostalgia he/she has a dialogue with the

<sup>6</sup> *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 14–15).

<sup>7</sup> *Kultainen tangokirja* 1 (1990).

<sup>8</sup> Lampila (1984).

<sup>9</sup> Ahlén (1987: 143–144); Jalkanen (1992: 15–16).

past, the present and the future. On the road of nostalgia man is actually on his/her home road in Heidegger's scheme of the inner and outer landscape, where all the familiar components of place and time are present. In *nostalgia* man expresses a longing to return so that human life consists of the universals *dolor*, pain, and *désir*, desire for love and happiness. It is always both sweet and painful to return to the past. Tango lyrics are able to capture this suffering of the human heart and soul. The tango singer and the tango communicate, because the lyrics sung by the singer are deeply felt by the dancer/the listener, recalling things which bring memories from the past, and which they know by heart.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1990s works which actually were not intended as tangos were also made into tangos. Among these was *Sininen ja valkoinen* ([1972] 1989), 'Blue and White',<sup>11</sup> music and lyrics by Jukka Kuoppamäki, performed by the tango singer Eino Grön accompanied by Leopoldo Federico's Argentinean tango orchestra, providing this Finnish tango with an Argentinean sound with *bandoneón*.<sup>12</sup> This song, as mentioned earlier, has actually been a national symbol for Finland, incorporating the blue and white national colours. Another song composed by Kuoppamäki is *Pieni mies* ([1971] 1989), 'Little Man'<sup>13</sup> which has also been adapted as a tango. This repeats the refrain of the title in every line, telling about a little child and his growth to adulthood, a rare theme in the Finnish tango lyrics.

In the songbook consisting of Finnish and Argentinean tangos in Finnish translation from the 1980s, the themes of the Finnish tangos are mainly nostalgic.<sup>14</sup> The subject longs for the beloved as in *Joka ilta kaipaän sua vierellein* (1984) 'Every Night I Long for You' by Toivo Kärki and Raul Reiman, or for youth and the home village as in *Viimeinen kierros* (1988) 'The Last Tour', music and lyrics by Kari Kuuva. The misery of life and memories are expressed as tears: *Jäätyneet kyynleet* (1987) 'Frozen Tears' music by Arto Laurila, lyrics by Arto Laurila and Juha Vainio, or *Yön kyynleet* (1986) 'Tears of the Night' by Raimo Roiha and Aappo I. Piippo. The main theme is sadness and sorrow but in *Ilon kyynleet* (1984) 'Tears of Joy' by Reino Markkula and Juha Vainio, the subject cries for happiness like 'a brook' (*puro*); tears can tell about love.<sup>15</sup> Tears were not often encountered in the earlier Finnish tango texts (cf. *Kuubalainen serenaadi* (1942) 'Cuban Serenade'), while in the Argentinean tangos the man can cry freely for his loneliness and sadness. In the 1980s the Finnish male can also cry not only for his sorrow, sadness and loneliness as well as rejection, but also his joy and delight.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Azzi (1991: passim).

<sup>11</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 3 (1979: 28); Grön (1989); Hirvi & Ollila (1991: 146).

<sup>12</sup> Eino Grön has visited Argentina several times and sung both Argentinean tangos, e.g. *Uno*, and *Sur*, in Finnish interpretations, as well as original Finnish tangos with Argentinean tango orchestras (cf. Grön, 1987, 1989). However, it seems for the Finnish tango enthusiasts and the Finnish people that this Argentinean sound does not touch the real soul of the tango in the Finnish socio-cultural context. They prefer the original Finnish tango with its repetitive character both in music and in lyrics.

<sup>13</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 2 (1977: 218); Haapanen 1901–1982 (1990: 253); Hirvi & Ollila (1991: 146).

<sup>14</sup> *Tangon kotimaa* (1990).

<sup>15</sup> All lyrics in *Tangon kotimaa* (1990).

The scene of the Finnish tango is also mainly rural in the 1980s and the 1990s. The lyrics describe the birch tree (*rantakoivu*) near the water in summer, with the sounds of the accordion (*harmonikka*), an important element of the Finnish tango. The beloved is compared with the flowers of spring, and the smell of the bird-cherry has filled the empty world of the subject as in *Kuin kukka toukokuun* 'Like the Flower of May' by Jukka Heino and Kyösti Timonen. The soul is filled with summer as in *Rakkauteni viimeinen* (1988) 'My Last Love' by Toivo Kärki and Juha Vainio, in which love is like a storm and a bolt of lightning, or as in *Jäätäneet kyneleet* (1987) 'Frozen Tears' by Arto Laurila and Juha Vainio, where the winter is a metaphor for cold feelings. Here the birch tree's tears are frozen: *Kun katson tammikuiseen pakkaseen, / se silmiini tuo kylmän kyneleen. / Jo linnut poissa on / ja luonto lauluton, / maan peittää lumen vaippa valkoinen*, 'When I look at the coldness of January, / it brings tears to my eyes. / The birds are already gone / and nature is without song, / the ground is covered by the white shelter of snow'. Spring and summer represent joy, delight and happiness, autumn, and the cold winter and frost oblivion and rejected love. The setting is usually romantic and sentimental consisting of dreams and illusions, or delusions and lies; *Musta rakkaus* (1987) 'Black Love' by Martti Koskinen and Veikko Juntunen talks about a love which was a lie. The setting may also be the isle of a wonderland (*sadun saari*) or the rainbow (*sateenkaari*) as in *Haave rakkaudesta* (1986) 'The Dream of Love' by Toivo Kärki and Juha Vainio.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the Finnish tangos produced during the 1980s are still adult fairytales. Stereotyped erotic metaphors are used in *Lyhty sateessa* (1989) 'A Lantern in Rain', music by Toni Edelmann and lyrics by Laura Ruohonen. The subject meets a girl in the rain. He cannot remember her name, and how they found shelter in an old barn, where 'nature is wet and youth is hungry': *Ahmi kostea maa / vanhaa latoa lahoavaa, / tuoksui kuuset ja yö, / nuoruus nälkänsä syö*, 'The wet ground ate ravenously / the old rotten barn, / the spruce and night smelt, / youth is hungry'. The text deals with memories, but the metaphor of wet nature expressing love is banal. Another trivial element is found in *Yksi valkorusu* (1987) 'A White Rose' by Reino Markkula and E. Metsä and Juha Vainio. In this text, and also more generally, one word can provide a banal or comic effect in the text and trivialise otherwise serious context. The actual tango begins with *Nyt kukkakauppaan mulla on hoppu, tai ihmissuhteesta tulee loppu*, 'Now I am in a great hurry to the flower shop, otherwise the relationship is finished'. The Finnish word *hoppu* 'hurry' is stylistically banal in this context which is about a white rose for a beloved person. The comedy appears only in a text meant for children about the little pig Niku (*Niku-porsas -tango*, 1980),<sup>17</sup> and an internationally well-known tango about a black cat dancing tango (*Mustan kissan tango*)<sup>18</sup> a children's song in tango form.

<sup>16</sup> All lyrics in *Tangon kotimaa* (1990).

<sup>17</sup> Strömmer & Haapanen (1992).

<sup>18</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 8 (1990: 64).

Typical of the new Finnish tango lyrics are intertextual links to earlier Finnish tangos, consciously using familiar words or expressions from them. These tango texts are thus in a dialogical relation to each other (cf. Bahtin's *intertextuality*). Nature functions as communicator in *Kesätuulen kutsu* (1984) 'The Call from the Summer Wind' by Rauno Lehtinen and Tuula Valkama: *Nyt kaukaa tämä viestini saapuu. / Sen tuuli kutsuen soittaa, / kuulla sä voitko sen?*, 'From a distance this message of mine comes. / The wind plays it, calling, / can you hear it?' The setting of this tango is the empty and lonely shore where the subject walks. The loneliness predominates in the tangos of recent times. Nature occurs in *Kaunein tango* (1987) 'My Most Beautiful Tango', music and lyrics by Timo Hämäläinen, as the communicator: *Kerro, oi kuu, voiko ikuisen onnen löytää? / Kuiskaa, oi tuulonen, salaisuus rakkauden!*, 'Tell me, oh moon, can one find the eternal happiness? / Whisper, oh little wind, the secret of love!' Here the concept of love is described as escapist: 'I will take you to the land of my wishes', or as in another tango from the 1980s, 'to the isle of fairy-tales', or through the very erotic themes mentioned above.

Love is also described as the beauty of the heart (*kauneus sydämen*) as in *Elämäni nainen* (1988) 'The Woman of My Life', music and lyrics by Rauno Lehtinen, a tango from the 1980s which has found its place among the modern Finnish tangos. It talks about the woman called Anja, repeating *Anja, olet elämäni nainen*, 'Anja, you are the woman of my life'. The text is realistic in that it is about the wonderland of the fairy-tale (*sadun ihmemaa*), canonical words in the Finnish tango, but never realised since humdrum reality eviscerates all useless dreams. This tango balances dream and reality. The subject has come to an insight, knowing (*savoir*) that beauty begins with the beauty of the heart. In *Elämäni tango* (1986) 'The Tango of My Life' by Jori Sivonen and Timo Lehtiö, the woman is described as "different", *Oot erilainen ja olet se nainen, / jonka lumoissa oon*, 'You are different and you are the woman, / who enchants me'. In *Ainoa rakkaus* (1987) 'The Only Love' by Jori Sivonen and Juha Vainio the subject also knows (*savoir*) that *Aistihurma pois aina katoaa, / se kestää vain tuokion*, 'The passion always disappears, / it lasts only for a while'. The concept of love includes the polarity *+désir* and *+dolor*. Love and longing mean both heaven and hell, but the real love is the beauty of the heart.<sup>19</sup>

The tango *Kasvot väkijoukossa* (1984) 'The Face in the Crowd'<sup>20</sup> by Fridrich Bruk and Juha Vainio is set in the afternoon rush hour, showing that the Finnish tango has moved from a rural to an urban setting. In the rush hour at the traffic lights the subject encounters a face, and reflects on hectic modern times and hurry, feeling a desperate loneliness: *Yksin, / koen sen kuinka yksin / kuljen täällä joukossa miljoonain. / Yksin / niin on ihminen silloin, tuntee hiljaisiin illoin / kaipuun vain*, 'Alone, / I feel so alone / I walk here among millions of people. / Alone / is man then; he/she feels in the silent nights / just the longing'. The alienation of modern man is strongly felt.

<sup>19</sup> All lyrics discussed in this chapter are in *Tangon kotimaa* (1990).

<sup>20</sup> *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 40-41).



Love in the tangos from the 1980s and the 1990s is presented mainly as a romantic and sentimental entity. *Soi maininki hiljainen* (1987), 'The Wave Sounds Softly',<sup>21</sup> music by Fridrich Bruk, lyrics by Juha Vainio, who wrote many song texts for both joyful and sad Finnish songs, displays another aspect of human existence. This tango text is a beautiful narrative showing the whole of man's life through nature. This is one of the really serious texts among Finnish tangos of the recent period.

## Soi maininki hiljainen

Tähdet ja kuu, taivas ja maa  
 kaipuusta mun ne kertoo saa.  
 Jälkeesi sun en ainuttakaan  
 kyennyt rakastamaan.  
 Tunteemme meitä tuulena veji,  
 rauhaisaa rantaa ees etsitty ei.  
 Meremme meidän ois yhteinen tää,  
 me sylissä sen vain kahden.  
 Tunne tuo vain niin arvaamaton  
 kuin kevätmyrsky ohitse on.  
 Kuitenkin kauniisti muistoksi sen  
 soi maininki hiljainen.  
 Niin kaukaa taas kantaa  
 tuo laulumme rakkauden.  
 Kun myrsky on mennyt mailleen,  
 soi maininki hiljainen.  
 Veistetty kuin maa veneeksi ois  
 kauaksi aavalle viemään sua pois.  
 Matkaan vain hetkeksi pääsimme niin,  
 kun tuulemme laantui meidän.  
 [...]  
 Music Fridrich Bruk  
 Lyrics Juha Vainio (1987)

## 'The Wave Sounds Softly'

'The stars and the moon, the sky and the earth  
 tell of my longing.  
 After you I could not  
 love anybody else.  
 Our feelings took us like the wind,  
 we did not even search for a silent shore.  
 Our sea could be ours,  
 we in its lap, you and I.  
 That feeling is just so unforeseen;  
 like the spring storm it is over.  
 However, the wave sounds softly  
 for that feeling as a beautiful memory.  
 So far away sounds  
 that song of our love.  
 When the storm is over,  
 the wave sounds softly.  
 It is as if I had been carved into a boat  
 to take you far away to the open sea.  
 We had been on our journey just for a while,  
 when our wind stopped.  
 [...]

The main idea is longing expressed through cosmic imagery, as above. This text can be interpreted as a love song but also as a metaphor for the road of life, or the sea of life, how people meet and how they part. Life is, to use an old metaphor, a stormy sea. When man's life is ended on the earth the wave breaks softly. This idea is emphasised in this text by the music, the lyrics and the music forming a dialogue together. Hence, the great adventure of man includes the banalities of love and longing, love and sorrow, joy and sorrow. The narratives, dramatic episodes, stories, fairy-tales, and the myths reiterate these over and over again, in different periods, only their forms and variations changing.

Finnish nature is indispensable to the Finnish tango lyrics. The birds still represent liberty and freedom; conversely frost, snow and winter the coldness of feelings. In Toivo Kärki and Vexi Salmi's *Kurkiaurat* (1980), 'The Wedges of Cranes'<sup>22</sup> nature is prepared for winter, and love and longing are essential part of this. The first line draws a beautiful picture of autumn, with the sea and the forest thinking of winter. The key words are *kaamos* 'the dark time in winter', *ruska* 'the colours in autumn in Lapland', *halla* 'frost', *kuuran halla kutoo* 'Jack Frost weaves the hoarfrost', and *kurkiaurat* 'the wedges of cranes'. The

<sup>21</sup> *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 60-61).

<sup>22</sup> Taipale (nd.), *Kotiseutuni*, MK 1388; Haapanen 1901-1982 (1990: 511).

expressions resembling folk poetry describing psychological states through nature in winter: *kuuran halla kutoo*, 'Jack Frost weaves the hoarfrost'. In translation these Finnish expressions lose much. The Finnish form of *Sehnsucht* is expressed in *rakkain siellä jossakin on*, 'my beloved is there somewhere'. The dark time in winter, 'kaamos' is depressive, the alliterative phrase *mieli maassa matala*, 'my mind is low' showing the frozen emotions. However, hope revives since summer and light bring new optimism. This tango text probably saved the idea of the basic Finnish tango lyrics with culturally bound signs in the 1980s.

## Kurkiaurat

Aurinko harteillaan hetken metsää kantaa,  
 päin taivaanrantaan vain ruskon antaa.  
 Hiiltynyt kajo pienen hetken vielä hohtaa.  
 Yön syyliin johtaa  
 sen syksyn varjot nukkumaan.  
 Lehdet puista putoo,  
 kuuran halla kutoo  
 Kurkiaurat kaukomaille liittää.  
 Mieli maassa matala  
 pian jo lunta sataa.  
 Haaveet sinne kaukomaille kiittää.  
 Kurkiaurat viestini viekää,  
 rakkain siellä jossakin on.  
 Kaamoksessa kaivaten ajattelee häntä mies onneton.  
 Lehdet puista putoo,  
 kuuran halla kutoo  
 Kurkiaurat kaukomaille liittää.  
 Järvenaalto vapaa  
 kahleen jäisen tapaa  
 Kurkiaurat kaukomaille liittää.  
 Päivän rusko palaa  
 hohteen kylmän valaa  
 haaveet sinne kaukomaille kiittää.  
 Tunne ei voi kylmässä elää.  
 Jäätymään sen pakkaset saa.  
 Toivon, että aurinko kesän tullen  
 jäästä sen sulattaa  
 Lehdet puista putoo,  
 kuuran halla kutoo.  
 Kurkiaurat kaukomaille liittää.

Music Toivo Kärki  
 Lyrics Vexi Salmi (1980)

## 'The Wedges of Cranes'

The sun bears the forest on its shoulders for a moment,  
 it gives a shadow of colours to the horizon.  
 The smouldering glow will still shine for a while.  
 Into the arms of the night  
 it leads the shadows of autumn to sleep.  
 Leaves are falling from the trees,  
 Jack Frost weaves the hoarfrost.  
 The wedges of cranes fly to distant countries.  
 My mind is low,  
 soon it will snow.  
 My dreams go to those countries far away.  
 oh, wedges of cranes, take my message,  
 my love is there somewhere.  
 In the darkness of the winter, a sad man thinks of her.  
 leaves are falling from the trees,  
 Jack Frost weaves his hoarfrost.  
 The wedges of cranes fly to countries far away.  
 The free wave of the lake  
 meets chains of ice.  
 The wedges of cranes fly to countries far away.  
 The colours of the day burn  
 cover the cold shine  
 dreams are flying there to distant countries.  
 Feelings cannot live in the cold.  
 The frost gives it its cold.  
 I hope that with summer the sun will  
 melt it from ice.  
 leaves are falling from the trees,  
 Jack Frost weaves his hoarfrost.  
 Wedges of cranes fly to countries far away.'

The structure of the lyrics is that the first eight lines describe the natural outer world. The inner world of man is then in focus, then nature describes the inner state. The flights of the crane are a communicator. The subject, described as an unhappy man, asks them to take his message to his beloved. Usually the lyrics end with an external description of time and place – nature is in a state of coldness and winter, a mirror for man's inner condition, rejection and oblivion in love. The 1950s tango *Etelän kutsu* (1959) 'The Invitation of the South' also uses cranes, these key birds in Finnish culture. Cranes signify both the approach of spring when they come to Finland in April and the approach of autumn when

they leave in August. They symbolise human freedom; they can bring man's soul to freedom, brightness, or the land of death, according to the myths.<sup>23</sup>

### 3 The context of time

Reino Markkula and Juha Vainio's tango *Varjojen tango* (1986) 'The Tango of Shadows'<sup>24</sup> gives a new narrative form including social concerns to the Finnish tango. Another novelty is the hectic life of modern man. *Varjojen tango* is rather a long story about social circumstances and poverty. The subject has visited Argentina where a familiar tango plays, repeating the same line at the beginning, in the middle and at the end: *Soi tuttu tango [...] Soi meille tango [...] Soi meille tango*. This text is a brief description of the tango in Argentina where it is like ballet and real art, implying that in Finland the real tango is unknown and the Finnish version does not have the same status as the Argentinean. The setting of *Varjojen tango* incorporates both the story of the Argentinean tango born among poor people in the slums and love, even though it has the more important message about poverty, work, and pain. The concepts of *hurmio* 'ecstasy' and *turmio* 'destruction' are interwoven.

#### Varjojen tango

Soi tuttu tango,  
en sitä koskaan unohtaa mä saata,  
kun soi se tango,  
ja saavuin kohti Argentiinan maata.  
On siellä tango parhaimmillaan  
aivan tosi taidetta,  
sitä verrata voi vaikka balettiin.  
Heti laivamme kun näytti laskusillan kaidetta,  
jo maissa soi ja tanssi alettiin.  
Oi tuota aikaa  
ja tangon taikaa,  
sen ensi kosketus vei minut aivan hurmioon.  
Muut poistui laivaan,  
jäin alle taivaan,  
niin uskoi toiset minun joutuneen jo turmioon.  
Soi mulle tango,  
en irti päässyt huumavaasta yöstä,  
toi riemun tango,  
vaan sanat kertoi puutteesta ja työstä.  
Ja miehet tummat mulle tarjosivat varraslammasta,  
loisti hymy monen partapuskasta.  
Mutta laulu kertoi jostain paljon vakavamasta,  
he musiikkinsa loivat tuskasta.

[...]

Tangon muistan, joka syntyy aaltopeltikyissä,  
ja varjoissaan saa kansa lymyillä.  
Kun onnen aikaa taas tango kaikaa,  
ei rauhaa mulle anna sävelet sen silloinkaan.

#### The Tango of Shadows'

The well-known tango plays,  
I can never forget it,  
when that tango plays:  
and I came to the land of Argentina.  
Where tango is as its best  
as real art;  
it can be compared for instance with ballet.  
As soon as our boat arrived,  
the tango was playing and we began to dance.  
Oh that time  
and the magic of the tango,  
the first touch of you led me to ecstasy.  
Others went to the boat,  
I stayed under the stars,  
so that others believed that it was the end of me.  
The tango played for me,  
I could not get rid of the enchanting night,  
the tango brought joy,  
but the lyrics were about poverty and work.  
And dark men offered me lamb to eat,  
they smiled behind their beards.  
But the song was about something much more serious,  
they created their music out of pain.

[...]

I remember the tango which is born in the slums,  
in whose shadows the people have to live.  
When the tango plays again of happiness,  
the sounds of it cannot give me peace.

<sup>23</sup> Haavio (1935: passim); Kuusi (1985: passim; 1994: passim); Turunen (1979: 180); Honko (1993a: 63-77; 1993c: 193-199; 1993e: 565-575); Timonen (1993a: 287-298; 1993b: 339-349); Tarkka (1995: 250-298); Dubois (1994: 138-179); Pallasmaa (1991: 5-8); Pentikäinen (1994: 7-23).

<sup>24</sup> *Tangon kotimaa* (1990: 14-15).

Nuo kujat kuljin ja sieluun suljin  
 ne varjot tummat, joita unohda en milloinkaan.  
 Music Reino Märkula  
 Lyrics Juha Vainio (1986)

I walk along those streets and in my soul  
 I lock those dark shadows which I can never forget.'

This is a new tendency in Finnish tango culture. The negative sides of reality are now handled, even though it is mixed with a stereotypical love interest. However, the social theme is still a marginal phenomenon. The overriding interest in this period is still longing and yearning described through Finnish nature.

#### 4 Swedish interpretations of the Finnish tango

In the 1980s the Finnish tango lyrics achieved a new popularity when some were translated into Swedish and sung by the artist Arja Saijonmaa in Finland, Sweden and Norway.<sup>25</sup> In the 1930s and 1940s some Finnish tango lyrics had been published with Swedish texts by Thure Wahroos and Joel Rundt, among others. Lars Huldén made some Finnish songs popular, especially in Finland, Sweden and Norway, when he translated some of the original Finnish tangos, waltzes and *humpas* into Swedish.<sup>26</sup> The paradigmatic Finnish tango, *Satumaa* (1955) 'The Happy Land' has already been discussed.

One very popular Finnish tango is *Kotkan ruusu* ([1941] 1969).<sup>27</sup> The story of 'The Rose of Kotka' takes place in the harbour of Kotka in Finland. Place and time are established at the outset: *On ilta tähdet syttyy loistamaan, vesi musta laitureihin loiskuaa.*, 'When shadows / deepen in the evening sky / the black water is splashing on the wharfs', and *Taas vartoo satamassa kulkijaa yön riemut, oottaa, poika ottajaa*, 'Again she is waiting in the harbour for a passer-by, the joys of the night are waiting'. The events recall the Argentinean tango, urban life, life in the harbour, and the prostitutes. This tango is one of the few in which love and place are described by a woman, a device almost entirely absent from the traditional Finnish tango, which very seldom mentions the life of sin as openly as here:

Kotkan ruusu	Kotkas ros <sup>28</sup>	The Rose of Kotka <sup>29</sup>
On ilta tähdet syttyy loistamaan, vesi musta laitureihin loiskuaa. Taas vartoo satamassa kulkijaa	Det skymmer och i skyn tänds stjärnorna. Svarta vågor slås i skum mot kajerna. I hamnen väntar nattens fröjder den	When shadows deepen in the evening sky Someone's waiting for a lucky passer-by; If love is what you have in view -

<sup>25</sup> Saijonmaa (1981).

<sup>26</sup> Huldén (1980: 159-164; 1981).

<sup>27</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja 1* (1976: 218). This tango was composed as early as 1941 for a theatre play at Kotka, but it became popular in 1969 when Pauli Räsänen performed it.

<sup>28</sup> Huldén (1980: 161).

<sup>29</sup> English translations by Mary Hatakka (1980s), and Robin Maylett (1993), both unpublished.

yön riemut, oottaa, poika ottajaa.	som nått den; gossen hittar snart en vän.	The Rose of Kotka is waiting there for you.
Tule myötä, tähdet syttyy tuikkimaan. Tule myötä, soitto herää pauhaamaan. Taas laulu raukuu, viinimaljat kuohuaa, taas Kotkan ruusu oottaa poimijaa.	Följ med mig, stjärnor tändrar underbart. Följ med mig, hör musiken klingar klart. Nu stiger sången och nu flödar vin och sav. Och rosen väntar nån att plockas av.	When starlight flashes on the harbour scene, Kotka night life offers what you've never seen; She's waiting - sailor put your whisky down The Rose of Kotka has just hit the town.
Ken lähtee seurakseni tanssimaan, kai hetken lohtu pikarista sallitaan. Jos lemmen tahdon sulle lahjoittaa, saat Kotkan ruusun hetkeks' omistaa.	Vem kommer med mig ut och dansar nu? En blick i bågarn skänker tröst åt hjärtat ju. Min kärlek vill jag kanske skänka dig. Rosen från Kotka låter plocka sig.	Hi stranger! Come and dance the night away. Hi stranger! Come and hear the music play; When moonlight on the harbour casts its charms The Rose of Kotka will take you in her arms. English lyrics Mary Hatakka (1980s)
Tänä yönä onni suosii rohkeaa, tänä yönä lempi tarjoo hehkuaan, tänä yönä hurmaa huolet antaa kuumintaan. Hän, Kotkan ruusu, puhkee kukkiinaan.	I natt skall lyckan stå den djärve bi. I natt skall kyssar ges med glöd uti. Om hon bara finner nån som hon vill vara hos, då blommar rosen, blommar Kotkas ros.	In the night-time, Fortune calls you, so be brave. In the night-time, love is like a stormy wave. In the night-time, lips so hot and full of love, The Rose of Kotka is like the stars above.
Ei vältä kohtaloan rohkeinaan. Oot kohtaloin mulle, poika kaukomaan. Tule myötä, kapakassa tanssitaan. Tule myötä, poika, Kotkan satamaan. Music Helvi Mäkinen Lyrics Leo Anttila ([1941] 1969)	Sitt öde har man inga händer med. Mitt öde är du, främling, vet du det? Följ med mig, följ mig ut på krog och dans. Jag finns i Kotka eller kanske - fanns. Swedish lyrics Lars Huldén (1980) English lyrics Robin Maylett (1993)	There is no way, to avoid your destiny. You will always be that special boy to me. 'Won't you join me, let us walk along the quay, and take my hand, dear, the harbour's calling me.

The subject is metaphorically called *Kotkan ruusu*, 'The Rose of Kotka', who waits for the *receiver* of her one night-love, the *poimijaa* 'who picks her up', *poika kaukomaan*, 'the boy from abroad', 'the stranger from abroad'. The *object* is casual love, the modality or force is desire (*désir*), the *helper* is good luck: *tänä yönä onni suosii rohkeaa*, 'in the night-time, / Fortune calls you, so be brave', or *oot kohtaloin*, 'you are my destiny'. The only *opponent* in this *dolce vita*, where 'the song clings and the wine flows', is bad luck, which means that she cannot find a boy from abroad. The semantic features are *+désir*, *+passion*, *+lust*, and *+temporary*, because, as the song tells us, wine gives *hetken lohtu*, 'consolation for a while', and *saat Kotkan ruusun hetkeks' omistaa*, 'you can own the rose of Kotka for a while', with such inherent features such as *+joy*, *+delight* and *+intensity*. The sadness of life, sin and the night are suggested through 'the black water' and through *kai hetken lohtu pikarista sallitaan*, 'perhaps getting a brief consolation from the wine glass is permitted'.

The salacious setting of this tango is unique in the Finnish tango culture, and perhaps this is the reason for its popularity. It is a good example of the concept of Lönnroth's *dual setting* (*den dubbla scenen*). This acquires a specific sense in the Swedish tangos written by Evert Taube. In Sweden, as Åhlén points out, Taube is undoubtedly the most charismatic creator of the Swedish tango.<sup>30</sup> Lönnroth discusses the relation between the *subject* and the *receiver* in Taube's well-known tango *Fritiof och Carmencita* (1936), 'Fritiof and Carmencita'. He also considers the concept *derealization* which covers both the real and the fictive setting of the text, offering examples of how the setting has changed in oral poetry over the years from the domestic milieu to urban or exotic milieus.<sup>31</sup> Lönnroth claims that *derealization* is possible if the *subject* and the *receiver* are removed from their reality to a foreign and exotic milieu where they do not have to think about social rules.<sup>32</sup> The tango is a path to another world for a brief period. The tangos *Kotkan ruusu* ([1941] 1969) 'The Rose of Kotka' and *Kuubalainen serenaadi* (1942) 'Cuban Serenade' both offer a specifically licentious setting for passions, and a dual setting in which a dramatic episode can be realised through the process of derealization.

Carl Niessen's *Tango Desirée* (1956) – *désir* 'desire'! – performed in Finnish in 1956, with both a Finnish and a Swedish text translated from Finnish,<sup>33</sup> has all the exotic and escapist elements of this kind of derealization including the pampas, the guitar, the lamp, and night – all fanciful metaphors. While most tangos communicate in one direction, here both the boy (*gaucho*) and the girl realise the modality of doing (*faire*). The *gaucho* plays, the girl gives him signs. The tango expresses the modalities of desiring and wanting (*désir*) and doing (*faire*). When I previously talked about the Finnish tango girl, the receiver of somebody's love and longing, 'The Lily Flower' *Liljankukka* (1945) represents the innocent girl, while *Desirée* is the passionate girl (cf. *Tamara*). Lönnroth's concept of the *dual setting* explains *Tango Desirée* as providing an exotic setting where the tango dancers and audience can be rid of their inhibitions. The man can briefly be a *gaucho*, and the woman a *Desirée*.

*Nuoruustango* (1974) 'The Tango of Youth'<sup>34</sup> originally intended as a parody, was performed by Kiti Neuvonen in Peter von Bagh's film *Kreivi* 'The Count'. It was composed by Kaj Chydenius to lyrics from the play *Tangokuningas* 'The Tango King' by the author Anu Kaipainen, and has become popular in the Finnish tango culture. Chydenius, who represents "the new song" in Finland, has composed songs with a political message for many plays.<sup>35</sup> This tango, now seriously thought of, was translated into Swedish by Lars Huldén in the 1980s. The literal translation from the Finnish original is mine:

<sup>30</sup> Åhlén (1987: 69).

<sup>31</sup> Lönnroth (1978: passim).

<sup>32</sup> Lönnroth (1978: 290); Åhlén (1987: 55-63).

<sup>33</sup> Huldén (1980: 164).

<sup>34</sup> *Suuri toivelaulukirja* 5 (1983: 104).

<sup>35</sup> v. Bagh & Hakasalo (1986: 392-394).



Nuoruustango	Ungdomstango <sup>36</sup>	'The Tango of the Youth'
<p>Lämpöni, lempeni annan, kaunis on nuoruutein. Näät suven ruusut kannan, itseni yksin tein. Ei ole muuta antaa kuin tämä nuoruutein. Sulle sen tahdon kantaa, en ota itsellein.</p>	<p>Kärlekens flammande låga bränner mitt hela jag. Ungdomens glödande rosor bär jag en sommardag. Ingenting annat äger jag än mitt unga liv. Tag det som gåva, låt mig evigt din egen förbli.</p>	<p>'My warmth, my love I will give you, beautiful is my youth. I bring you the summer roses, together with my heart. I have nothing else to give you but this youth of mine. I will give it to you, I will not have it all for myself.</p>
<p>Muuta en koskaan tahdo kuin sinun olla vaan. Elämä ympärilläin kaikkoaa kokonaan. Huominen päivä ci meitä vaaranna varjollaan, kun sinun saan vain olla täysin ja kokonaan. Music Kaj Chydenius Lyrics Anu Kaipainen (1974)</p>	<p>Ingenting annat i livet vill jag än vara din. Allting i världen omkring oss flyr och är borta som vind. Skuggan av morgondagen känns inte som något hot, om jag blott din får vara helt ifrån blomma till rot. Swedish transl. Lars Huldén</p>	<p>I want nothing else in my lifetime but to be yours. Life around me vanishes completely away. Tomorrow will not touch us with its shadow, when I can be yours only, only yours.'</p>

Anu Kaipainen, author of a book about Larin Paraske, a folk poetry singer, uses alliteration in this tango from the outset – *Lämpöni, lempeni annan*. This is a normal stylistic device in Finnish folk poetry as well as in Finnish tango lyrics. *Lempi*, meaning 'love', is used above instead of the harsher-sounding *rakkaus*. Huldén's Swedish translation contains more fire metaphors than the original: *Kärlekens flammande låga*, 'The burning flame of love', and *bränner mitt hela jag*, 'the whole of me burns'. The Swedish introduces, time which flies away: *flyr och är borta som vind*, 'flies away and is gone like the wind', and the last line, in which the subject wants to give her love totally to her beloved: *helt ifrån blomma till rot*, 'totally, from the root to the blossom'. Both are excellent metaphors for the idea expressed in the original text. The only *opponent* in this tango is time, but 'the shadows of tomorrow cannot cover our love, when I can be yours only.' Although a parody this is one of the joyful Finnish tango lyrics. The music composed by Chydenius managed to hide the parodic text and made this a classical among Finnish tangos.

<sup>36</sup> Huldén (1980, manuscript); Ekblad (1984).

*X The semiotics of Finnish tango lyrics*  
*1 The tango as nature, culture and communication*

Many things influence changes in music and song. Allan Merriam's well-known model takes into account those aspects which influence change in music and culture given that music is a part of the social institutions established when structural changes happen. Merriam claims that five models are needed to understand changes in culture: (1) the model of acculturation, (2) the model of the gradual development of a culture, (3) the model of historical events, (4) the model of cyclicality, and (5) the model of individual aspects.<sup>1</sup> The model of acculturation concerns the changes induced when two or more cultures meet. Its application to the tango is obvious. The Argentinean tango was born under different influences to Europe, and it was acculturated in Europe with Argentinean and other influences and in a very special form in Finland. The reasons for the birth of the Argentinean tango were social and cultural changes and the alienation of immigrants in the suburbs, becoming a social sign which linked immigrants and the poor. The tango meant life, and was a way to process the social context. In its international and European form the tango changed, acquiring the characteristics of entertainment, while in Finland it became a nostalgic mirror of man's inner state and Finnish nature. The Finnish tango was acculturated especially after the war ended in 1944 as Finnish society began to undergo social and cultural changes. The war changed people's lives, and music and song showed new tendencies. The Finnish countryside was left behind as urban life in big cities became a reality. Merriam's four other models are included or overlap with the first.

The semantic features of love and longing discussed in various idioms, metaphors and paraphrases are manifested in the inherent features of love, i.e. *+désir* consisting of *+perception*, *+sensation*, *+passion*, *+delight*, *+joy*, *+creative force*, and so on, but also the negative features *+dolor* covering *+sorrow*, *+pain*, even *+jealousy*, and *+longing*, the attributes of time *±temporary*, and the depth of the feeling, *±intensity*. These features exist in the Argentinean as well as in the Finnish tango. However, various concepts of love show a tendency for love to be not merely a perception or a sensation, but to acquire its definite senses within the demands of the social milieu and the cultural context.<sup>2</sup> Very passionate expression of feelings is not characteristic of the Finnish mentality, as appears in the original Finnish tango texts, while the translated tangos or the international instrumental tangos provided with Finnish texts allow more passion than our domestic equivalents, which tell about the joy and pain of love in the natural context. Tango lyrics are in some sense an aid in the process of the loss of love, longing and pain for the life that is gone, the countryside, youth, the beloved, i.e. love in its particular manifestations. The

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam (1977: 836-841).

<sup>2</sup> Jallinoja (1984: 115).

tango is perhaps a message of something which is difficult to verbalise, and therefore has a very important communicative task in the silent Finnish culture.<sup>3</sup> It is folklore and poplore in our time, a time when we do not sing as we did before when we used songs and laments in work and in coping with joy and sorrow. The tango lyrics are the lament songs (*itkuvirsiä*, "itkelmiä") of our times. Their lyrics provide a dual setting for our nostalgia and melancholy, joy and sorrow, love and longing, which permits us to bewail our existence. If popular music and mass-culture lyrics and texts have this as a primary aim, they fulfil a crucial function.

The Greimasian model for analysing tango texts and especially the phenomena of love and longing, illustrates the complex structure of the discourse; at the same time both the positive as well as the negative structure is exposed, a model which shows the states, actions and the modalities of human existence.<sup>4</sup> Love is an emotion, a passion, a perception actualising physiological, psychological and mystical forces in man,<sup>5</sup> difficult to classify and analyse. However, in its fictive form it can be partly seen in terms of Greimas' model with the actors in the tango playing dramatic episodes exhibiting the modalities, primarily *désir*.<sup>6</sup> The other theoretical view, that of Peirce, Heidegger and Bahtin has helped me to analyse the inner state of man enacted in tango lyrics discourses, even though a researcher never can avoid introspection and intuition when dealing with qualitative questions such as those discussed here. Lotman's cultural semiotics has provided the essential understanding that different language texts always represent their respective cultures; discrete oral and literary texts become parts of wider cultural contexts. Different cultures and their boundaries, their semiospheres, become transparent through contrastive cultural analysis. This shapes the semiotics of the tango as a dramatic episode in which the central dramatic theme is love. The semantics of love in the tango lyrics may however only be revealed by a detailed analysis of the meaning and meaning relations in these texts.

One of the outstanding features of the Finnish people is the national silence.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, the Japanese share this national silence (*Schweigekulturen*) where verbal communication is not the same as in the French or the American culture (*Redekulturen*).<sup>8</sup> In Finland and Japan people dance the tango. It seems therefore that in silent cultures, the tango texts function as silent communication, as proposals and discussions. During the dance real verbal communication is not possible, because one has to concentrate primarily on the lyrics, which function as great interpreters of Life, Love and Suffering in the disparate Finnish and Argentinean cultures, the *+désir* and *+dolor* which together form the semantic

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Åhlén (1987: 68-69); Kukkonen (1993a; 1997; 2000; 2002); Pelinski (2000); Numminen (1998).

<sup>4</sup> Greimas (1966: 209).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Dictionary of the History of Ideas III* (1976: 98); Alberoni (1979).

<sup>6</sup> Greimas (1966: 201-209).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Lehtonen & Sajavaara (1985); Tannen & Saville-Troike (1985); Saville-Troike (1985); Tannen (1985); Oksaar (1988: 52-59); Kukkonen (1991a-b; 1992c; 1993a-c; 1997).

<sup>8</sup> The terms are from Oksaar (1988).

features of love. Finnish silence depends on our nation, our society, and our mentality, communication in Finnish agrarian society was rare.<sup>9</sup> The movement from the countryside into the cities and densely-populated communities, or to Sweden, began in the 1960s and is still going on, leaving the Finnish countryside relatively empty. Verbal communication is usually a problem for the average Finn; at the dancing pavilions we are a quiet people, as we are in the sauna and at church – as a Finnish proverb says: *Hiljaa saunassa ja kirkossa*, 'Silent in the sauna and in church'.<sup>10</sup> Love is some kind of taboo and an abstract word one is not able to talk about or express feelings about. But we have our tango; true, imported with strange influences from the original Argentinean, the German march style, Russian romances, the Slavic melancholy, as well as religious influences.<sup>11</sup> The Finnish tango however has its own steps and its own lyrics based on folk poetry and nature, as exemplified by how well P. Mustapää's [Martti Haavio] high-culture lyrics with folk poetry forms and stylistic features written in the 1920s suit the basic Finnish tango music composed by Chydenius in the 1980s. This supplies evidence for the indexical strength of texts in a national culture. The repetitive character of the tango lyrics make the tango a "security" factor;<sup>12</sup> we briefly escape to another place and time, through familiar words which talk about love and happiness, or sorrow and longing which help us to apprehend our various mental states.<sup>13</sup> In the *helper's* role we find nature, the stars, the moon, the sea, the happy land.

## 2 The language of nostalgia

The main idea of this book has been to show how tango lyrics reflect reality and how pre-eminent a role music and song has in a culture. My discussion of the Finnish tango lyrics has originated in the key role of Finnish folk poetry. In Finnish tango lyrics from 1915 until present the cardinal concept has been love, as Asplund has noticed in her book *Ballads and Broad-sides. Finnish Narrative Popular Songs* (1994), without which these songs would hardly have been preserved.<sup>14</sup> My investigation gives support to Asplund's claim that the greatest changes have happened in the song culture because of war, because normal life is disturbed and after the war the song culture changes radically. Asplund mentions that the Nordic War (1700–1721) was a similar watershed between Kalevala song and the new song. After the Finnish War (1808–1809) besides the oral song culture, printed songs began to appear, and after the civil war in 1918 the oral song tradition began to vanish. After the Winter War the time of round-game songs and sleigh songs was over. In the 1920s, the era of the hit and

<sup>9</sup> Nortamo (1990); cf. Karkama (1985); Suutala (1986); Tarasti (1990); Laine-Sveiby (1991).

<sup>10</sup> Vuorela (1979).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Jalkanen (1992: 7–16).

<sup>12</sup> Ahlén (1987: 68–69).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Lönnroth (1978: *passim*), the term *den dubbla scenen* 'the dual setting', cf. also van Elderen's discussion (1994: 50–65) of Finnish popular music, culture and identity; Shuker (1994), *Understanding Popular Music*.

<sup>14</sup> Asplund (1994: *passim*; Kukkonen 1997: *passim*).

industrial music began. Today the poetry of popular music lyrics is of the utmost importance for the masses, providing people with an opportunity to listen to and deal with the important tissues in life: life and death, love and longing, joy and sorrow. A basic need to sing today finds an outlet today in the popular form of singing, when the role of the Kalevala song tradition, oral poetry and singing has almost vanished. Popular music texts show, however, that music and song is an essential language of love and longing. The old tradition of the comic songs and revues of the 1920s is partly seen in the Finnish tango parodies, but the principal theme of the Finnish tango lyrics is love and longing, either as a nostalgia for the past or as a yearning for love and longing in a state of paradise, or through Finnish nature which reflects the inner states of man. Descriptions of Finnish nature still form the main setting of the Finnish tango.

The acculturation of the Argentinean tango in Finland amalgamated disparate foreign influences, but formed them into a distinctive atmosphere built around Finnish culture and nature, including Finnish culture and themes in folk poetry, nature and silence as creative forces demonstrated so clearly in the Finnish people, and through the most important feature which generates identity and mentality – the language. Language reflects culture. In this book I have discussed three genres of tango lyrics: the Argentinean, the European, and the Finnish. The aim has been to show how music and song reflect the culture in question. A primary assumption has been that song and music, as Lönnrot wrote in the 1840s, are the language of man's inner state, when everyday language fails and when the psychological states need another form of expression. Argentina has its tango, a form of music and song expressing man's inmost condition with the city, the *cafetín* and the *bandoneón* providing the spirit of place, the urban environment. *Nostalgia* and *tristeza* are described in rather long narrative lyrics, and when verbal expressions do not suffice the language of the *bandoneón* functions as a continuation of the description of love and pain, *désir* and *dolor*. Europe acculturated and transformed the Argentinean tango into her own forms; clearly music knows no borders. Music goes through acculturation processes and songs are provided with new lyrics from the soil of the particular culture, like languages acquiring various local features in different places and regions. We can speak of the dialects of the tango being difficult to understand without a considerable knowledge of the various languages of tangos and the sociocultural context in which they occur. The tango began its history in Europe during the great depression and the wars; the music and songs tried to provide a setting different from reality, so that the European tango became sentimental and escapist, employing sentimental and hyperbolic expressions of passion. These texts were fairy-tales for adults, unrealistic stories through which the dancer/the listener found release, or were humorous stories aiming to make people forget their dreadful reality for a while. The passionate music provided an opportunity for intimacy, if not in reality then in the imagination. The texts were above all communicators.

The Finnish tango lyrics show a development from their early history up to the present. Their history shows that during the first period the themes of the

Finnish tango lyrics are different, being passionate, escapist and exotic. During the 1940s and the war, the texts became more serious, creating the core of Finnish tango lyrics in the 1950s and 1960s, i.e. *kaipuu*, which is not a cheap, romantic or sentimental longing or yearning but a profound expression of man's vital psychological states. These themes also dominate in Finnish folk poetry and literature. The point of this study has been to understand Finnish tango lyrics as mirrors reflecting national signs, those which are repeated in art and culture over and over again. Even though the Finnish tango is primarily a male culture, its key lyricists, Kerttu Mustonen and Dagmar Parmas, were women who described the psychological landscape of the Finnish male, his love and longing, his happiness and pain, through the Finnish landscape. Thus male and female meet in *togetherness* as human beings with a mutual existence comprising love and longing, joy and sorrow, nostalgia and melancholy.

Hence, my discussion has been based on two theses. The first is that the Finnish tango lyrics are a continuation of folk poetry, the folk poetry of today, in which repetitive themes provide security, and in whose lyrics people feel at home in a familiar *chronotopos*. The second is the communicative function providing a forum for expression of love and longing as reflections of the Finnish mind, mentality and culture. In cultures where communicative silence in oral language discourses can be seen as a national sign, popular music functions as communication. It is easier to sing or to listen to the language of love and longing than to declare it to one's beloved. Words and the tango lyrics as national texts are thus especially important in Finnish culture. While *life is a tango* is the prime metaphor of the Argentinean tango, the Finnish tango stresses *life is a journey* or *life is a road*.

While the Argentinean tango lyrics are mainly reflections of psychological depth and descriptions of man's mental states here and now, the modality of being (*être*) with the state of *tristeza* as its main motif, the Finnish tango lyrics prefer the idea of *nostalgia*, living in memories, or living in a dream which yearns for a state without worries and problems. The subject of the Argentinean tango discusses psychological states in terms of *Gelassenheit*, i.e. leaving things as such, but his existence can be realised also in action and doing (*faire*) when he kills his rival out of jealousy or commits suicide because of jealousy and rejection. The urban Argentinean tango lyrics only sometimes mention nature, and it lacks the national romantic idea of the centrality of nature found in the Finnish tango. The man in the Argentinean tango is dealing with the dual concept of the woman as Madonna/la madre-prostitute. For the man in the Finnish tango the woman is mother earth, *Satumaa* or *Onnen maa* 'The Happy Land' meaning: (1) Mother earth, the actual landscape and nature, including love and longing; longing for somewhere else when at home (*Sehnsucht*), longing for home when somewhere else (*Heimweh*), i.e. a realisation of *chronotopos* and the dichotomy of now-then, here-there, (2) the abstract notion of *chora*, a place of unity, a harmony, an inner peace, and (3) the abstract place 'Heaven', where longing ends. This is the paramount concept of Finnish tango lyrics and love and longing (*kaipuu, kaiho*).



## *Epilogue*

### *The tango and Finnish popular music*

*Pekka Gronow*

During the past two centuries, there have been three global waves of popular music. The first wave originated in Europe during the 19th century, and spread gradually to most of the world by the turn of the century. It was spearheaded by Central European dances such as the waltz and the polka, but it included other forms of European popular song, both secular and sacred. The popularity of the new dance rhythms cut across all strata of society, and melodies based on instrumental dance rhythms influenced many kinds of vocal music, from folk songs to musical theatre. The increasing demand for musical entertainment led to the establishment of a popular music industry in Berlin, London, Paris and other large European cities. The new music also helped the diffusion of new musical instruments such as the accordion.

The second wave began in the 1910s, when the flow of Afro-American dances to Europe started. This phase, which continued into the 1940s, saw the introduction of new dances such as the foxtrot, the tango, the rumba, the beguine, and so on. It turned the flow of music so that New York gradually became the most important centre of popular music, and its influence also helped music from other parts of the New World on its way towards Europe. The main agent for the diffusion of the new music was the modern dance orchestra, which included several previously neglected instruments such as the drum set and the saxophone. The dance orchestra also introduced a number of new musical practices, such as improvised solos, which were quickly picked up by younger European musicians.

If the first wave furthered the development of music publishing houses and the trade in sheet music, the second wave helped the new media, radio, films and the recording industry to establish their position.

The third wave, rock and roll, started in the mid-fifties. It also had its roots in Afro-American music, but it represented a break from the earlier dance band culture of the second wave. Rock and roll was emphatically based on oral tradition, and in its diffusion, recordings, radio and television took precedence over "live" music. Elvis Presley, the first king of rock and roll, never toured Europe, but within a few years of the release of his first recordings, there were Presley imitators in most European countries. By the seventies, rock sung in local languages was firmly established all over Europe.

The new idiom was again accompanied by specific instruments and practices, in particular the electric guitar and the electronic manipulation of sound.

These three waves have been successive in the sense that each new idiom has displaced older ones in the limelight. However, the retreating wave has always

left a rich sediment of tunes and musical practices which has stayed under the new wave and gradually become mixed with it. In some regions, the older idioms have lived much longer than in others. In the history of popular music there are many overlapping phases and local or national idiosyncrasies, ranging from Ukrainian country and western music to Inuit rock and roll. The local varieties of popular music have their roots in the global waves, but acquire their special characteristics in the process of adapting to local conditions.

### *The tango in Europe*

The history of the tango in Europe has been well documented by Åhlén and others. It follows the pattern of the diffusion of "second wave" popular music since the beginning of this century. The tango was first brought to Europe before the First World War by visiting Argentinean musicians and dancers who had found employment in the dance halls and cabarets of Paris and other metropolitan centres. The tango shared many stylistic traits with ragtime, jazz and other new North American idioms which were at the same time making inroads in Europe, and the trends supported each other, making the European public receptive to "modern" popular dances.

After the tango had become fashionable, many European musicians started playing and writing music in a similar idiom. At first they attempted to emulate the trappings of the style in great detail. Bands dressed in Argentinean fashion (*Geraldo and his Gauchos* in London) and gave Spanish titles to their compositions (*Guapita, Bonita Nina, Adios señorita*). Fairly soon, however, the tango became domesticated as composers in France, Germany, Greece and other European countries started writing tangos with lyrics in local languages and elements from local musical idioms. By the thirties, the tango was universally accepted as one of the fashionable expressions of popular music, along with contemporary North American styles and older European idioms.

The popularity of the tango lasted into the fifties, despite the constant change of fashions in popular music. The old-style dance band of the twenties was replaced by the big bands of the forties, singing styles changed, and in some cases the dance was given more flavour in the form of modern arrangements or hybrids such as the "tango-beguine". In England the tango had more or less disappeared by the forties, except from the world of competitive ballroom dancing, but in continental Europe and Scandinavia it still was a common form of popular song. In Germany, popular composers continued to write new tangos which spread northwards to Scandinavia translated into local languages: *Isabella, Strassensänger von Neapel, Unter der roten Laterne von St. Pauli* and so on.

During this period, the tango was one of the standard forms of popular music, both a compositional formula commonly used by songwriters and a dance step known to most people interested in social dancing. In the repertoire of popular dance bands, the tango would alternate with foxtrots, waltzes and more recent Latin American dances. A composer might use the foxtrot tempo for a bright,

boy-meets-girl type song, while the tango was preferred for nostalgic, romantic songs. The lyrics of tangos often used images and stock phrases similar to earlier waltzes, but showed a preference for exotic characters and settings.

The third wave, which began with the introduction of rock and roll in the mid-fifties, soon made the tango sound old-fashioned. A look at the lists of best-selling records in music trade papers confirms that various rock-based forms of music are now dominant all over Europe, with local productions competing successfully with American imports despite the strong competitive position which the Americans have in the audio-visual industries. In many countries, English has become the dominant language of popular music, and Swedish bands such as Roxette or Ace of Base routinely write songs which are accepted on the highly competitive American market. In the Mediterranean area and in parts of Eastern and Northern Europe, rock in local languages enjoys a strong position.

### *The Finnish tango*

The first two decades of the Finnish tango closely follow the general European pattern. The Finnish tangos of the thirties often resemble German ones, and in fact German tangos were frequently translated into Finnish, but gradually the Finnish tango began to acquire local characteristics both musically and textually. The minor mode became the accepted norm in the Finnish tango, and at the same time melodic elements from earlier idioms (such as Finnish and Russian romances) were incorporated into it. Exotic topics lost their popularity, as Finnish names (*Aila, Anna-Liisa*) and northern images such as frost became common in lyrics. However, comparative research is needed before we can state with any certainty whether the Finnish tango of this period really had more local colour than, say, the Czech or the Greek variety.

The development of the indigenous tango continued after the war, when Toivo Kärki created his original and hugely popular tangos which became the model for many subsequent Finnish songwriters. But what is really unique about the Finnish tango is its enduring popularity in the rock era. Rock had been introduced into Finland during the fifties, and the first "Finnish Elvis" competition was held in 1957. By 1963, Finnish beat groups had become quite popular. But the tango did not go away; instead it seemed to gain new strength. In 1964, the two most popular records in Finland were *All my loving*, by the Beatles, and *Tähdet meren yllä*, by the tango singer Reijo Taipale.

It appears that at the time when a large part of the younger population was ready to adopt rock as its main form of musical expression, there were still considerable segments (particularly among the older and rural population) which clung to traditional musical values. By this time, the tango had become so thoroughly finnicized that it was now accepted as the form of popular song which on the one hand was in accord with traditional Finnish values, and on the other hand was sufficiently modern to suit the rituals of courtship and social dancing.

As a result, an exceptionally large number of new Finnish tangos were written and recorded in the sixties. Their content (lyrics, melodic structure) was highly conservative, but their outward form (production with latest recording technology, wide frequency response) was modern.

Today the tango no longer holds the same position in Finland as it did in the sixties. Although new tangos are written and recorded regularly, they hardly ever appear on the lists of best-selling records. But the Finnish copyright society Teosto tells us that tangos are among the most frequently performed and broadcast compositions in the country, and the annual tango festival in Seinäjoki in the north of Finland has become the most successful musical event in the country. Most Finns today think of the tango as a typically Finnish phenomenon, like skiing or the sauna, even if they personally have other musical preferences. With the exception of a few classics such as *La Cumparsita*, foreign tangos are seldom performed in Finland.

### *The tango in cultural history*

In a wider perspective, even the development of the Finnish tango fits into a pattern. There have always been local deviations from the mainstream of popular music, and it is possible to find similar "neo-traditionalist" forms of popular music in other parts of Europe, particularly in conservative, less-developed regions some distance from the influence of metropolitan centres. For instance, I find the Finnish tango phenomenon in many ways similar to the "Volksmusik" of Southern Germany, German Switzerland and the western parts of Austria. This "folk music" is not folk music in the academic sense of the world, but a professionally produced and modernized adaptation of the polkas and waltzes which were popular in the region about a hundred years ago. The traditional repertoire is regularly augmented by new songs written in local dialects.

American country music could probably be interpreted as a similar survival of the "first wave" of popular music. The similarity is not in the style, except in the sense that "Volksmusik", country music and Finnish tangos share a roughly similar tool kit of song writing techniques (the Finnish tango having shed all the Afro-American characteristics of the original form). The similarity is in the fact that a musical idiom which has been more or less abandoned by the rest of the world continues to flourish in one region. Like the Finnish tango, country music and the Alpine "Volksmusik" have the full support of the local media, including television, radio, and the recording industry.

Whatever our interpretation of the global status of the Finnish tango, it constitutes one of the most creative bodies of Finnish popular song. There are many interesting, popular and even original Finnish popular songs in other idioms, but it would be difficult to justify the study of, say, the Finnish foxtrot as a genre. The Finnish tango represents a tradition with its own internal logic. In a sense it can be seen both as a continuation of earlier traditions of folk music and as a predecessor of the currently flourishing practice of writing rock in Finnish.

Why, then, has Finland preserved this relic from an earlier wave of popular music? When Finland became independent in 1917, the country had a little over three million inhabitants. Almost 85 per cent of the population at that time was rural. In Britain, for instance, there had been an urban majority since the 1850s. Today Finland's population has grown to five million, spread over an area much larger than the United Kingdom. The urban population first exceeded the rural in the late 1960s. Migration into urban areas was particularly rapid during this decade, and it was often traumatic both to those who moved and to those who stayed behind. It created a need for music which gave emotional support to traditional values.

Finland is one of those countries, like Ireland, Norway, or Israel, where language has played an important part in shaping the nation's history and consciousness. Although Finland is and has always been bilingual, it was the Finnish language which was largely responsible for the emergence of the nationalistic spirit in the 19th century.

In English-speaking countries, popular music in foreign languages is an oddity. It seems natural that all popular songs are in English. In many smaller European countries, the English language has also become the language of popular music, although culturally this represents a contrary trend. In countries like Denmark, Sweden, or the Netherlands, only a relatively small number of records sold consist of songs in the national language. It is easy to believe that with the unification of Europe, many of the countries of the Union will become functionally bilingual, with English as the second language. To the French, this trend has been so alarming that beginning in 1996, radio stations will be legally required to play at least 40 per cent French music.

In Finland, there has been no need to consider such measures. The Finnish language is firmly established in the popular music business. But the example of the Finnish tango also shows how *Finnishness* is constantly reinvented and recreated.

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*Tango Nostalgia* focuses on three central concepts: language, culture and communication as seen through tango lyrics discourses, a genre of poetry and literature of popular music as culture, poplore, or folklore in our time.

The main stress is on three manifestations of the tango as a sociocultural and a semiotic phenomenon:

- The poetry and themes of the original Rioplatensian and Argentinean tango lyrics, a manifestation of *argentinidad* and *tristeza*, the central concepts of the texts.
- The romantic, sentimental and escapist European tango lyrics, the hit tango, an example of acculturation.
- The Finnish nostalgic tango lyrics created by the concept of Finnishness, Finnish nature, culture, identity and mentality, a genre of its own both as music and lyrics. The book aims to illuminate how central existential themes such as life and death, love and longing, joy and sorrow, nostalgia and melancholy are understood and handled in the cultural texts of the masses.

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